

Do You Know the Difference Between a Background Check and a Criminal Background Investigation?

When it's time to hire new employees – or find out where a contractor is getting *their* employees – do you need a background check, or a detailed criminal background investigation? Is there even a difference?

Although a lot of business owners and executives don't understand the distinction yet, more and more are finding out just how significant and important it actually is. In fact, the difference could mean millions of dollars to your company in lawsuits and negative press attention.

The Fallacy of Background Checks

The first thing to know is that "background check" isn't actually a very useful term, because there isn't any real definition for it. Because there is no regulation or oversight for companies offering these services and packages over the Internet, they can sell literally anything (or nothing) without breaking too many laws.

For the small fee that you pay, usually between \$5.95 and \$49.95, what these businesses do is compare the names and Social Security numbers you give them against an incomplete database of criminal records. That might sound like a good start, but there are a number of problems:

- ✓ There isn't any way to know what's in the database
- ✓ You can't know who put the database together, or when
- ✓ The information within the database may or may not be accurate
- ✓ Data entered into the database by the user (like name, date of birth, etc.) might not be accurate
- ✓ And, there is no way to match results (or missing results) to a specific identity

Even in the best of circumstances, these databases go out of date very quickly and suffer from lots of small errors that render the results useless. The bigger issue, though, is that criminals know they can easily use a different name or provide a false date of birth, previous address, etc., and have their past convictions and activities go undetected.

And so, what instant background check companies are really selling you is a false sense of security. They aren't in the business of screening out criminals, but marketing low-cost products over the Internet.

What a Real Background Criminal Investigation Looks Like

A proper criminal background investigation has all the elements that instant background checks are missing. Think of it this way: If you were going to have someone coming into your home, or potentially

being alone with your children, would a quick, inaccurate Internet search be enough to calm your nerves? Of course it wouldn't.

Using live investigators, CrimShield works to find out who a person *really is*, where they've *really been*, and what they've *really done* to get a more complete picture of their history – and the risks you're taking by hiring them. Here are just a few of the features that set the real criminal background investigations apart:

- ✓ Identity and citizenship verification to be sure that the person is who he or she is claiming to be and has a legal right to work in the country
- ✓ A check of sexual offender lists and registries
- ✓ A review of past addresses and employment to verify that the person in question doesn't have unexplained gaps in their past (like unreported prison time)
- ✓ A thorough review of federal, state, and even municipal court records (along with government watch lists) to find out if your application is hiding past troubles or convictions
- ✓ A personal review of all materials by a trained investigator – including search engine and social media reviews – to look for any other potential problems.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. The reality is that real criminal background investigations don't cost you much more, in terms of time *or* money, but can offer real protection for your business.

Keeping dangerous people away from your employees and customers should be a priority because it's the right thing to do. Beyond that, it's also a good way to protect yourself from lawsuits, since you don't want to have to explain in a court of law why you didn't take even the most basic steps to find out who you might be sending out to deal with your customers and coworkers.

Wouldn't you agree that the difference between a background check and a real criminal background investigation is an important one?

About The Author: J. Denton (Denny) Dobbins is Nationally and Internationally recognized as the world's leader in Premises Liability Protection and has been featured across North America sharing the stage with Political Leaders, Police Celebrities, Administrators and Business Leaders. Since 1978, Denny has been involved with the detection and deterrence of Criminal Activity in properties and employment of all types.

