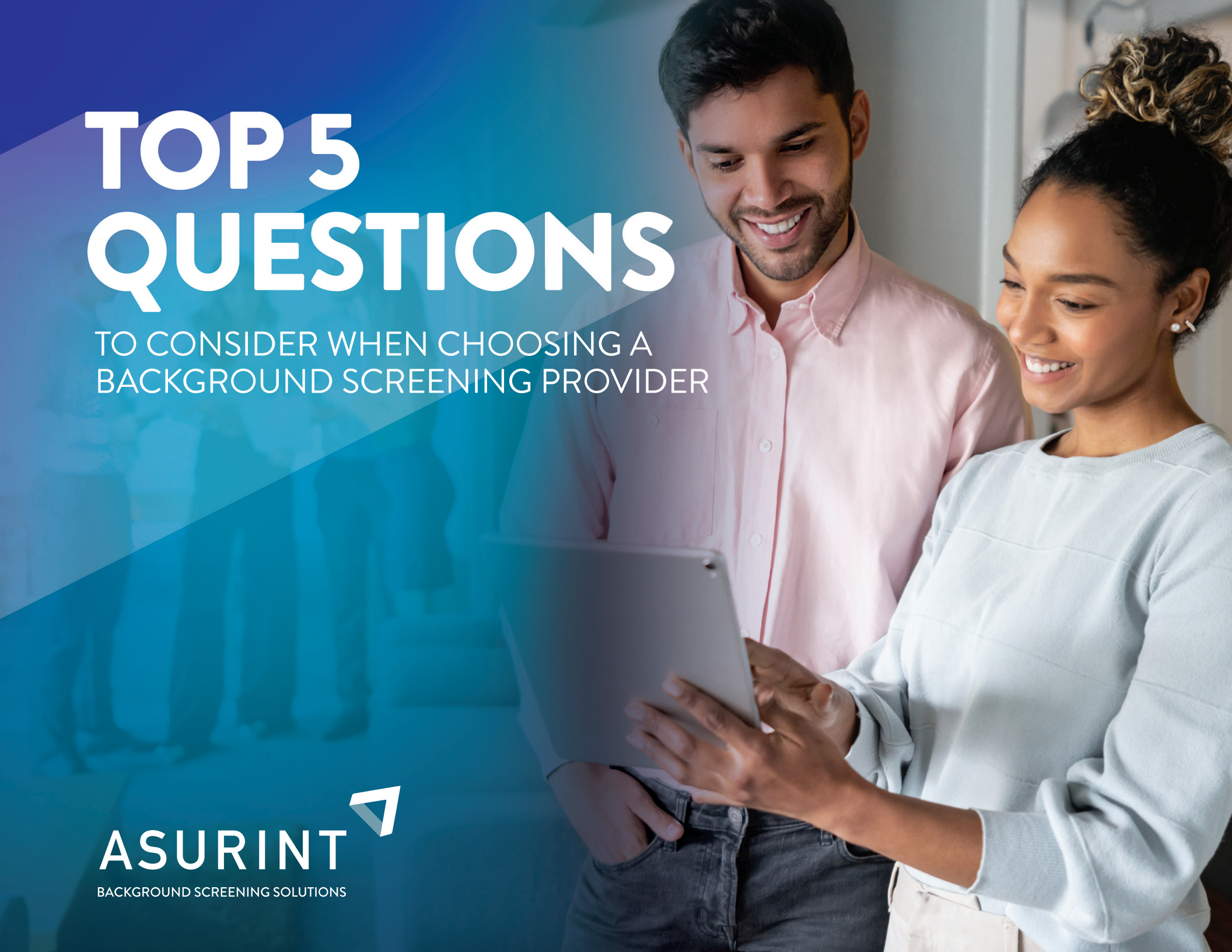
TOP 5 QUESTIONS

TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A BACKGROUND SCREENING PROVIDER



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BACKGROUND SCREENING SOLUTIONS

The majority of employers today perform background investigations of some type, according to the Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA).

All background checks aren't created equal, however. Whether you're seeking to improve existing talent acquisition capabilities or are among the employers introducing a new background search policy, it's vital to identify the right partner for background checks.

With so many options on the market, the quest for the best-fit background screening provider can seem overwhelming at first. To help cut through the clutter, we've compiled five basic questions, which home in on the central issues related to background checks and can help any organization identify the companies most capable of meeting their needs.

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HOW DOES THE COMPANY EVALUATE SPEED?

One of the big pain points in background investigations is turnaround time. Recruiters and hiring managers despise losing candidates because they couldn't complete the requisite background search quickly enough. Background check providers know how important this factor is to prospective customers, so everybody in the industry claims to be the fastest.

It's essential, therefore, to check how each provider measures speed. In some cases, incumbents are hyping improvements over their old statistics, while other background check providers compare themselves against straw-man examples.

Their claims don't supply any meaningful information about the competitive landscape.

Far better estimates use actual studies of background searches including head-to-head trials, and not just ones based on a few cherry-picked records. Comparisons of investigations run on many hundreds of individuals are the best benchmark. Superior results indicate real speed in real screening scenarios.

It can also be helpful to subject providers' speed claims to a commonsense review. How are they actually accelerating the process? For example:

- **Is there automation involved?** When decision engines and other technologies take on key tasks, it improves speed and consistency over manual processes.
- **Can adjudications be automated?** Systems that enable HR to upload and apply position-specific hiring matrices will spare adjudicators the time-consuming and error-prone process of manually comparing results with a hiring matrix. Instead, they can identify specific reports to evaluate the hiring decision in an efficient, time-saving manner.
- **Can they quickly tell which candidates are clear without additional research?** This is a great feature, and it's well worth looking for providers delivering instant clears in the most jurisdictions possible.
- **Is the system easy to use?** The more rapidly HR personnel can order the right search and be alerted when the results are available, the faster they can take action.

Speed isn't one thing, it's many things—so be on the lookout for a provider optimizing every detail to accelerate the process for clients.

COMPARISONS OF INVESTIGATIONS RUN ON MANY HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS ARE THE BEST BENCHMARK. SUPERIOR RESULTS INDICATE REAL SPEED IN REAL SCREENING SCENARIOS.

CAN THE PROVIDER HELP KEEP MY TEAM COMPLIANT?

Compliance in the background search arena is complex and rapidly evolving across the United States. Any misstep can risk litigation, reputation damage, hiring problems, and financial consequences. It's vital to remain constantly up-to-date on the applicable rules but can be very difficult to do so if you're not consistently monitoring the laws.

Not only do federal regulations and agency guidance change, voluminous quantities of state legislation and local ordinances can affect screening policy in different jurisdictions across the nation. Companies with global reach also need to stay within the legal lines in other countries and territories, which only adds to the compliance challenge.

Tapping outside expertise is the logical solution. Given the high stakes involved, finding a background search provider with deep knowledge of the legal considerations and extensive investment in compliance expertise must be a priority. Things to look for include:

RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS

Look for background check providers approved and/or certified by such organizations as PBSA and the EU-US and Swiss-US Privacy Shield Frameworks. The PBSA Accreditation program in particular establishes high standards for background screening providers evaluating several factors including information security, client education, Fair Credit Reporting Act compliance and other important business practices.

AN IN-HOUSE LEGAL AND COMPLIANCE TEAM

Some providers may skimp on compliance, only bringing in specialized counsel occasionally to give their processes and technology systems a quick once-over. This isn't enough in today's litigious environment. Employers should seek background check providers that invest in dedicated legal and compliance teams.

COMPLIANCE INTEGRATED WITH THE TECHNOLOGY

The greatest level of confidence comes from having a compliance-focused background investigation system, which consistently applies federal, state, and local requirements. This feature helps ensure employers receive only those records reportable under an applicable law.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND EXPERT AVAILABILITY

Understanding current compliance issues is helpful in informing an organization on what to take action on the broadest scale. From the use of social media to the changing marijuana landscape, it's important to know what rules apply but also why certain sensitivities exist. This can help HR set effective candidate screening policies aligned with both legal and cultural considerations. A good background search provider will offer educational materials, proactive updates, and access to experts who can answer the toughest compliance questions.

THE RIGHT "FEET ON THE STREET"

This capability can be necessary for domestic or international background searches, especially in locations where digitization of court records and other resources is limited. Employers should make sure they engage a provider who uses only experienced, fully vetted partners who understand the processes and requirements for checking information repositories in their geographical areas of responsibility.

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WHERE DOES THE DATA COME FROM?

Using a background search system should be equivalent to heading to the courthouse and pulling records directly. With over 3,000 counties in the U.S., many with multiple court systems, enormous effort is required to achieve such seamless access to data on a nationwide scale.

TOP-TIER PROVIDERS RELY ON:

- **Court relationships.** Depending on the jurisdiction, many courts will work directly with select background check providers to deliver data updates. Immense relationship-building is required to establish such connections with state and local court systems, and only a few background search providers can boast significant coverage across the country.
- **Researchers.** Research professionals are frequently required to review court filings at the more than 3,800 courthouses in person. They should be experienced and must conduct themselves in accordance with all federal and state guidelines on the delivery of criminal case information. It's vital that background search providers work with partners who are specially trained to review court records for employment purposes, and background check providers must constantly evaluate and verify their background search performance.
- **Technical experts.** In addition to direct feeds, some courts maintain public access websites, from which background search providers can pull information using custom-built web crawlers. Appropriate measures must be taken to collect, confirm, update, and maintain such data integrations for inclusion in background search results.
- **Quality assurance methods.** These must include in-depth vetting and oversight of all researchers in the provider's network, using a continually updated scorecard and frequent spot checks of their search accuracy. Technical integrations, including data uploads and information gleaned from web crawling, must be subject to intense testing as well.

Managing primary data resources is a challenge and building the data foundation for powerful background searches is job that's never finished. The provider must constantly refresh records, apply quality assurance measures, and test systems over and over again.

The results, however, are worth the effort. High-quality data assets enable powerful features like "instant clears" and search automation, which accelerate background investigations. Well managed data also leads to greater accuracy rates allowing candidates to get to work faster.

DOES THE SYSTEM INTEGRATE WITH MY ATS?

For hiring managers, the applicant tracking system (ATS) is the central hub for the entire process, from the moment a candidate makes contact through the decision, offer, and onboarding phases. It is almost impossible to overstate the value of a background search solution integrating seamlessly with the ATS.

Performing background checks within the ATS enables staff to request appropriate investigations and track the status within the same tool they use for other functions. This makes running a background screen a more natural part of the daily workflow.

Moreover, working within the ATS to vet candidates facilitates communication and helps prevent errors. Required candidate data, such as full name and social security number, can be pulled from the ATS database, eliminating the need for time-consuming re-entry or contacting candidates to ask that they fill out more online forms. At a time when job prospects are vetting potential employers as thoroughly as employers are vetting them, giving the right impression—including a streamlined, organized, and non-bureaucratic hiring success.

There are two main ways providers can offer ATS integrations and employers should determine their needs in advance of any background check provider search.

1. **Integration with off-the-shelf ATS solutions.** Many background check providers have existing integrations with popular ATS products. Finding an appropriate provider is as easy as checking with the ATS vendor for a list of existing partnerships.
2. **Custom integration.** For an organization with a homegrown ATS or a highly customized product variant, integration is still possible.

There are background search solutions architected specifically for flexibility. In these cases, involving the IT team in selecting a provider is often helpful, but employers may find the complexities and price point for custom integrations less daunting than expected.

Background search integration options exist for nearly every ATS. The ability to tap or create a seamless candidate investigation workflow should, therefore, be a prerequisite for any background check provider partnership.

WILL I GET QUALITY SUPPORT WHEN I NEED IT?

Employers' needs and preferences for training and support vary widely, but some background screening providers offer only "one size fits all," which typically serves no organization very well. Limited support can erode the value of an employer's investment, leaving staff ill prepared to operate the platform, struggling to set up specific searches and templates, unable to obtain the reports they most need, or at a loss when key questions come up.

The best way to minimize risk is to find a background search provider capable of tailoring the support experience to your requirements, now and in the future. This takes due diligence. Customers must dig deeply into each provider's training, support team composition, and more. Consider asking things like:

- Is training provided as part of the package? What does it entail?
- Can the provider deliver customized training on your terms, whether remotely or in-person?
- How will additional questions and support needs be handled, once staff is using the solution?
- How long will it take to get answers? Can staff expect to have inquiries answered within moments, or is there a long wait time or escalation procedure involved? Can you access individuals to help implement specific searches, for example a one-off investigation in a foreign international jurisdiction your team is unfamiliar with?
- What resources will be on the client services team? Will you have an account manager? Will you have access to experts who understand compliance? Can you put your IT personnel in touch with theirs to resolve integration issues that may arise?

Any background search provider worth dealing with should be able to communicate on your terms and in your timeframes. This should include a wide window of availability for live answers of all support calls, whether you're in New York City or overlooking the Pacific. Secure chat and email should also be options, and click-to-chat within your own ATS can be especially convenient.

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GETTING STARTED
BUILDING YOUR SEARCH PROFILES

SUMMARY

For employers to identify the best background search partner and get the most out of their investment in this critical HR tool, procurement teams should probe each prospective partner on five key issues:

Speed

Compliance

Data

ATS Integration

Support

These points won't address every element of due diligence to be covered during a thorough provider vetting and contracting process, but they will guide you toward a short list of prospects and a quality final decision.

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CONSULT
THE
EXPERTS
Asurint is innovating the background screening industry. Our powerful, customizable technology—backed by subject matter experts and personalized assistance—helps employers hire the right candidates every time, and faster than ever before.
Our clients leverage faster background checks to reduce manual workloads, minimize compliance risk, promote a safer workplace, and drive insights to boost hiring and recruitment success without sacrificing comprehensive, complete records. From the first candidate interaction to the final hiring decision, Asurint helps HR professionals get what they desire—to achieve a streamlined process and seamless candidate experience.
Learn more at **www.asurint.com**
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