



FIVE MISTAKES ON BACKGROUND CHECKS THAT CAN PUT YOUR COMPANY AT RISK

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At a time when so many carriers are desperate for drivers it's tempting to skip the background check or loosen your standards. That's not a good idea, according to Unna Edmonds, President, Owner and Operator of [Premier Background Screening Services](#), LLC in Tomball, TX. "While everyone is in a hurry to get drivers on the road these days, it can be a costly mistake to hire people without a background check or wait until after you start their training or put them on the road," she says. "You open the door to potential problems. In addition, if you start their training before the background check, you could be spending time and money training them and end up not being able to use them."

Background checks allow you to valid that a candidate has the qualifications to do the job and does not have a work or life history that could signal potentially bad behavior. These checks should be a critical part of the process of bringing in any new drivers. "A strong background screening program should be part of an overall systematic and well-designed hiring process that is focused on making the best possible hiring decision to bring the right talent into the organization," according to Edmonds. "By performing a background screen, you reduce your liability from these relationships and start them off on the right foot."

She lists the most common mistakes carriers make:

1. Neglecting to get release forms before running a check
2. Putting the driver to work before doing a background check
3. Not giving candidates the chance to correct background check mistakes
4. Turning to social media to vet a driver
5. Doing a check without the help of a professional employee background check service.

NEGLECTING TO GET A RELEASE FORM BEFORE RUNNING A CHECK This is the most common mistake carriers make involving background checks according to Edmonds. “One of the most important regulations from the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) is that you obtain permission to run a background check,” she says. She cites Section 604(b)(2) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act that says “...a person may not procure a consumer report... for employment purposes with respect to any consumer, unless— 1. a clear and conspicuous disclosure has been made in writing to the consumer at any time before the report is procured...in a document that consists solely of the disclosure, that a consumer report may be obtained for employment purposes; and 2. consumer has authorized in writing...the procurement of the report by that person.” Edmonds simplifies it this way: “You must have your applicant complete and sign a release giving you permission to run a background check. In addition, you should provide the form to the applicant as a document that is separate from the application.”

PUTTING THE DRIVER TO WORK BEFORE DOING A BACKGROUND CHECK Edmonds cautions against trying to shortcut the process by getting a driver on the road before doing a background check, MVR and drug test. “It costs more money to rehire and train after a troubling report comes back than it does to wait,” she advises.

NOT GIVING CANDIDATES THE CHANCE TO CORRECT BACKGROUND CHECK MISTAKES When you’re eager to make a hiring decision, it’s easy to look at a background check report as the ultimate key to a candidate’s readiness. “Don’t look at the report as if it answers a yes-or-no question,” she cautions. “Are there any blemishes on the applicant’s record? If yes, does that mean they are automatically out? If no, are they automatically in? The problem is that pre-employment background checks cannot tell the whole story. An excellent hire might happen to have a rough patch in their history. Or a candidate could have an explanation that makes their criminal record look a little less shocking. In fact, this is one reason FCRA requirements dictate that you must notify applicants about the results of their background checks. Candidates deserve to know what you know. And you might both benefit when the candidate has an opportunity to explain themselves. It’s always a great idea to ask otherwise promising applicants if they can explain a blemish on their record. Of course, this generates more work for your HR manager. In fact, failure to ask questions is such a common mistake because follow-up takes time. But doing the follow-up may be worth it.”

TURNING TO SOCIAL MEDIA TO VET A DRIVER While it may be tempting to just peruse a candidate’s social media, it won’t give you the whole story and it could open the door to a

discrimination claim. “It’s very common for companies to turn to social media as a means of screening candidate for culture fit,” Edmonds admits, but it’s not a good idea. “Social media includes a lot of details you’re not looking for and information you could never legally ask about in an interview. You might learn an applicant’s age, religion, sexual orientation, or political leanings. You could find out they have kids or if they’ve had any recent health issues. And while it would be extremely difficult for anyone to prove you discriminated against them based on this knowledge, it is possible. For that reason, we advise against using social media while you’re in the process of making hiring decisions.”

DOING THE CHECK WITHOUT THE HELP OF A PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEE BACKGROUND CHECK SERVICE An employee screening service can take an objective look at the character of a prospective hire. “Our services can provide information that allows you to make intelligent human capital decisions, while withholding details that might cause unconscious bias,” Edmonds points out. “A professional background screening company is better skilled when it comes to human capital due diligence. It’s what we do day in and day out. Firms like ours know what to look for, where to find it, and how to analyze the data.”

Edmonds explains that mistakes like these happen for good reason, but still need to be avoided. “In the transportation industry there is a high rate of turnover. Employers need to get their customers’ products from one place to the other quickly and there is always a need to get the new drivers on the road as quickly as possible, so they skip these things,” she says. “But the outcome of missing these steps can be catastrophic for a company. You can end up hiring people with disruptive behaviors or a history of fraud or embezzlement. They may have a history of workplace violence, sexual harassment, racist behavior or bullying. Their backgrounds could cause morale issues among your team and create potential liability issues for your company. While it may be tempting in this tight labor environment, skipping these checks puts your company, your customer relations and your reputation at risk.” **CLDA**

Want to protect your company’s bottom line, reputation and customers through professional employment checks? Send your questions to Unna Edmonds at Premier Background Screening Services, LLC. You can reach her at: unna@premierbgs.com