

Background screening - what to do and what not to do

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Advice on the do's and don'ts of job hunting can be found in abundance online and while extremely pertinent for job seekers, there is great value in recruiters and hiring managers also understanding what they should or should not do during the recruitment process.

- At the very start of every recruitment effort, it is absolutely important to create a comprehensive job specification and advertisement, says Rudi Kruger, General Manager of LexisNexis Data Services. "Don't discriminate, be vague or offer limited information in the job advert as unspecific adverts will attract a multitude of applicants, many of whom may be taking a chance. Instead, publish a concise yet comprehensive advert so that job seekers are informed before deciding to apply," said Kruger.
- Don't be inconsistent when reviewing job applications and shortlisting candidates for interview. "Instead, afford each candidate equal opportunity, time and consideration to ensure you are seeing the complete picture," said Kruger.
- Once candidates are selected, it is important to get in touch with their past employers and review referrals and testimonials. While referrals are highly valuable, remember they cannot be relied upon 100 percent as several factors such as low recall or bias could render the process misleading and unreliable. "It is possible for past employers to want to restrict the amount of information they provide to avoid legal action. It is also common for managers to impose bias based on personal experience of their referral, whether positive or negative, and this jeopardises the overall subjectivity of the process, so don't rely on referrals as your only background check," said Kruger.
- Don't avoid running a background check no matter how promising a candidate may seem. You have to always look out for red flags. "Common red flags to pay attention to include regular job changes, which points to instability or incompetence, while candidates with lengthy and unexplained career gaps could be a cause for concern. Broad and generic responsibilities are also a red flag to look out for. More serious red flags include criminal records, suspicious qualifications and poor credit records," said Kruger.
- Invest in expert help. "When looking to add on any candidate for any position, no matter the company, it is imperative to ensure the process is designed to assess their integrity in addition to their ability to do the job," said Kruger. "Ensuring this means an investment of time as well as resources like screening tools. The benefits of complete background checks include verification of academic qualifications, criminal activity, residency, professional memberships and credit history. Be sure to obtain consent for checks into criminal records, credit reports, qualifications and identity verifications," said Kruger.



Rudi Kruger

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