

A Guide to Help Background Screening Companies Select a Technology Platform Partner



It is widely accepted that the backbone of a successful background screening program is dependent on having an effective technology platform. The purpose of this Guide is to help you to identify some of the major criteria that you should consider when embarking on a campaign to select a technology provider.

We respect that every organization is different and that there is no ‘one process’ that will fit each organization’s needs, however, despite this reality there are some core items that every selection plan must consider. Our goal is not to help you find the perfect technology platform, but more importantly to fine the perfect technology platform that fits your organization’s needs.



Following Steven Covey advice, “First Things, First,” one of the first things you must do is to define your strategy, objectives, and goals. No technology solution will be successful unless you know what you want to achieve and how you will measure success. Before you start to build a list of potential suppliers, make sure you have clear objectives that have been built on supporting your organization’s operations strategy and that the key stakeholders have bought into the strategy. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that you know what your stakeholder needs are without talking to them. To this end, many organizations form a development team that includes key stakeholders to ensure their input throughout the process. This is key to keeping the project on point regarding supporting the business goals and building buy-in.

Also, keep in mind, that the driving force for selecting a technology platform is to be able to meet your customers’ needs. Every background checking company that expects to succeed in the future must be locked in on providing what the marketplace is demanding. Today, employers are focused on faster, more accurate

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Then carefully identify and layout out the tasks you want the technology to support. This should become your road map for identifying a technology provider to meet your needs.

KEY SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

Automation

The implementation of automation improves the efficiency, reliability, and speed of many tasks by eliminating manual tasks like entering each applicant’s information, calling to verify each reference and previous employer, informing employer and applicant of status, etc.

Great systems will also increase operational efficiency by providing time saving tools and improving the quality of data output.

Essential automation in the background checking process includes gathering, storing, populating applicant information across different forms, data bases and processes while ensuring compliance with internal



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policies, security, privacy, and legal requirements. Advances in technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) will further enhance automated processes by facilitating reviewing and cross-referencing of vast amounts of data with incredible speed, providing a far more expansive and accurate background check. An example is AI will make it easier than ever to cross-reference different names associated with one person such as a nickname, suffix, maiden name, or any other changes in a subject's name. This is especially important to ensure full transparency and accuracy in reporting results.

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AI algorithms running within a background check software have a synergistic effect, maximizing the software's capability by combining it with the machine learning aspect of AI. When the background check software is AI-powered, the benefits are substantially increased.

In addition to AI, advances in 'Big Data' and Quantum computing will expand automation's capabilities by allowing the review of large volumes of data which is direly needed in the background screening process as the availability of an ever-expanding mass of online information continues to grow. In addition, these technologies will also give you the capability to analyze both structured and unstructured data which will further expand the analysis capability.

Structured data is explicit data listed in legal dockets, corporate registries, regulatory listings, and other categorized records. It consists of clearly defined data types with patterns that make them easily searchable, like an employment application with fields like name, address, dates, etc.

Unstructured data is not as handily searchable, including formats like audio, video, web articles, and social media postings. This type of data is of particular importance when it comes to background check software, as the technology must be able to derive meaning and make connections within a text. For instance, if a job candidate appears in a social media post that raises a red flag, the algorithms need to be capable of identifying the text in the post that is problematic.



Predictive Technology

Predictive technology applied to background screening is a cutting-edge application of technology. The basic concept is that a combination of AI and machine learning can take the information found in a person's background and make relatively accurate predictions of future behavior.

The software, of which there are already numerous brands, identify potentially risky behavior and assess the risk it poses in various scenarios. For example, the predictive analysis will be different for someone investigating a potential childcare provider than it would be for someone investigating the same person as a potential machine-operator in a factory.

Predictive technology has run into substantial push-back over concerns about bias and accuracy. Though the companies marketing predictive technology tout it as nothing more than a tool to alert potential employers to possible issues, the potential

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for abuse in how the "predictions" are used remains. Time and technology, march forward though, and predictive technology seems destined to remain.

Continuous Screening and Monitoring

People change, as do life circumstances, meaning their background checks change over time as well. Many background screening tools now use continuous screening and monitoring to end-users of arrest, incarceration, driving violations, etc. to alert them of potential issues.

Some questions to consider asking prospective suppliers about their automation capabilities:

- What features should you expect from the supplier's technology when it comes to automation?
- Does the supplier have smart tools that recommend the best background searches to perform?
- Does the supplier's system have the capability to scan resumes and compare them to social media results to spot inconsistencies?
- Does the supplier's system have the capability to capture the computer IP addresses of information that is supposed to be coming from job references – to make sure the “references” aren't actually the applicant.
- Does your system have the capability to gather, store, and populate applicant information across different forms and processes.
- Does the supplier's system have the capability to gather investigative reports like job performance, reason for termination, personal references, etc.
- Does your system have innovative, secure, compliant verification solutions?
- Does the provider have the capability to streamline processes and workflows, improving time-to-fill?
- Does the supplier's system have the capability to help with onboarding activities like e-verify and tracking I-9 status?
- Does the supplier's system include preliminary scoring with hiring matrices and adjudication included?
- Please explain how you are applying AI.
- Please explain your use of Big data, structured and unstructured data.

USER EXPERIENCE

User experience relates to the ease with which the end-user's personnel is able to input the applicant's basic information as well as their ability to easily view and understand final results. The quality of the user experience is paramount in determining the end-users satisfaction with the software. If the background check cannot be easily understood or takes a long time to review and discern the risks, then satisfaction is diminished.

Final reports must be designed with readability and understandability in mind to meet the end-users needs. A software application with an intuitive, interactive interface makes information easier to manage and interpret.

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When looking for background check software that has a well-designed interface, ask:

- Is the background check accessible from any device (i.e. laptops, mobile phones, tablets, etc.)?
- Can one login allow access for all applicant functionality?
- Do I have direct access to original sources and content to see where the information was taken from?
- Is there a clear system of flags that signal levels of risk (red, yellow, informational) to enable rapid focus on priority information?
- Is there a dashboard with a search engine where I can easily browse through the different background checks that have been ordered?
- Explain how using your platform will help us become more efficient in our operations
- Is the system intuitive enough for personnel to use so that it requires little to no training?
- Is a Candidate Relationship Management system available?
- What kind of onboarding support do you provide? What is the process? Who will we work with?
- What kind of on-going support do you provide as my business grows, e.g., training, coaching, etc.?
- Describe your customer support process including technical support. Hours when support is available, method of communication, e.g., on-line chat, telephone, email, etc.
- Does the supplier's final report have an intuitive design and interactive interface that makes it easy to read, understand and manage information.
- Does the supplier enable users to interact with the results and involve their team members by including collaborative features such as a comments section on each area of the report?
- Does the supplier provide a one-stop-shop experience (dashboard) that allows team members to view and manage the report all in one place including backlinks to specific data sources and original documents, so you have all the information at your fingertips?
- Does the supplier provide simplified invoicing and invoice export (to excel or CSV) capability? And does the supplier's reports provide cost details for every screening report for faster invoice reconciliation and transparency for total screening cost?

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

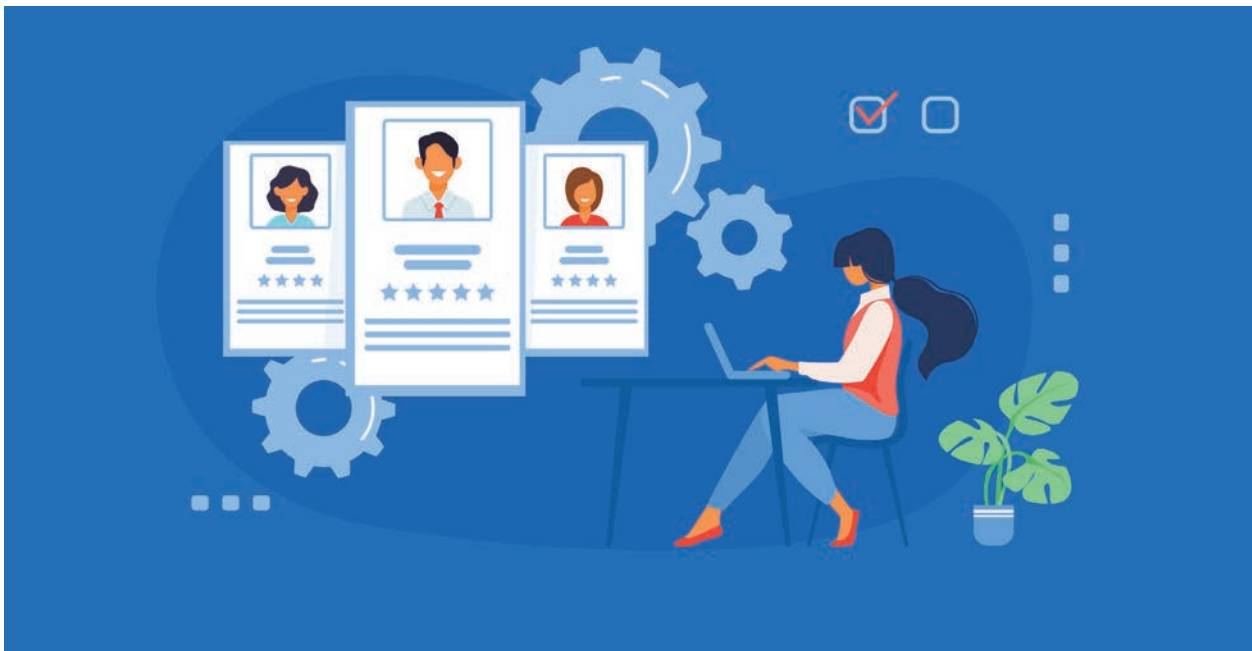
The Candidate Experience has emerged as a major factor that employers are using to enhance the positive nature of the experience that candidates undergo while interfacing with entire hiring process including the background checking process. Key attributes include the applicant's ease in understanding requirement, providing required information, elimination of need to enter redundant information, ability to edit information and provide for a smooth and efficient process.



Instructions must be designed with readability and understandability in mind. A software application with an intuitive, interactive interface makes information easier to manage and interpret.

Explain how your services and product supports improving candidate experience:

- Is the system intuitive enough for applicants to quickly be able to understand and use?
- Does your system have the capabilities to initiate the background check by texting the candidate?
- Does your system let applicants enter their own information – from anywhere?
- Does your system allow CRA, clients and candidate to track progress of an in-process screening, 24/7?
- Can candidates save in-progress applications, manage their details and profiles, and sign up for alerts via any device?
- What's the mobile experience like for applicants?
- Do candidates have the ability to review their results and have the ability to take corrective action, if needed?
- Does your system give candidates the ability to control how their data will be used?
- Do you offer online or in-person support for candidates?



ATS/INTEGRATIONS

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) have become an essential requirement of the background checking process by allowing end-users to streamline their workflow, eliminate duplication of data entry tasks and monitor candidates as they move through the job application process. Integrations with these systems also give the user a view of all applicant information in one place.

This level of coordinated workflow automation is made possible by the strength of a technology platform's API/XML gateway, giving users the ability to connect to a wide range of ATS partners.

In order to maximize your investment, it is paramount that you find a background check software partner who provides you with the following:

- An extensive network of existing integrated ATS/PMS partners,
- IT resources dedicated to the task of new partner development.
- What should a successful integration process look like? How much work can I expect during implementation?
- A partner with solid financial footing, capable of making the required investment,
- A robust, feature-rich API,
- Scalable gateway capable of handling high level throughput,
- How do you integrate with existing ATS and HRIS?
- What are the average set-up times?
- Is there any added cost or fee? If so, what are the costs or fees?
- Details on level of integration support,
- Is there a product offering built into the integration that will allow my company to validate a candidate's identity?
- Is there an additional cost to develop the integration? Does the supplier add monthly, annual or transaction based costs for enablement and use of ATS integration?

SECURITY

Needless to say the background checking process is heavily focused on data gathering and distribution of personally identifying information (PII) which means in today's privacy focused world ensuring that your data is secure is of paramount importance. With access to such private information comes rigorous security standards—both to prevent unauthorized access to PII and to avert the loss or destruction of critical business data. When deciding on a technology partner, it's crucial to understand what measures are in place to ensure your data is secure. Some of the factors to look for include the following:

System Redundancy

Make sure your technology partner has appropriate redundancies in place, including the following:

- Multiple independent application and database servers
- Real-time data replication, both locally and off-site/out-of-region
- Failsafe power, HVAC, and utility systems
- Diverse upstream Internet Service Providers
- On-site security, operations, and emergency response staff
- High availability failover throughout the technology stack
- Automated suppression systems



Multi-factor Authentication

Multi-factor authentication is a de facto industry standard and accepted best practice for login security. It creates an extra layer of protection for your personal information and should be included in security protocols.

Data Encryption

Encryption is a must for all technology partners as it is the basic insurance that your data is protected at all times. The two aspects of encryption to be aware of are encrypting data in motion and encrypting data at rest.

Look for a technology partner that provides both as part of their security offerings.

Continuous System Monitoring

Does the supplier continuously monitor their system – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year?

Does the supplier proactively protect their system with the following?

- Intrusion detection and prevention tools
- On-site security, operations, and emergency response staff
- Cameras and video archiving throughout facilities
- Active analysis of network traffic

Have the supplier explain how they safeguard and monitor all staff who may have access to your sensitive data including limiting staff access to only those systems necessary for each person to fulfill their responsibilities.

Comprehensive Security Compliance

It is an absolute necessity that your technology partner adheres to compliance and industry best practices.

Have the supplier identify the independent, third-party compliance certifications they have obtained.

SCALABILITY AND CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Workloads in the background screening industry are fluid and to meet clients' needs it is important that technology providers offer are able to be agile in providing scalability and reliability.

In an effort to address this in today's evolving technology market, many software providers are transitioning away from traditional data centers to cloud-based solutions. This transition has allowed technology partners to put greater focus on flexibility, functionality, costs, and demand fluctuations.

In order for you to ensure you get the most out of your investment, look for the following when

- Cloud-based solutions
- Industry leading uptime
- Server, storage & network virtualization capabilities
- Real time data replication and disaster recovery
- Redundant and secure storage and distribution channels
- Competitive pricing

Support of Marketing and Branding

Look for a technology partner that can assist with the following:

- Setting your color scheme and theme
- Adding your logo
- Using your fonts
- Creating custom report layouts

Your Domain

Technology partners should provide a login portal, placed directly on your marketing site. By creating this single access point, you can help create the type of user-friendly brand your clients are looking for. This functionality also assists in creating a singular focus on your company, rather than that of your technology partner.

Your Workflow

Customize more than just aesthetics by tailoring your functionality and workflow. You should be able to edit, organize and create the following:

- Reports
- Searches
- Disclosures
- Invoices
- Orders
- Your Solutions

CRA's often oversee various brands or market segments under their umbrella of offerings. Provide your clients with the flavor that best suits their needs. Choose a background screening partner that allows you to represent multiple brands for your unique business model.

Legal Compliance

The background checking process is very litigious. Consequently, it is essential that you choose a provider that uses best practices and adheres to all relevant legal requirements established for the background checking process both at the local, state and federal level.

- Ask the supplier to explain their process for ensuring compliance with all appropriate legal requirements.



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- Does the supplier have built-in compliance for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines and anti-discrimination laws, Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), Ban-the-Box, etc.
- Does the supplier have an online consent and dispute processes?
- Does the supplier have adverse action automation/assistance?
- Does the supplier have the capability to redact

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. What is the supplier's policy on you using multiple vendors? What limitations do they place on using other vendors?
2. How do you measure and monitor reliability?
3. Do you have any white label documentation that I can provide to my end-user?
4. Do have any new features or releases planned in the next several months? If so, when do you expect them to be released and describe their functionality.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As we mentioned in the beginning, having a successful background screening program is dependent on having an effective technology platform and having a comprehensive, well thought out plan on ‘how to’ select technology platform provider is essential.

In this Guide we have identified many of the major criteria that you should consider when embarking on a campaign to select a technology provider. While each company’s selection process will differ based on their unique requirements, we have presented many of the core items that every selection plan must consider.

This Guide helps to identify the work that is necessary prior to making a list of potential providers. The hard work is to define your strategy, objectives, and goals, and ensure that your selection strategy is been built on supporting your organization’s operations strategy and that the key stakeholders have

bought into the strategy. We encourage you to form a development team that includes key stakeholders to ensure their input throughout the process. This is key to keeping the project on point regarding supporting the business goals and building buy-in.

Never lose sight of your purpose in selecting a technology platform is to be able to meet your customers’ needs. Every background checking company that expects to succeed in the future must be locked in on providing what the marketplace is demanding. Today, employers are focused on faster, more accurate and secure information that is compliant with prevailing privacy standards.

In closing, remember the words of Ben Franklin, the infamous inventor who said, “even a man of ordinary means can accomplish great things with a well thought out plan.” The concept of having a well thought out plan is one that should remain embedded in your thought process throughout your initiative to select a technology platform provider.

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