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FILTERING PROCESS



RIGOROUS Most companies hire external bodies to carry out background check of their interviewed candidates.

Better safe than sorry

Proverbially speaking, one can never be too careful. This, at least, is the philosophy followed by a large section of companies in the City, when it comes to hiring potential candidates. Background checks — once the stuff of third-rate detective novels — are now a staple part of the employment process.

Given that the scale on which these companies are hiring has expanded exponentially over the last two decades, this isn't very surprising. However, what makes one pause, though, is the level of detail that these checks get into. At the most basic stage, companies validate the educational and professional claims that any candidate has made. Sheela, a human resource professional, explains, "Every company carries out a professional and employment check prior to hiring someone. Professional checks determine the quality of work, managerial and soft skills of a person, while employment checks evaluate their previous experience and salaries. We also check the educational certifications of the candidate and conduct a pre-employment medical check-up."

However, the average background check involves many

more layers of verification. This is normally the stage at which companies bring in external help — that is, outsource the job to organisations which carry out a more detailed investigation. Nandini, also in the human resource field, elaborates, "After we interview a candidate, we bring in an external body to carry out what we call 'role verification' — that is, checking the salary that the candidate previously received, since it's very easy for a new hire to quote an extravagant figure. A social-networking screening is also conducted, among other things, to analyse the kind of posts someone puts up."

Two other factors that these external organisations verify are the employee's financial situation and criminal record.



Nandini

"Normally, the candidate has to hand over a copy of his or her passport during the employment process. This is then sent to the nearest police station, where his or her track record is checked. We also have them scrutinised for financial bankruptcy, and make sure their credit cards haven't been blocked," explains Sheela, adding that these external organisations generally charge Rs 8,000 per candidate.

Some of this information appears to be fairly tough to come across — but Narendra KV, the CEO of a firm that carries out these background checks, explains that his staff employ various methods to get what they want. "We have tie-ups with government departments to validate a person's identity and with the postal department to check their previous whereabouts," he explains.

Another issue which his company tackles — and which he describes as being extremely difficult — are cases of resume-padding. "It's rampant these days. People make tall claims and in large industries, it's tough to identify whether these are true or false. We also check up on their previous employers be-



Narendra

cause sometimes, candidates produce reference letters from companies that simply don't exist. Shockingly, we have identified over a 1,000 organisations which are in the business of giving false letters of service and experience — candidates generally have to pay Rs 15,000 for each year of false experience they want to claim," he says.

This kind of research generally takes time, but Narendra adds that quick results are important. "We sign a service agreement with each company that we do background checks for, and the time specified is ten working days. Of course, if we don't have the necessary information in that time period, we give them a ten per cent penalty," he concludes.

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