

The ADVOCATE.

Survey: Firms using more background checks on job seekers

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Job seekers pursuing that dream position may want to think twice before submitting a resume filled with untruths or missing pertinent information.

Some area companies are taking extra steps to ensure the people they hire are who they say they are, according to a survey conducted by two Stamford companies, OperationsInc, a human resources consulting firm, and Performance-Solutions-Group Inc., a management consulting firm.

The survey, which focused on recruiting practices, revealed that of the 73 organizations in Fairfield County and the metropolitan New York area that participated, more than 65 percent use an outside source to conduct formal background checks.

"We were taken aback by the number of companies doing background checks via third-party service providers," said David Lewis, chief executive officer and founder of OperationsInc. "Sixty-five percent is a very significant number. Now, many companies do background checks - education, criminal checks and often credit checks. Better than 50 percent of resumes contain something inaccurate. They're no longer taking information given by candidates as gospel.

"The number of companies performing formal background checks is very significant as it demonstrates the high level of concern that today's employer has about the integrity of information being provided by candidates for employment," Lewis said.

Some companies no longer ask for personal references, he said.

Submitting a resume that is not completely honest

could jeopardize an applicant's prospects, but it often depends on the degree of dishonesty and the quality of

the applicant, Lewis said.

"Each company has a different set of tolerances. Most companies take it case-by-case," he said.

Lewis, along with Wilfred Brewer, president and founder of Performance-Solutions-Group, distributed the survey to 400 companies within 40 miles of Stamford.

The results came as no surprise to Joseph McGee, vice president for public policy at the Business Council of Fairfield County.

"That's pretty common now. There's a lot more scrutiny done across the board on employees. When I became commissioner (of the state Department of Economic Development in 1991), the state police went back to my high school," he said. "That's due diligence. I think people have become much more aware of potential problems, whether you're a coach, bus driver or senior executive."

The two companies will conduct surveys on human resources topics every other month, with the one next month focusing on the use of technology in the HR field. In the past two years, the two firms have teamed up on several projects, Brewer said.

"He does transitional and operational human resources work, and we do follow-up to that - designing, strategic planning and performance. My firm does a lot of surveys," said Brewer, whose client list runs the gamut from The Hartford, Pitney Bowes and Johnson & Johnson to the Las Vegas Convention Center and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

Working with Lewis, Brewer said his firm recently developed the human resources infrastructure for the new King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia.

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