

10 Quality Questions

TO ASK YOUR SCREENING PROVIDER



EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS, INC

Background Screening • Drug Testing • Occupational Health Screening • Form I-9 Solutions

10 Quality Questions to Ask Your Screening Provider

You're in the business of providing quality to your customers. How can you be sure your background screening company is committed to doing the same? In other words, are you getting what you pay for?

Bob Capwell, Chief Knowledge Officer at EBI, oversees our Quality Management Program, including our ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 27001 Information Security Management standards certifications. With his subject matter expertise, we have developed the following series of questions to guide businesses in determining how well your screening agency is putting your dollars to work.

No matter the size of your organization, we know creating and implementing a background check program is an investment. These 10 questions will educate and empower you to find out if your background screening company meets the quality standards you deserve.



Bob Capwell

Chief Knowledge Officer, EBI



What will make a screening program successful at my business?

Whether you're already an established client of a background screening company — otherwise known as a Credit Reporting Agency (CRA) — or are reading this because you're considering implementing a screening program, you need to identify what aspects of a screening program are most important to you. Things like compliance and accuracy rates, account management, Applicant Tracking Software integration, and customer service are common priorities EBI clients share with us.

Once you know what components are most important to you, you can ask a background check company to provide specific examples of how they define and deliver that service. You're really looking to see if those examples align with your priorities. If you prefer U.S. based customer service, but they outsource their call center, you already know it's not a great fit.

You should then ask how they monitor and measure those services. This is critical because it will give you insight into whether the company has a documented quality policy.

"If a background screening firm does not have or will not provide a copy of its quality policy, that should be a red flag. It proves the vendor does not have a formalized quality program with objectives and Key Performance Indicators. It's the equivalent of saying, 'Yes, we are concerned about quality, but there is no plan or program in place to prove legitimacy and third-party verification'," says Capwell.



Do you have a documented screening process and training program for your employees?

Having employees who are happy, fulfilled, and inspired to perform at peak capacity is any employer's dream. Fostering a feeling of growth, security, and continual learning is key to engage employees this way. That's why you should ask your background screener if they have documented policies, procedures, and instructions for each business process related to fulfilling a background check request.

What you're doing with this question is twofold. One, you're inquiring about training and quality control measures for employees. Two, you're learning about the culture of the company. You want to be sure they care enough about their employees to not only provide direction and metrics, but also the support and teamwork needed to achieve these things.

At EBI, we use an internal learning facility called Happy University to train, assist, and provide continuing education and support for all our employees. Classes are available on work-specific tasks like helping a candidate better understand their drug testing results, but there are also soft-skill life-enrichment classes about increasing your emotional intelligence and practicing active listening.

This all speaks to EBI's commitment to treat the whole employee as a person, not just as someone who performs a task. Great companies value employees' uniqueness and foster mutual respect. This creates a team ready for any challenge.



Can you prove how effective your background checks are?

This is a huge question because 'effective' can be a subjective term within many screening agencies. Does your CRA boast about its 90% accuracy rate? At first glance, that may seem powerful. However, when compared to EBI's near 100% accuracy rate over the last six months, that seems paltry.

Background check companies should not be shy about showing how effective their background checks are. Knowing how a CRA monitors and measures its effectiveness — and seeing both past and present results — helps you understand how reliable the company has been, currently is, and aspires to be.

"One of the tools EBI uses to measure and monitor our quality and effectiveness is an annual audit. This audit is tied to our ISO 9001 quality standard certification. The ISO 9001 certification requires an audit conducted by internal and external auditors," says Capwell. "They meet with EBI team members across all departments and examine the processes and procedures in place. This combined approach of reviewing internal and external feedback gives us a comprehensive, 360-degree view of EBI in action."

These are the accuracy results from EBI's latest audit:

- 99.98% – Criminal Records
- 99.73% – Verifications
- 99.48% – Occupational Health Screenings

That is effectiveness we stand by. Can your CRA say the same?



Tell me about your customer service team. How are they trained? Where are they based? What is their availability?

A customer service team should exist for one reason — to make your job in talent acquisition easier. As an employer, you'll want a CRA who provides excellent client-facing and candidate-facing customer service. Because background checks involve human resource professionals and vendors like on-site criminal record verifications specialists, you need a support team who is highly-skilled in assisting the unique needs of clients and vendors. These support team members require specialized training to ensure they remain in compliance with evolving employment and screening laws.

Additionally, you need customer service agents who can swiftly, politely, and accurately help candidates navigate the pre-employment background check process. The screening process can be stressful for candidates. It's critical to have a customer service team who cares about the person on the other end of the phone.

Other considerations you may weigh, according to Capwell:

- What are the support team's hours?
- Are they trained and based in-house or are they third-party or overseas contractors?
- How can they be contacted? Phone? Email? Chat? Social media?
- How quickly are inquiries responded to and resolved?

EBI's Customer Care and Candidate Care teams are thoughtfully assembled and trained at our Owings Mills, Maryland headquarters. When you call our toll-free helpline at 1-800-324-7700, team members listen empathetically, are curious about your needs, and work diligently to fix your issue quickly. With the support of EBI's U.S. based client care team, you consistently receive these remarkable results:

- 98% of calls are answered within three rings
- 97% of calls are handled by a live agent



Do you conform to any well-known quality certifications?

There are several quality certifications a screening company can achieve.

- Professional Background Screening Association
- ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems certification
- ISO 27001 Information Security Management certification
- Privacy Shield Framework (EU-U.S. and Swiss-U.S.)
- Concerned CRAs

EBI is proud to hold all these certifications. If your screener claims to hold any of these certifications, feel free to ask for proof and how long they've been certified. You can also inquire if they have plans to apply for any further certifications.



How do you correct mistakes?

Mistakes happen. It's difficult for everyone involved when they do. But how a background check company responds to a mistake is just as important as correcting the error, advises Capwell. "At EBI, we track each known incident, conduct a root cause analysis, document corrective actions internally, and if needed, provide concessions or credit owed to our client," he says.

You want a screener who takes ownership of its actions; accountability speaks to the company's integrity. Ask questions about if, or how, clients are informed of mistakes.

- Are you told as soon as the error is discovered?
- Or does the screener attempt to rectify the mistake before telling you?
- What type of error tracking and/or dispute logging process is in place?
- Have the number of errors increased or decreased in recent years?
- What is that attributed to?
- How are corrective actions handled and what role does management play in this?



What can you tell me about your risk management program?

Beyond mitigating errors, a quality screening company should also have a risk management program in place. This systemic program identifies potential negative impacts and recommends a treatment or corrective plan. Sometimes this may be as straightforward as fixing a billing code in a client's file or as complex as reviewing compliance regulations at the state level. Whatever the potential for error is, you want to feel assured your screener has a policy in place to regularly review and mitigate risks.

EBI's risk management program is closely tied to our annual audit. Here are some areas we focus on:

- Potential consumer disputes or inaccuracies during background checks
- Data privacy infractions
- Understanding client requirements
- Compliance knowledge
- Tracking human error
- Quality auditing of outsourced processes and vendors
- Billing set up
- Non-compliance with federal, state, international or other laws

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Do you audit your vendors?

Many background check companies, including EBI, partner with third-party vendors to provide a full suite of services to clients. In most cases, these partnerships are symbiotic. Employers reap the reward of doing business with one company while having a host of services delivered by others. These relationships, however, depend on the CRA performing due diligence and vetting its vendors. It's imperative you ask a screener if and how they vet their vendors and how often these reviews are performed.

You want to know how vendors are vetted prior to onboarding with your screener. Who analyzes these third parties and what qualifies them as a vendor? What quality metrics and accountability must they meet to be considered a vendor? After they become a contracted vendor, how regularly is the quality and accuracy of their work reviewed? What quality metrics and accountability are measured? And who performs these quality checks – is it the CRA's in-house risk management or auditing team?

The point of this line of questioning is to determine if your screener has aligned itself with quality vendors.

"If we are vetting and putting in place a new public records researcher, we actually send them known positive records to be sure they find them," says Capwell. "This is one way we perform a quality check on our vendors prior to beginning work with us, and then we conduct further quality checks on an ongoing basis."



Do you perform internal quality audits?

Think of an internal quality audit as your screener's annual report card. It's the single most effective tool at monitoring and measuring the products and services produced by a background check company. Audits may be conducted independently or as part of an overall Quality Management Program. Audits are usually performed by internal and external auditors. They discuss processes and procedures with employees across all departments, ensure existing standards are being met, and identify areas for improvement.

In EBI's case, our audit is attached to our ISO 9001 standard certification for quality management. "Our internal auditors are impartial and independent of the departments being audited or assessed. As part of ISO, you can't audit yourself or your own department," explains Capwell.

Much like having a risk mitigation program, screening companies who perform audits show a proactive approach to quality control. They don't wait for problems to appear and then rush to fix them. Conducting audits promotes growth internally and shows you they are transparent and take their integrity seriously.



What role does your management team take in overseeing quality standards?

Any strong audit or Quality Management Program will also incorporate a Management Review Board (MRB). The MRB is responsible for reviewing client feedback, vendor evaluations, and a variety of recommendations outlined in audits, says Capwell.

Having a strong management and leadership team is instrumental in reaching and maintaining quality objectives and standards. It's important to know how often the MRB reviews audits and other feedback. Do they examine things like customer satisfaction surveys, sales differentiators, and employee performance reviews? What process does the MRB use to guide the company and enforce its mission?

Conversely, are employees encouraged to have open communication with their managers and leadership team? What processes are in place if an employee notices a discrepancy in the background check process?

Fostering an open sense of communication between employees and leadership is critical for a risk mitigation or quality standards program to operate effectively, says Capwell.

Curious to Know More?

Dedication to quality cannot be underestimated. You deserve to know where your hard-earned dollars are being spent and if your CRA is performing to the highest standards. We hope these questions are useful as you consider your next background screening company.

For more information, visit www.ebiinc.com.

