

The Evolution of Background Checking.

Demonstrate the value of digital background checking through its evolution from traditional methods through to today.



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Introduction

Background checking has been part of job applications and onboarding since records began, with letters of recommendation being the first known cases of employment vetting. Indeed, this practice remains, with past employer references just one of the many checks now available to global hiring managers looking to create a robust and secure recruiting process.

In 2022, screening solutions are leaning more heavily towards digital vetting, but how does this technology work and how can it provide added benefits to employers?

In this whitepaper, we'll look at the history of screening through to the emergence of digital screening as a secure and efficient way to facilitate global hiring in the 21st century.

Why is background screening necessary?

Employers have always been required to make educated decisions about who they hire. Making quick judgments based on information that is provided to them during the recruitment and interview process is difficult. Screening provides a way to verify information provided, and create a more cohesive, comprehensive, and consistent process.

Timeline - The history of background screening



1960s

Background checking as we recognise it today can be traced back to the 1960s, which was introduced by the UK government following the US Security Classifications of the 1940s, which required government employees to have security clearance before accessing certain data.

1980s

In the 1980s, the UK privatised Background Screening Industry meant that vetting companies emerged as a credible source to check the information provided by candidates.

1990s

In 1990, British Standard 7858 Security Screening of Individuals (relevant to security personnel) came into force. It is now on its 6th iteration and is applicable to all personnel working in secure environments.

2002

The Criminal Records Bureau was launched in 2002 to allow criminality screening, since replaced by Disclosure and Barring Service.

Today

Nowadays, background screening has become a standard part of the recruitment and onboarding process. All workers are required by law to have a Right to Work check, to check their legal right to work in the UK, and many industries and roles require screening as part of compliance. The financial sector, any role involving children or vulnerable adults and the legal sector all have their own screening requirements.

The 4th Industrial Revolution has given way to a huge growth in remote work and global hiring of specialist contractors, and, as workers become more mobile, screening has had to adjust to allow checking across different countries and continents.

And the changes don't end there. The way we work has given rise to the emergence of the gig economy, a move away from the traditional 9-5/single employer that had previously dominated working practices.

Improvements in technology as well as changes to the work culture have meant that digital screening has now overtaken traditional screening practices.

The move to digital background screening

Traditional background screening was a long and arduous process, but heavily relied upon in many screening processes right up until the pandemic.

Involving the collection of paper copies of documents or reaching out to past employers who would have to take the time to request letters of recommendation, it also often meant that candidates would have to present in person to have their identity and other documents validated. It could take days or even weeks to take a candidate through the screening process and onto hiring.

Digital screening became popular in the early 2000s as innovative technology provided access to secure data.

And while the move to digital screening was gradual up until 2020, the pandemic has forced a complete shift to digital screening across the entire background screening industry. The UK government has recently announced that their emergency pandemic measure of allowing digital background screening is permanent as of April 2022.

Why digital background screening is really the new normal

It's not as simple as the rise of remote working, it's actually all about data.

Surge of available data – There is an increase in job mobility from an industry and sector standpoint as well as geographically. Shorter contracts and portfolio careers generate more information that needs to be considered by prospective employers.

Data privacy and security – Legislation and data security laws mean that obtaining, storing, and managing data needs to be through secure systems with traceable processes. Consent also needs to be given, with candidates having control over whether or not they share data with employers.

Standardisation of data – With roles and industries requiring differing skills and credentials, standardisation of certain types of data is needed to make recruitment processes more manageable.

Credibility of self-reported data – digitisation provides a solution to a problem that has long plagued hiring managers, can the information provided by candidates be trusted? Digital screening offers a virtually fool proof system of ensuring the validity of all claims made in the recruitment process.



How big data revolutionised background screening

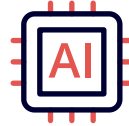


Blockchain

Blockchain is a decentralised ledger that allows several parties to log data which is stored across a network of databases. Each piece of data (block) is dependent on the other blocks in the network (chain), always maintaining the integrity of the records.

The development of blockchain technology is at the core of the transformation to digital background screening, which is dependent on accurate and current information.

Blockchain is now used across all checks including identity verification, credit checks and criminality checking.



AI and Machine Learning

Artificial intelligence and machine learning is far more efficient and accurate than traditional checking.

AI is often used for oversubscribed roles, where AI can quickly sift through CV's and generate a shortlist of candidates who demonstrate the relevant skills, qualifications, and experience.

It can also be used to create a much more engaging candidate experience, walking the candidate through the screening process and being able to answer simple questions.

Machine learning can spot patterns in data, highlighting the most important points or identify potentially risky candidates.



At a glance - the benefits of digital background screening

- Faster – improved time to hire
- Data protection – simple to obtain user permissions and increased security of personal data
- More agile/tailored – check packages can be quickly tailored for different roles and industries
- Better candidate experience – convenient and engaging candidate experience, can be branded for individual companies
- Enables remote checking – for global hiring and future lockdowns
- Accuracy and consistency – no human error and standardisation of candidate data
- Integration – can be integrated across existing HR processes such as ATS
- Future proofing – technology is constantly adding to the capabilities of digital screening, making the switch now means that companies can make use of the latest developments



Trends to look out for in the future of background checking



Social media checking

Social media screening is growing rapidly in its popularity and will soon become a standard feature in all employment background checks. Employers are quickly learning the power of social media, with several high visibility cases of past bad behaviour on social media hitting the headlines. Reputational damage can be serious, and companies are starting to see the value of checking that candidates don't have any social skeletons in the closet before hiring.



International screening

As the world opens up after the pandemic, global hiring is on the rise again and international screening becomes more important. And as more countries adopt digital technologies, carrying out checks that span territories will become even faster.



Ongoing screening

Continuous monitoring has always been necessary in industries such as finance and education, with certain roles requiring periodic rechecks to ensure that credentials remain up to date. But many HR departments are now including periodic checking as part of their HR practices to enable employers to ensure that workers remain suitable for the role they have been hired for.



Conclusion

Background screening isn't new, but it has recently been through a complete transformation with the rise in digital technology.

The latest technologies, such as blockchain and AI, have created the opportunity for more efficient and secure screening processes, which provide candidates with a better experience and employers with reliable results.

Zellis Background Checking - Digital by Design

Zellis Background Checking is digital by design. Our processes are leading the way in digital screening, offering our clients the very latest in digital screening techniques. Fully customisable, we screen for all roles and industries, and offer international screening for overseas candidates. Talk to us today about how we can help you secure your recruiting future.

