



# The Baker's Dozen



THE TOP 13 PROVIDERS OF FULL-SERVICE WORKPLACE SCREENING. BY HRO TODAY STAFF

If the work of outsourced security and screening service providers seems increasingly critical to HR organizations' hiring processes, it's because it is. More than ever, employers face compliance pressures and concerns about their liability.

Under mounting federal and state pressure to screen out illegal aliens and those with questionable backgrounds from their candidate pools, employers are turning to outsourcing more than ever to help them meet regulatory mandates, spot potentially troublesome workers, and minimize their organizations' exposure. Whether these services are a quick web-portal search or an end-to-end solution that

covers many facets of a candidate's background, screening service providers are harnessing improved technology, easier access of public records, and a maturing network of subcontractors.

For buyers, this means screening results are becoming more accurate, timely, and less costly to generate—a development that is a testament to a dynamic market. At the same time, solutions are becoming more integrated with HRIS and recruitment software so users can easily process and onboard their new employees.

Helping the industry make this goal a reality are the 13 service providers listed here. As the biggest

and most progressive vendors in corporate screening, these companies have a bead on what employers want. Of course they're not the only ones to have a finger on the pulse of the screening market, but this year's Baker's Dozen are at the forefront of trends, continually advancing the delivery of screening services. If you are in the market to outsource, you might want to start with this group; but remember, there are many vendors offering a variety of solutions as robust and cost-effective as the ones you'll find here. Your biggest challenge will be deciding which services are the most appropriate for your particular need.

**Methodology:** This list was developed by contacting 25 screening providers and requesting the number of employees screened in 2006. We asked how many individuals were searched, not how many different searches were conducted. Respondents were also asked who their top competitors were. Their votes were then tallied to determine the Baker's Dozen. Providers are not ranked because the number of employees screened by each company cannot be independently verified since not all are public companies and are not required to publicly disclose those numbers. Buyer's choice designations are awarded to the three providers with the most number of clients who participated in an online HRO Today satisfaction survey and who gave positive ratings of their experience with outsourcing screening services.

Company	* Employees Screened (2006)	URL
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## ACCURATE BACKGROUND, INC.

1.6 million [accuratebackground.com](http://accuratebackground.com)

A provider of tailored solutions, Accurate Background contracts thousands of researchers throughout the U.S. and worldwide to offer a multitude of employment screening products as well as drug testing, compliance, and fingerprinting services. Buyers can choose from one of several web-based applications or the company's value-added integration solutions, which integrate Accurate Background's services with a popular ATS (applicant tracking system) to offer comprehensive streamlined workflows. The company also offers Risk Reduction Technology, a patent-pending process that ensures consistent hiring decisions across all parts of an employer organization.

**Clients:** JC Penney, Washington Mutual, Health Net, Safeco, Microsoft, Boyd Gaming, and Books-A-Million.

**Workplace Screening Services:** National SSN/address locator; felony/misdemeanor search; federal criminal search; sex offender registry searches; education, employment, personal reference, and professional license verification; vendor management program; consumer credit report; civil searches; fingerprinting; fraud and abuse control information system; motor vehicle report; OFAC search; basic terrorist search; and drug screening.

**Most Important Metrics:** Accuracy of screens, customer service, timeliness of services, innovative technology in searches.

\* The number of employees screened in 2006 was provided by the vendors.

Company

\*Employees Screened  
(2006)

URL



### ACXIOM INFORMATION SECURITY SERVICES

1.7 million

[acxiom.com](http://acxiom.com)

A wholly owned subsidiary of Acxiom Corporation, Acxiom Information Security Services offers 30 years of experience backed by technology options and a full-service solution. Acxiom provides multi-layer, 100-percent in-person/real-time FCRA-compliant reports, including criminal record checks, credit reports, and driving records. These services are offered in combination with others such as drug testing and employment, education, and professional license verifications. The core components of its solutions are derived from its capabilities in Customer Data Integration (CDI) technology, data, database services, IT outsourcing, consulting and analytics, and privacy management.

**Clients:** Acxiom currently serves 3,000 corporate clients and supports 10,000 accounts.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Checks of federal, county, and statewide criminal records; civil and motor vehicle record checks; credit reports; ID verification/social security trace reports; employment, education, and professional license verifications; international checks; national criminal database searches; sexual offender registry checks; media searches; suspected terrorist watch list checks; federal exclusion list searches (OIG/GSA, FACIS, DEA & NPDB databases); drug testing; fingerprinting; I-9 verifications; workers' compensation checks; UCC filings; tax liens; insurance verifications; secretary of state checks; national corporation, fictitious business name, and bankruptcy checks; applicant scoring services; and adverse action fulfillment services.

**Most Important Metrics:** Hit rate/data quality; turnaround time; client retention; and customer service response time.



### Buyer's Choice

**Best 3 Services:**

1. Broad scope of services
2. Ease of use
3. Customer service



### ADP, INC.

5.8 million

[adp.com](http://adp.com)

As the country's largest payroll provider, ADP is also able to cross sell its screening services to its broad base of existing clients. A comprehensive offering that includes employee screening, hiring, and compliance services, ADP provides three tiers of screening solutions, much like its payroll business, for employers of different sizes: 1 to 49 employees; 50 to 999 employees, and 1,000 or more employees. ADP offers unique solution sets for each tier, including the EasyHire product for small businesses, and more flexible products for larger businesses. These include standardized packages as well as customized products for specific needs.

**Clients:** ADP provides background screening services to more than 30,000 clients nationwide ranging in size from small businesses to large corporations.

**Workplace Screening Services:** SSN validation; address verification; criminal court, driving, credit, and workers' compensation claims records; employment, education, credential, and personal verification; department of health and human services check; government sanctions registry; sex offender registry; adverse action service.

**Most Important Metrics:** Performance measurements include cycle time, report accuracy, and vendor performance and customer/contact survey data. Efforts are focused on the continual improvement process and sustaining that performance over time.



### CHOICEPOINT WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS INC.

10 million

[choicepoint.com](http://choicepoint.com)

Serving organizations of all sizes, ChoicePoint offers highly specialized screening solutions for industries such as retail, financial services, staffing, healthcare, transportation, gaming, and more.

**Clients:** ChoicePoint services more than half of America's 100 largest employers.

Company

\*Employees Screened  
(2006)

URL



**Workplace Screening Services:** Online applicants data capture tools; integration with ATS and HRIS systems; database criminal records and direct, court-access criminal records; electronic fingerprint services; verification of employment and education; terrorist watch list and sanctions checks; drug testing; employment eligibility verifications services (I-9); global background screening; vendor screening; specialized screening solutions for retail, financial services, transportation, and health-care; and volunteer and nonprofit screening programs.

**Most Important Metrics:** Effectiveness—measures the ratio of derogatory information developed; performance—measures cycle time delivery against service level requirements; quality—tracks errors, root cause analysis, and resolution; reliability—reports on system “up time,” unscheduled outages, and adherence to service levels requirements; user satisfaction—measures user feedback on customer service, responsiveness, problem resolution, and the program’s effectiveness against success criteria.



**FIRST ADVANTAGE EMPLOYER SERVICES**

9.2 million

[fadv.com](http://fadv.com)

First Advantage Employer Services provides a comprehensive suite of employer solutions to numerous *Fortune* 500 organizations designed to help them reduce the time and cost associated with recruiting, hiring management, screening, and ongoing retention processes. The company focuses on providing integrated, single-source solutions, customizable technology, compliance and managed services, and client support for employers worldwide.

**Clients:** Not provided.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Global background verifications; criminal reports; SSN verifications; NationScan national criminal database search; federal criminal records; statewide criminal records; state and federal civil records; education verification; employment verification; international searches; motor vehicle records; professional license verification; Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) checks; terrorist searches; substance abuse testing; and biometric fingerprinting.

**Most Important Metrics:** Turnaround time; results and reporting quality; system up-time; adherence to service level agreements; client services responsiveness; client satisfaction; and integrated screening results.



**GENERAL INFORMATION SERVICES, INC. (GIS)**

11.2 million

[geninfo.com](http://geninfo.com)

With more than 41 years of industry experience, General Information Services, Inc. (GIS) has transformed its service offering from pre-employment screenings to total workforce management solution. Utilizing its Pangea People Management system, clients can recruit, screen, hire, and retain. The company offers customized screening and compliance programs for thousands of companies across the globe, ranging from small businesses to *Fortune* 500 firms.

**Clients:** GIS serves clients in the retail, insurance, financial services, staffing, healthcare, and transportation industries among others.

**Workplace Screening Services:** GIS provides the following services to clients: criminal history reports (county, state, and national); court searches; national government watch lists (including those of OFAC, GSA, and most wanted lists); driving records; identity validations; credit history; employment verifications; education verifications; professional license certifications; reference checks; sex offender registries (in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and the territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, including photos for all these areas); international screening and compliance, drug testing and program management; fingerprinting; USA Patriot Act compliance; retail theft database; attending physician statements; life inspections, Employment Eligibility Verifications (EEV); Form I-9 storage and maintenance; state-specific regulatory forms; configurable online application; behavioral assessments; powered achievement interviews; strategic employee



Company

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(2006)

URL

onboarding; workforce reporting analytics; automated report grading, and integrated progressive screening, all available via a web-based platform.

**Most Important Metrics:** GIS focuses on turnaround times, robust reporting, full customization and integration capabilities, and customer care.



**HIRERIGHT, INC.**

4.8 million

[hireright.com](http://hireright.com)

Focused solely on employment screening, HireRight serves organizations of all sizes. An on-demand solution, the company's Enterprise offering can be a stand-alone or an integrated package that fits with a user's existing recruitment solution. The company has partnered with vendors such as Oracle, PeopleSoft, Taleo, Deploy Solutions, VirtualEdge, PeopleAdmin, and Vurv to codevelop pre-built, pre-integrated employment screening solutions. With worldwide headquarters in Irvine, CA, and supported by offices and affiliates around the globe, HireRight reaches more than 200 countries and territories with more than 50 service offerings.

**Clients:** HireRight serves more than 50 of the *Fortune* 500.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Background screening, drug screening, international screening, extended workforce screening, electronic I-9, and online employment applications.

**Most Important Metrics:** Customer satisfaction, turnaround time, first-time quality, and uptime.



**INTELLICORP RECORDS, INC.**

2 million

[intellicorp.net](http://intellicorp.net)

IntelliCorp is a nationwide provider of background checks and employment and volunteer screening. Since 1996, the company has worked with court systems and other reporting agencies throughout the U.S. to build a unified data center. IntelliCorp has built one of the most comprehensive data repositories of criminal records and other public information that allows instant access to billions of public records that can be used in recruiting decisions. In addition, IntelliCorp has formed strategic partnerships with several industry leaders to make other employment-screening programs and professional services available to a broader customer base.

**Clients:** Client base includes large, medium, and small companies, in addition to a large portion of the nonprofit and military sectors. Markets served include banking/finance, healthcare, hospitality, insurance, manufacturing, medical, retail, staffing, tenant screening, transportation, and volunteer organizations. IntelliCorp also has a Service Partner division, which serves the wholesale data market.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Adjudication (scoring); batch processing; client-specific customized solutions; dedicated account management; integration options; and 24/7 secure system access to run and view reports. Additionally, end-to-end screening products and bundled package options include criminal searches (criminal SuperSearch, statewide criminal searches, inmate records, arrest records, single-county criminal searches, nationwide sex offender registry, federal criminal records); bankruptcies/liens/judgments; civil searches; credit reports; DOT employment verification; drug testing; education verification; employment verification; evictions history; former last name criminal searches; international searches; medical fraud and abuse; motor vehicle reports; practitioner's databank; professional licensing; SSN verification/address history; and terrorist database.

**Most Important Metrics:** Hit ratios (instant, vendor, and in-house); turnaround times; report accuracy; quality assurance programs (internal and external) to measure accuracy of data entry; correctness of results reported to the identifier level; completeness of results (monitoring that all cases, charges, and sentence details have been reported); FCRA compliance; consistency of reporting; website performance; quality rating (vendor and in-house); client/user satisfaction; and strict privacy and security policies.

Company

\*Employees Screened  
(2006)

URL



### KROLL

1.5 million

[kroll.com](http://kroll.com)

Kroll is a global risk consulting company with more than 30 years of experience. An operating unit of professional services firm Marsh & McLennan, it has offices in more than 60 cities in the U.S. and abroad. Background screening is just one component of the company's services, which also include investigations, identity fraud, and corporate advisory services.

**Clients:** Ryder, eBay, Bank of America, American Express, Credit Suisse, Yahoo!, HCA, Burger King, Hasbro, and GE. Kroll currently serves a global clientele of more than 12,000 companies, government entities, financial institutions, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Domestic and international background screening; substance abuse testing; physical exams; vendor screening; form I-9 services; and identity theft fraud solutions.

**Most Important Metrics:** Information quality (less than one in 500 reports is amended, usually because of court/source error); and focus on compliance (more than half of Kroll clients operate in highly regulated industries such as healthcare, life sciences, education, and transportation).

 Buyer's Choice

**Best 3 Services:**

1. Thoroughness of search
2. Quick turnaround
3. Ease of use



### LEXISNEXIS SCREENING SOLUTIONS

1.2 million

[lexisnexis.com/screening](http://lexisnexis.com/screening)

LexisNexis Screening Solutions authenticates the identities and verifies the backgrounds of both individuals and businesses. With more than 20 years of experience providing critical business decision-making data, LexisNexis offers intelligence and analytics that organizations need for managing their risks in hiring and retaining talent or tenants. The company has developed proprietary technology to reduce turnaround times. Data can be delivered directly via XML-based integration or by batching technology. LexisNexis uses matching logic to verify applicant identities, criminal and credit records, as well as education and work history—all while coordinating reports with drug or fingerprint screening results. LexisNexis provides solutions to all sizes of organizations and can tailor reports, billing, and orders based on the unique needs of each business.

**Clients:** LexisNexis provides background checks to more than 7,000 companies worldwide, including nonprofit organizations, government, wholesale, manufacturing, transportation, hospitality, retail, gaming, property management, and financial institutions.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Individual applicant background checks includes identity verification; criminal, credit, or driving records; work, professional license, or educational history verification; government watch lists (OFAC, FDA debarment, OIG, etc.); eviction and bankruptcy results; and fingerprint or drug screening reports. Business background checks include business structure; legal history; credit history; and media exposure. Data sharing via system integration or applicant tracking system is also available as are international search capabilities (currently providing screening in 119 countries).

**Most Important Metrics:** turnaround time and customer satisfaction.



### STERLING TESTING SYSTEMS, INC.

2.5 million

[sterlingtesting.com](http://sterlingtesting.com)

Sterling Testing Systems, Inc. is a privately held, ISO-certified organization with thousands of customers in diverse industries. Consulting customers and sharing "best practices" are critical parts of Sterling's strategy. Services include background checks, drug testing, and other key verification and assessment services for *Fortune* 500 and other companies utilizing the latest technology to maximize efficiencies in the screening process. Founded in 1975, the company said it maintains a 99 percent client retention rate.



Company

\*Employees Screened  
(2006)

URL



**Clients:** A&P; Daimler Chrysler; Echostar; Laboratory Corporation of America; Bed, Bath & Beyond; Kaplan Higher Education; Staples.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Criminal history searches; credit reports; drug testing; employment verification and references; education verification; department of motor vehicle record searches; professional license verification; sexual offender searches; online employment applications; terrorist watch lists; healthcare checks; tenant screening; I-9 processing; legal compliance; targeted tax credits; and electronic fingerprinting.

**Most Important Metrics:** Accuracy and thoroughness—the first critical factors in measuring relationship success with any client are the accuracy and thoroughness of the services provided; turnaround time—turnaround times are posted on each order as well as in customizable reports, allowing clients to monitor service commitments; online customer satisfaction survey—enables clients to provide feedback regarding their experiences at any time.



**TALX CORPORATION**

3 million

[talx.com/Services/TheWorkNumber/](http://talx.com/Services/TheWorkNumber/)

Following its acquisition by Equifax, TALX now has direct access to more individual records than any other screening providers. The St. Louis-based company operates as an independent unit of Atlanta-based Equifax. Through its The Work Number business, TALX provides employment and income verification to more than 1,500 customers and more than half of the *Fortune* 500 companies. It also boasts government agencies as well as customers in all 50 states.

**Clients:** Bank of America, Chase Manhattan, Citigroup, Countrywide Financial, National City, and Wachovia.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Employment and income verification and work history summary. Authorized users can confirm a person's current and past employment or income in one of two ways: online instantly (database access to 159 million records from more than 1,750 employers) or researched by agents.

**Most Important Metrics:** Speed of delivery (TALX is the only provider of instant employment and income verification for 30 percent of the U.S. employed workforce. For employment information not immediately available, TALX agents will research employment in less than two days on average); authenticity (TALX employment screening is an employer-direct service. Source of data is the HR/payroll department of the candidate); and labor savings (recruiters save up to 48 hours finding information online).



**USIS**

6.2 million

[usis.com](http://usis.com)

USIS is an information and security services company serving HR, insurance, government agencies, and national security markets. Headquartered in Falls Church, VA, USIS offers background screening and risk management solutions for the transportation, healthcare, financial, gaming, and retail industries. Intelligence gathered by seasoned professionals is the core competency of the company, which claims to be the largest supplier of background investigations to the federal government. In addition, USIS provides risk management solutions and security and related professional services for institutions, commercial businesses, and the U.S. government. USIS is a leading supplier of program administration experts to federal agencies and U.S. interests worldwide.

**Clients:** Not provided.

**Workplace Screening Services:** Criminal history reports; motor vehicle reports; verifications; drug and alcohol testing; and searches of proprietary databases such as the DAC Employment History File and the USMA National Theft Database.

**Most Important Metrics:** N/A. HRO



# Improving Screening Services Through Technology and Product Integration

EMPLOYERS HAVE ALWAYS NEEDED FAST AND ACCURATE SERVICES, BUT TODAY'S GAME CHANGER IS THE USE OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO QUICKLY RETRIEVE AND VIEW RECORDS.

BY ANDY TENG

As HR leaders look to transform their organizations, the outsourcing of non-core functions is a key pillar of that effort. But deciding on exactly which services to outsource and which ones to retain has been an age-old dilemma for everyone who has ever considered HR transformation.

Outsourcing payroll and benefits administration might seem like an obvious start, but perhaps no HR service is more appropriate for outsourcing than employment background screening, which by many accounts has become increasingly difficult to manage internally because of fast-evolving regulations.

Whether the difficult task they face is compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act, verifying occupation-specific certification, or obtaining a state-wide or country-wide criminal check, employers have myriad options when it comes to outsourcing these tasks. That's especially comforting in an age of increased security awareness and fear of legal liability. Moreover, with HR services growing more integrated—marrying the recruitment process with screening and new employee onboarding, for instance—outsourcing is furthering its value to HR professionals who are stretched for time and domain expertise. Not only has the market broadened its offerings and improved services, but technological advances have made it easier for employers to order screening work, review results, and manage reports. All these steps can now be performed quickly with a few clicks of a mouse.

"As you see more and more companies shedding functions that are not core, this is one of the functions that's clearly not core," said Scott Singer, a corporate recruiter with spirits marketer Bacardi USA in Miami. "I don't have time to chase down courthouse records. I'd have to go to credit agencies and call past employers about their place of work. I just wouldn't do it in-house."

As an alcoholic beverage company, Bacardi USA has to be especially careful about the employees it hires. With 466 workers in 50 states, the maker of Bacardi

Rum and other products uses provider EBI to order thorough searches for its candidates. At a cost of \$120 to \$150 per background check, Singer said he promptly receives a comprehensive report that allows the company to either quickly hire or reject an applicant. He added that the price is comparatively negligible considering that a typical warehouse worker might make \$23 an hour including benefits, so each background check accounts for only a few hours of work—a small price that he said more than pays for itself if it can ensure Bacardi makes good hires.

## COMMON PHILOSOPHY

Singer's philosophy mirrors many employers these days, especially as the employment screening industry has markedly improved offerings and services. What used to be an arduous chore of faxing orders, waiting days for results, and then sometimes finding out that the information was for the wrong person or that the data were inconclusive, today's services are being delivered by dozens of providers who can process online requests almost instantaneously, check against a larger database of records, and make reporting available to anyone with an Internet connection.

Albert Bueno, president of screening service provider GIS in Chapin, SC, characterized today's employment screening services today as a blend of "old-school value with new technology." That means employers still want "old-school" customer service, accuracy, and savings, but these days technology has evolved into a cornerstone of service delivery. He said providers must be able to give customers the information they look for in a variety of ways, especially as they migrate into new technology.

"If you're not in a paperless environment, you're in the wrong business," he said, pointing out that paper-based processes have been highly prone to errors. For instance, when customers used to fax orders to their screening service providers, errors could occur at any point of the process, including filling out the order form, transmit-

ting the fax, reading and entering the order by the provider, and conducting the search at government offices. He lamented that it was a slow process that could easily lead to searching the wrong candidate.

Today, the process has become much more automated and comprehensive. With many local, county, and state governments increasingly making their records available online, and with employers receiving candidate information electronically through recruiters or applicants themselves, performing searches may be just a matter of logging onto a provider's web site and uploading candidate information electronically. On many cursory checks, results are available almost immediately. That's one benefit that some employers say is invaluable when outsourcing.

"I like to know that if I'm submitting a number of candidates, when the information comes back it will be fast and reliable," said Doug Cole, director of loss prevention at the Bartell Drug Company in Seattle.

Cole, whose company operates a chain of

drug stores in Washington, said his company performs some screening functions internally but also relies on locally based Intelius for additional services, especially when a short search time is necessary. The company conducts both pre- and post-employment screening as part of its loss prevention program, and while it only has stores within the state, Cole said he relies on his vendor to search databases outside of Washington on applicants who have recently relocated to the area. He said in those cases, one key requirement dominates the others. "Basically it's not so much a question of cost as it is of speed of pre-employment screening," he added.

#### TECHNOLOGY IS KEY FACTOR

How do companies such as Intelius, GIS, and others reduce search times? According to Todd Owens, Intelius' general manager of screening services, technology has been the key enabler as service providers and employers turn to the latest software and web innovations to improve their metrics.

"Technology is the single largest differentiator. It allows us to rapidly deliver customized solutions," Owens contended. "What we're seeing now is a technology shift."

Aside from better integration with recruitment software and HRIS—which raises overall efficiencies—screening solutions also enable better reporting capabilities, which in turn help employers comply with myriad regulatory requirements. Owens said providers spend significant amounts on their technology, an investment that few HR organizations can afford to make.

For employers such as Barnhill Contracting Company in Tarboro, NC, the proliferation of easy-to-use technology has been a useful development in its hiring process. Glenda Hughes, an administrative assistant who works in compliance for the company, said the convenience of web-based submissions means she spends little time to make sure candidates quickly clear the company's security checks.

"I do everything on the Internet. Being web-based, I can save reports right on my

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desktop and I can send it out [by e-mail],” she pointed out.

Hughes said she uses two providers—USIS for a cursory, immediate background check and LexisNexis for a more comprehensive search. She said this approach provides a series of checks to ensure applicants are thoroughly vetted before they are hired.

Barnhill Contracting’s two-tier approach also helps the company to address what has become an increasingly critical part of the screening process—complying with all state and federal employment laws. And with more regulations being rolled out in light of the immigration debate—states such as Georgia and Arizona are legislatively tackling the hiring of illegal workers—HR will be under greater pressure to meet those requirements.

Still, they won’t be addressing them alone. Outsourced screening service providers are evolving into more consultative roles, helping their clients to overcome new challenges. Supported by technology, domain knowledge, and growing market demand, these providers are well-suited to deliver what HR needs. **HRO**

## OPEN STANDARDS FOR HR TECHNOLOGY

BY ROBERT J. VALE, CEO, CLEARSTAR.NET

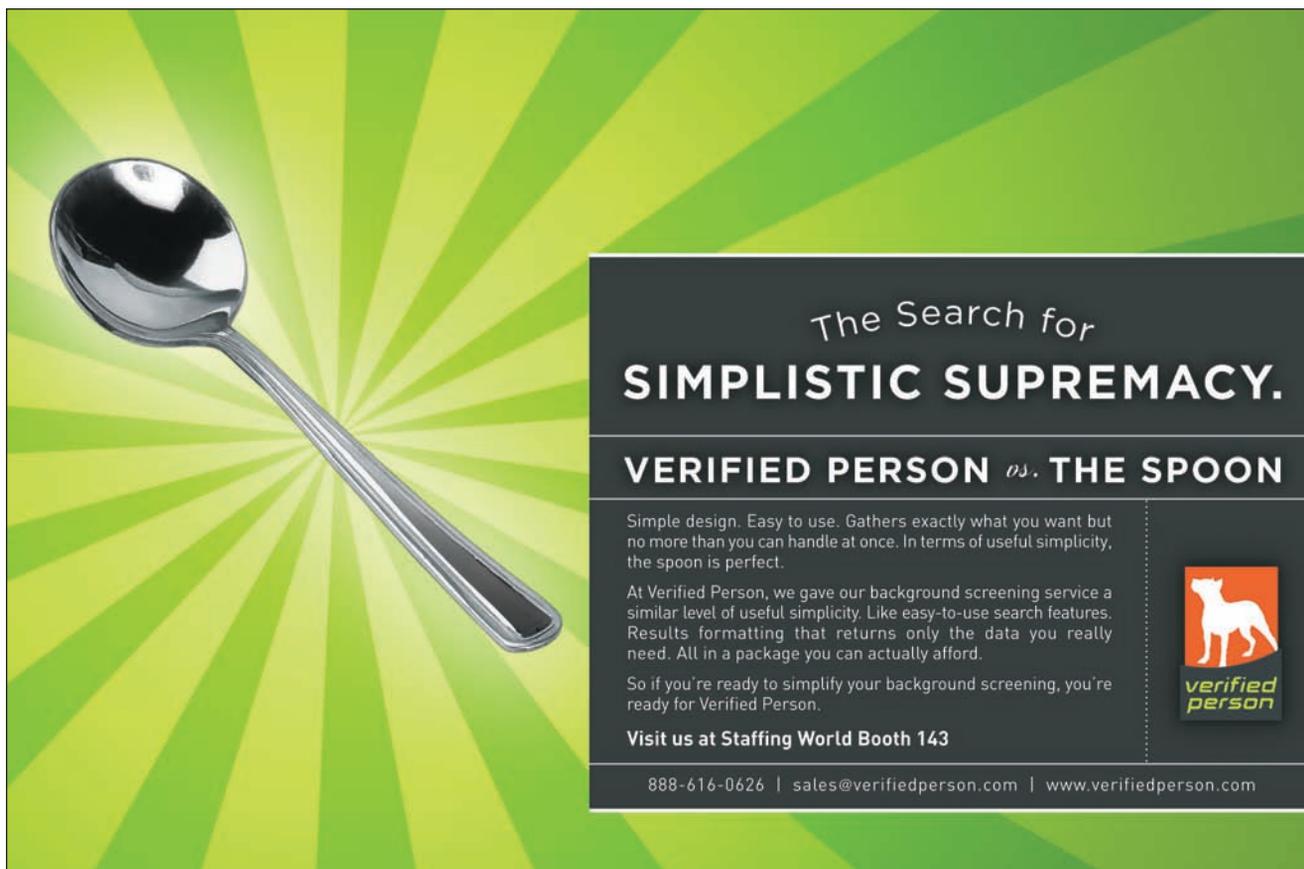
Today’s technology provides standard integration points that enable the HR manager to select best-of-breed solutions from a variety of service providers. These integration points exist throughout the process and can ultimately feed the data directly into your HRIS.

You could obtain all these services from a single provider, but the reality is that each provider has its strengths and weaknesses. Despite increasing opportunities for data and application integration, a few providers still attempt to hold you hostage to their proprietary systems and format. Some organizations still find themselves held hostage by an ATS that seeks to dictate the platform, the database, and the data structure across the applicant continuum, or an HRIS that attempts to exercise control straight through employee on-boarding and into benefits and payroll.

Proprietary systems and formats should have been tossed out the window long ago as progressive technology providers are able to conform to XML as a common data stream. When a provider says he can’t conform to this minimally acceptable option, you should run towards a friendlier service or system.

Increasingly providers of HR systems and services are voluntarily joining the HR-XML consortium to form a common sandbox while creating a more hospitable environment for vendors and customers to manage and conduct business. The HR-XML Consortium was formed to spare employers and vendors the risk and expense of having to negotiate and agree on data interchange mechanisms on an ad-hoc basis. By developing and publishing open data exchange standards based on Extensible Markup Language (XML), the consortium has set a platform standard to ensure that all software entities have the same data stream flow.

HR-XML-certified products specify the location of applicant information to simplify the stream. There will always be some minimal level of uniqueness, but the program gives technology providers the same standard platform so you don’t start from scratch each time you try to connect systems or customize data. If you are outsourcing to a partner or provider who doesn’t share this forward-thinking mindset, it might be time to find a provider willing to conform to your standards instead of the other way around.



The Search for  
**SIMPLISTIC SUPREMACY.**

**VERIFIED PERSON** *vs.* **THE SPOON**

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# Screening Buyers Weigh In

WE SURVEYED A DIVERSE ARRAY OF CLIENTS WHO OUTSOURCE TO LEADING PROVIDERS FOR THEIR FIRST-HAND INSIGHT ON SCREENING SERVICES. THE FOLLOWING ARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON WORKPLACE SCREENING.

## Most important qualities to look for in a full-service screening and workplace security provider?

**1** Accuracy

**2** Ease of Use

**3** Customer Service

**4** Timeliness

**5** Thoroughness

## What are the most important things to look for in a full-service, end-to-end screening & workplace security provider?

- Being able to provide expedient background checks, legal updates, driver's license reports, and template letters.
- Availability of checkpoints, cost, and quickness of results.
- Cost-effective, cross-country referencing on backgrounds and convenience of service.
- Reference database for our county and state, along with a significant presence nationwide. Clear and consistent billing.
- Affordable but thorough search capabilities, and I like options that are customized to the need.
- Good customer service. If I have a question about a report, I want to be able to talk to someone the same day; also a versatile and user friendly website.
- Communication and trustworthiness are the most important things I look for in full service.
- Help with complying with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations.
- First thing is reliability—both in the data they are providing to you and the company itself. Second is responsiveness to the customer's needs. Of course you also need a provider that fits your specific needs and one that has the ability to handle the quantity of information your company will send.
- Excellent customer service and a real person on the other end to help with issues.
- A 24-hour helpdesk that offers dependable results.

## What trends are most noticeable in the workplace screening and security market?

- The use of biometrics (fingerprint screening) and analytics (automating decision-making).
- Background checks for existing staff on a scheduled basis for business purposes.
- Background Investigations are requested by more clients as a requirement to win their business.
- Sharing data electronically and automatically ordering; having forms online and signing online.
- Screenings are becoming more and more complex and thorough, which is good but requires more manpower and time.
- Computer-based ordering where the employer does the entry and retrieval of info.
- One-stop shopping; end-to-end paperless processing; integrated databases; accurate database searches; and quick and reliable processing and turnaround.

## What is the biggest challenge associated with workplace screening and security?

—Use of FCRA standard release forms and FCRA regulations.

—When screening candidate backgrounds, I have received erroneous information that is about someone else and not our candidate.

—Getting the background check as soon as possible. Some candidates have several different options/offers on the table and at times the candidate goes elsewhere due to on-the-spot job decisions.

—Receiving real time changes to an employee's background checks. Example: An employee drives a company vehicle and loses his license on a weekend due to a DWI. The company runs annual DMV reports on all their drivers. The DWI employee could drive for 11 months on a revoked license without the employer knowing it.

—The decision to overlook potentially damaging traits or information simply on the desire to hire the person.

—Using several different suppliers to make sure you get all the information. Better cross referencing from the information providers would help a great deal.

—Believing that the information received covers all areas that the person has lived or worked. Intra-state information—is it available and up to date?

—There is so much fraud and identity theft out there that non-criminals are hesitant to give personal info like SSN. It's hard to convince them that the information is secure.

—Being at the mercy of so many different court systems and having the applicant in limbo sometimes for over a month waiting for results.

—Knowing what to screen for and understanding what is really being checked and what is not checked with any particular service.

# Staffing Firm Finds a Better Option In Outsourcing Screening Services

PARKER STAFFING SAYS ITS INITIAL SERVICE PROVIDER FAILED TO DELIVER. BUT ENGAGING AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION LED TO BETTER RESULTS. BY TODD OWENS, GENERAL MANAGER, SCREENING SERVICES, INTELIUS, INC.

A privately held staffing company based in Seattle, Parker Staffing Service, LLC, provides temporary, contract, and full-time work in administrative, call center, IT, IS, development, QA, healthcare IT, and sales and marketing positions. Its staffing division focuses on the Pacific Northwest, while the technical and search divisions place candidates nationwide. In 1999, Parker decided to outsource background checks on every candidate it placed. Prioritized services with its first provider included SSN verification, seven-year background checks, credit checks, and employment and education verifications, depending on a candidate's resume and client demand.

After implementation of the screening program, however, Parker Staffing noticed a number of areas in which results fell short of the company's needs, including:

■ **Access/Turnaround Time.** The vendor was in a different time zone and had inflexible business hours. Coupled with a lack of responsiveness, this caused Parker to lose entire business days for simple search and report processing.

■ **Reporting.** Parker failed to receive timely communication from its vendor about basic success indicators such as hit ratios, turnaround times, and search progress, ultimately costing the company time following up on search requests, progress, and issues.

■ **Service.** Parker was dissatisfied by the provider's lack of emphasis on service. Questions and issues consistently failed to be addressed in a timely fashion, and provider-driven issues weren't resolved with what Parker staff considered "a customer-first mentality."

As a result, the staffing firm chose to do what many other dissatisfied outsourcing buyers have done before them: switch vendors. After a thoroughly exhaustive due-diligence process that included a side-by-side test of vendors, Parker selected a new vendor to address the company's requirements for accu-

racy, responsiveness, and service.

In choosing the new vendor, Intelius, Parker Staffing sought to establish new standards in background screening service levels. To do so, the company looked for improvements in screening service, as well as the promptness of results. The company then worked with its new vendor to focus on improving the screening process.

By communicating clearly with Intelius about its previous experiences with a screening partner and identifying its priorities and pain points, Parker in cooperation with Intelius was able to establish processes and bench-

**By clearly defining its service expectations and undertaking an exhaustive due diligence effort, the company was able to markedly improve the services it received.**

marks. These processes included setting up performance reports and offering ad-hoc reporting capabilities, which delivered Parker detailed and on-demand insights into program progress, screenings completed, and results. This facilitated measurement of critical screening metrics including turnaround times and hit rates.

Implementation of the new solution was nearly immediate. Vendor availability, flexibility, and responsiveness were critical in the early stages of the relationship, and ensured that Intelius identified and met Parker's evolving needs to the company's satisfaction.

## A BETTER RESULT

Since making the change, Parker Staffing has consistently reported a significant improvement in nearly every aspect of its screening program.

■ **Turnaround.** Significant improvements were noted in turnaround time—64 percent of all search results in the first three months

were returned in fewer than 24 hours. During the holidays, a time of particularly high volume, credit checks were often returned in less than 30 minutes. Parker also reported saving 15 to 20 minutes per check in management time—a significant savings for an organization performing hundreds of checks each month.

■ **Reporting.** Parker management receives regular performance reports and has the option to leverage Intelius' ad-hoc reporting capabilities, gathering additional reporting data at any time from anywhere.

■ **Cost Efficiency.** While financial savings were

not a primary driver for Parker's decision to replace its vendor, the company saw a reduction in spend, with better hit rates and more accurate results upon implementation of Intelius.

■ **Quality of Service.** Parker also reported dramatic improvements in service following the switch. Improvements included direct access to account management, immediate responsiveness to questions or issues, and periodic meetings with the vendor to ensure Parker's screening program is running at peak efficiency and in line with its priorities and expectations.

Parker Staffing's experience with outsourced background screening reflects other buyer success stories in today's maturing outsourcing market. By clearly defining its service expectations and undertaking an exhaustive due diligence effort, the company was able to markedly improve the services it received, demonstrating that not all screening services are alike—and finding the right one takes a bit of effort. HRO

# Provider Aids Sutter Health with Policy and Compliance Support

IN AN END-TO-END SERVICE RELATIONSHIP, A CALIFORNIA HOSPITAL CHAIN CONSOLIDATES SCREENING SERVICE VENDORS AND DISCOVERS THAT A PARTNERSHIP WITH A SINGLE PROVIDER CAN LEAD TO GREATER BENEFITS.

BY CAROLYN BEGHIN, DIRECTOR OF HR, SUTTER HEALTH

Human Resources has evolved over the years as we've placed greater emphasis on strategic communications and explored new ways to work more efficiently. Today, we're using data and metrics to manage our work, and we're including a branding strategy to help attract and retain the very best employees.

For us, the HR leaders at Sutter Health, a not-for-profit network of 26 community-based hospitals and physician organizations throughout Northern California that employs more than 38,000, these evolutionary trends have never been more true.

The key to great HR is being able to communicate clearly and efficiently with each party involved in a hiring transaction. And with close to 10,000 new hires being screened yearly, it seems as if the company has com-

**Our biggest concerns were inconsistencies in the overall processes and making sure that those processes complied with hiring laws, as well as the program cost.**

munications down to a fine science. "It's all about building relationships with our internal and external customers," said Keith Vencel, HR product manager at Sutter Health.

There was a time when Sutter Health used more than a dozen different vendors to process background screening requests, causing workload backlogs and vast inconsistencies in reporting.

"We had close to a dozen different companies conducting employee investigations using a dozen different processes and providing analyses in a dozen different formats," Vencel recalled. "From an economies of scale standpoint, we were losing out in terms of costs, quality, and time."

Our biggest concerns were inconsistencies in the overall processes, making sure that those processes complied with hiring laws, and the program cost.

After reviewing the system, a team of HR professionals and our legal staff determined that our overall return on investment in the screening process had to involve a reduction in cost per case, reduction in the average turnaround time, and complete standardization of the process.

## CONSOLIDATING VENDORS

After vetting a number of providers, Sutter Health chose Corporate Screening Services to take a strong business partnership role and assist us in revolutionizing our system, revamping our screening policies, educat-

ing our staff, revising documentation standards, and, finally, securing a purchasing relationship with our affiliates.

That task was not simple. First, Sutter contracted Corporate Screening for a three-year agreement, which called for the provider to reduce costs per case, cut the average turnaround time from 12 to four days, work closely with Sutter's risk-management team, and educate staff on FCRA/CCRAA/ICRAAA (Federal and California regulation) issues.

Compliance with FCRA/CCRAA/ICRAAA required in-depth review and consultation. Working with Sutter Health's legal and risk-management departments on inter-

pretive issues and various challenges that accompanied the federal and state law changes, the two organizations developed new screening guidelines to satisfy federal and California standards.

Through that effort, we were able to modify our policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the laws.

Corporate Screening further developed investigative standards for each position, ranging from housekeeping to medical staff, revised documentation to ensure the right information accompanied investigation requests (which greatly reduced turnaround time), and established an internal program to ensure legal compliance in every facet of the background-checking process.

## AN ANALYTICAL SOLUTION

Corporate Screening analyzed our system, developed processes to streamline that system, and cultivated relationships with Sutter Health affiliates to implement those agreed-upon processes. It collaborated with our HR team and Sutter Health affiliates on the management end, and transformed an inconsistent, expensive operation into a streamlined process.

Much of Sutter Health's recent success in background investigations resulted from a close working relationship with our sole screening vendor. We surveyed our HR leadership group system-wide, and Corporate Screening has received very high marks in the areas of quality, responsiveness turnaround, reporting, and access to information. This partnership certainly has worked to our advantage.

Corporate Screening has since opened an office in California with a full-time employee to serve Sutter Health. As a result, the nature of our screening relationship has changed from being vendor-client to a true partnership. 