# First Advantage

# Is it time to switch background screening providers?

Five critical background screening differentiators employers should question.

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# You know when it's time to switch.

**In 2023, the average time to hire hit a record high: 44 days.** Meanwhile, the average cost per hire is nearing $5,000.

Background screening is a big contributor to both hiring speed and costs. When it's optimized, the hiring process hums, and you're better positioned to find, hire, and onboard top candidates faster, ahead of competing employers.

But when it's clunky, lagging, or otherwise underperforming, it can gum up everything.

That's when it might be time to think about switching. After all, you want your time-to-hire and costs to go down, not up.

At First Advantage, we get it…sometimes changing background screening providers is necessary because, as the saying goes, "When you know, you know."

This eBook explores five key areas of background screening that could be dragging down your hiring process, along with a quick view of how we do things differently to help you hire smarter and onboard faster. [1]
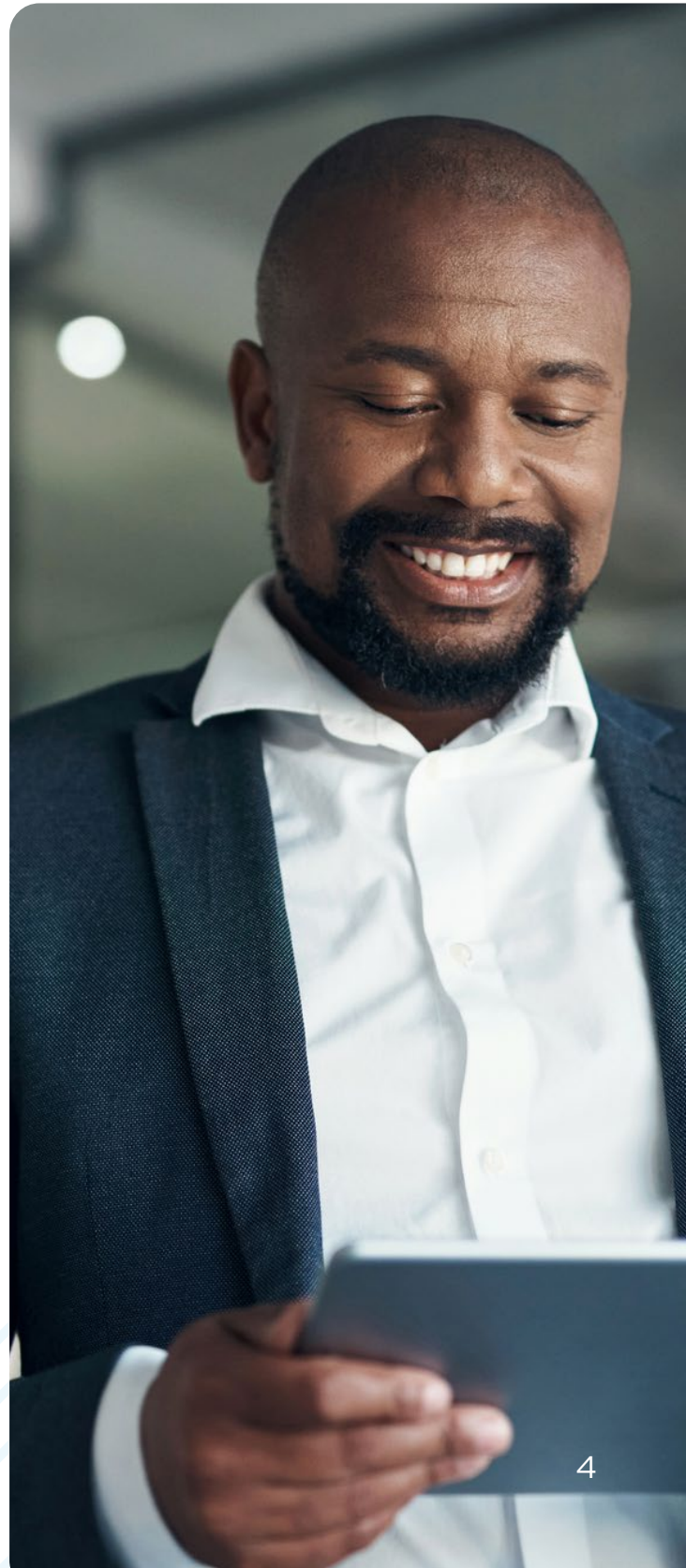
## 1 Turnaround time

In today's digital age, turnaround times are getting faster...or at least yours should be.

Yet, according to the Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA), **62 percent of employers** said turnaround time was their biggest background-checking challenge.[2]
If you're experiencing slow or below-average turnaround times, it can create frustrating hiring backlogs that hurt your ability to attract and quickly hire top candidates.

Key components to watch:

• **Verifications** are often manual and can require up to three attempts to verify.

• International screening is sometimes separate from domestic screening with complex **compliance requirements**, restrictions, and forms that can hamstring the process and slow down results.

• County and state-level **criminal checks** can vary depending on technology restrictions, localized requirements and laws, and other complexities.

**At First Advantage, we're rethinking everything with industry-leading innovations to help reduce turnaround times across the board.**

Our goal is simple: help our valuable customers make better-informed hiring decisions, faster.

For example, smart automation and responsible AI helped increase the number of criminal checks we processed with minimal human intervention in 2022 by **8 percent**.[3]

**Verified!,** our proprietary database which is comprised of previously verified employment and education information, accelerates verification turnaround time and reduces costs linked to third-party verification services.

Our international screening capabilities are seamlessly integrated within the same platform as our domestic screening. That means **less time and money spent** managing multiple providers or websites.

And, we're constantly researching new innovations and exploring next-gen technology applications to further constantly improve the customer and applicant experience.

# 70%

## faster than standard verification processes

Our proprietary Verified! database provides verification results more than 70% faster than traditional efforts, without expensive third-party fees.[4]

# 16%

## faster county criminal checks

By focusing on process automation and efficiency, we recently improved county search turnaround times by 16%.[5]

# 96%

## faster county criminal checks

Our push toward increased automation is accelerating the availability of online statewide database searches. In New Jersey, for example, search volume more than doubled after turnaround time was cut by 96%. Florida, Texas, and other states are seeing similar improvements.[6]

# 2  Costs

Inflation is now the top concern among today's HR leaders, according to a recent Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) report. Given this focus, if the price of your background checks feels out of sync based on your screening volume, or your screening process has become cumbersome and protracted—which can directly impact your hiring costs—it might be time to re-evaluate your provider.

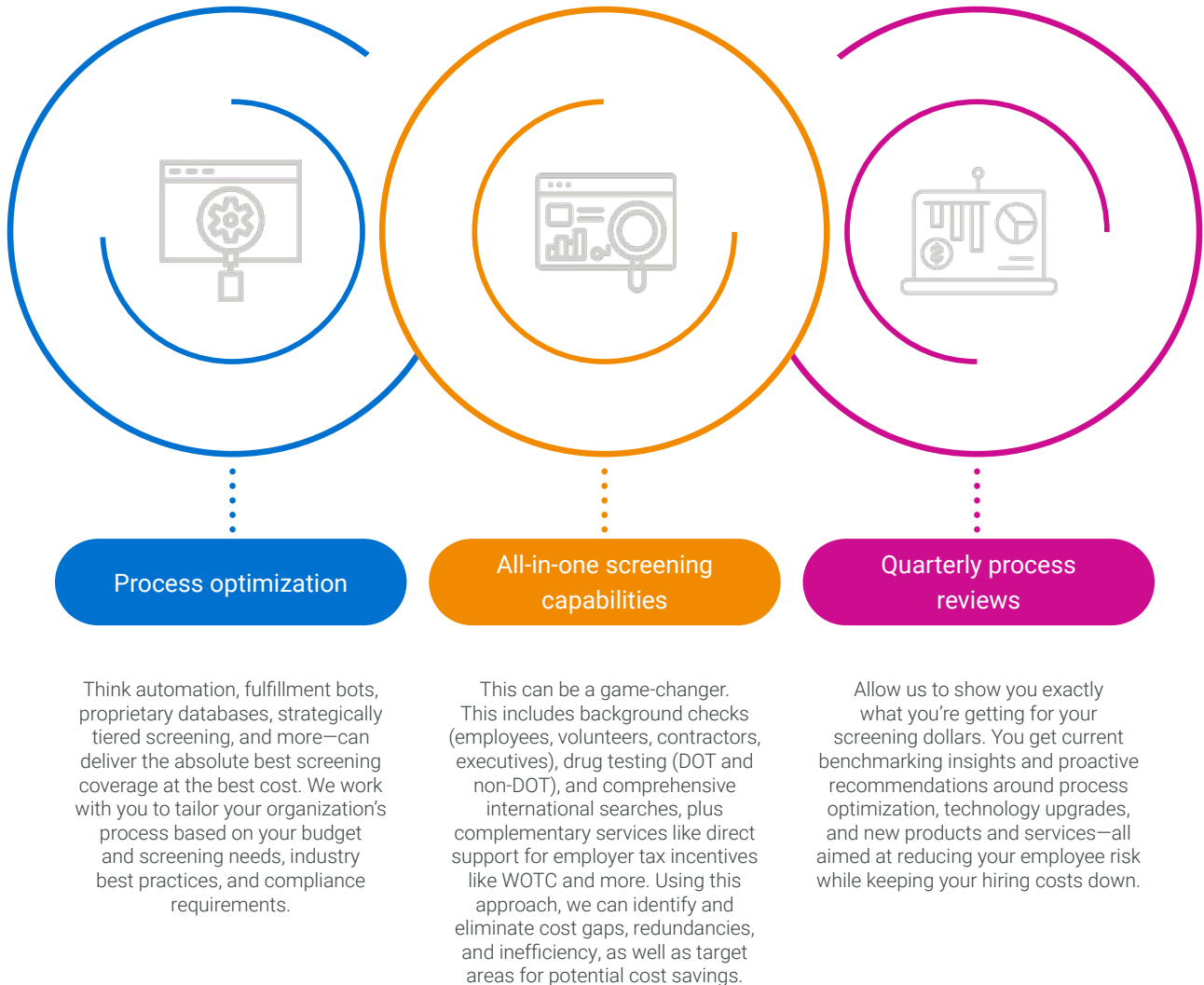Here are a few opportunities to consider:

- *Has your screening volume increased due to business growth or a merger/ acquisition?* If so, request updated pricing to help reduce your screening costs. Start with your existing provider but also expand your request (possibly through a formal request-for-quotes process) to include other providers and ensure you get the best, most competitive price available.

- *Do you work with multiple screening vendors to fulfill all required employment screening, including pre-and post-hire screening, drug testing, and international screening?* Consider consolidating everything under one qualified provider.   Not only can this significantly streamline your screening process, but it also maximizes your purchasing power by boosting your screening scope and volume.

- *Get creative.* Try offsetting your screening costs by applying for Work Opportunity Tax Credits. The WOTC is a federal tax credit available to employers that hire individuals with barriers to employment due to limited skills or work experience. Depending on your screening volume and location, your business may qualify for tax credits of up to $9,600 per qualified individual.

> At First Advantage, we view ourselves as a true hiring partner who brings **cost-saving ideas and solutions**throughout the Applicant Journey.

# Optimize and Deliver

Here are a few ways we can help optimize your screening costs and deliver a stronger ROI:

### Process optimization

Think automation, fulfillment bots, proprietary databases, strategically tiered screening, and more—can deliver the absolute best screening coverage at the best cost. We work with you to tailor your organization's process based on your budget and screening needs, industry best practices, and compliance requirements.

### All-in-one screening capabilities

This can be a game-changer. This includes background checks (employees, volunteers, contractors, executives), drug testing (DOT and non-DOT), and comprehensive international searches, plus complementary services like direct support for employer tax incentives like WOTC and more. Using this approach, we can identify and eliminate cost gaps, redundancies, and inefficiency, as well as target areas for potential cost savings.

### Quarterly process reviews

Allow us to show you exactly what you're getting for your screening dollars. You get current benchmarking insights and proactive recommendations around process optimization, technology upgrades, and new products and services—all aimed at reducing your employee risk while keeping your hiring costs down.

## 30% more

We identify 30 more Work Opportunity Tax Credits when clients transition to us from another vendor. To get a quote on how much you can earn, contact us.[7]

## Pricing, your way

At First Advantage, our pricing is flexible, starting as low as $25 for a comprehensive employment background screening check, unlike other services that require a monthly subscription to run checks.[8]

# 3 Technology integration

It's a given that most modern HR departments integrate their hiring and background screening technologies. It essentially plugs a background screening interface into a host of systems, including applicant tracking systems (ATS), human resource information systems (HRIS), human capital management systems, and human resource management systems (HRMS). There's no better way to streamline hiring and onboarding while creating an easier, faster, and more seamless experience for candidates.

However, every screening provider brings different levels of technology and integration expertise, which can impact the quality, performance, and costs associated with your integration.

Also, in today's marketplace, companies are constantly acquiring and merging with other companies—each with its own HR technology that's often different from the parent company. Knowing this, it's important to know what integrations are currently available through your provider so you're better positioned to support and onboard newly acquired businesses and stay ahead of your industry.

Here are a few questions to ask to get up to speed on your provider's capabilities:

- Ask for an update on their integration ecosystem, including their partner network, API capabilities, etc. Technology is moving very quickly, so it might be time to explore what new capabilities and efficiencies are now possible.

- Inquire about their partnership status with your ATS and other relevant technologies. This is important because it can impact the cost and quality of your integration.

  - **"Preferred partners"** work directly with your ATS and are often able to reduce your integration fees. They're also among the first to get system updates.

  - **"Certified partners"** also work directly with the ATS but may or may not have flexibility on integration fees and they may be prioritized lower than preferred partners when it comes to system updates.

  - **No formal partnership** between your screening provider and your ATS provider usually means you'll pay higher integration fees because they will have to bring in third-party integration support.

## At First Advantage, **technology** is one of our core building blocks.

We have one of the industry's largest networks of technology partners, many of which are "preferred" partnerships. And unlike other providers that may require you to bend to their capabilities, we meet you wherever you are regarding your technology systems with standard and REST APIs, and file-based integrations that work with legacy systems.

From project inception through launch, our in-house implementation team works closely with you to nail your objectives and timelines and support your business with fast, efficient, and well-communicated upgrades. They also continuously evaluate and work with up-and-coming technology providers, ensuring that our capabilities are among the most comprehensive and cutting-edge.

## Mobile-friendly
### *More "swipe," less type*

With our **Profile Advantage** solution, you can offer your candidates the easy, mobile experiences they expect.

- Accelerates time-to-onboard
- Improves input quality and accuracy and API-powered autofill.
- Integrates essential services, including background screening, instant oral drug screening, tax credit services (such as WOTC), and I-9.



## Single sign-on
### *No need to remember passwords*

Did you know First Advantage supports a platform-neutral, SAML-compliant SSO model that enables a single sign-on integration with our platform? All configured users are automatically authenticated and securely logged into our website—no need to remember passwords.

**Learn More**

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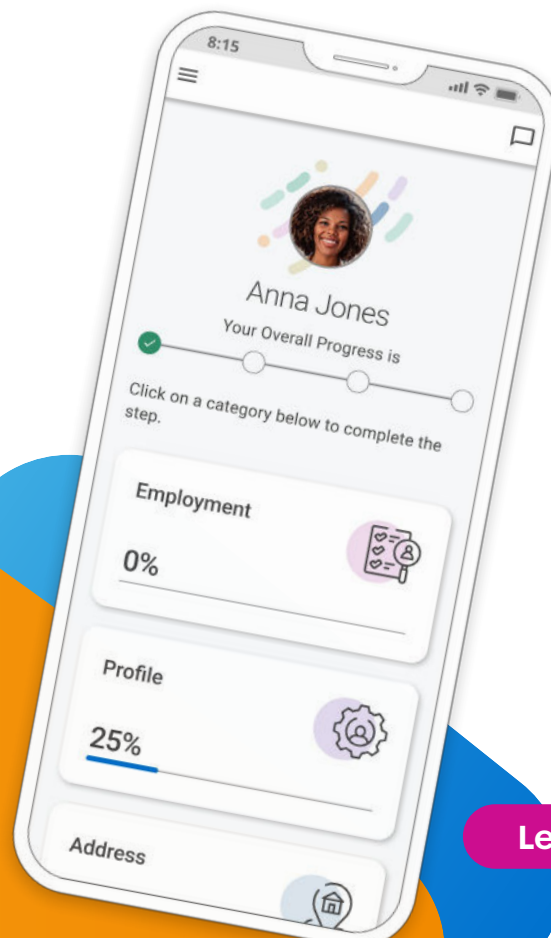
# 4    Compliance

Just when you think you have a handle on the latest legal trends, new laws emerge, impacting your hiring and screening process in unforeseen ways. Knowing this, it's more important than ever that your screening provider acts as a true partner, supporting your organization throughout your compliance journey. They should be proactively engaging you with updates about existing laws and regulations, sharing best practices for navigating any required changes, and anticipating what's around the corner to help keep your hiring process compliant and ahead of the industry.
If this isn't happening, start asking questions.

Here's a quick snapshot of the most pressing **compliance matters** impacting employers today:

### Marijuana legalization and drug screening.

To drug screen or not to drug screen...that's the big question. Even in jurisdictions where it's permissible to use marijuana for medicinal or recreational purposes (or both), do you—as an employer—have the ability to make employment decisions based on drug screening reports about marijuana? Noting of course that marijuana remains a Schedule I substance under the Federal Controlled Substances Act, with a high potential for abuse, and it can significantly impair employees, creating a host of safety issues. Yet, screening for marijuana can shrink your candidate pool, making it harder to find qualified employees. Your screening provider should be working with you to craft a thoughtful, balanced, and consistent strategy for moving forward because this issue is not going away.

### AI and process automation.

These technologies are becoming a part of the modern hiring processes; however, if your screening program includes a level of automation that could potentially bias your candidate selection process, it's a problem. Your background screening provider should be able to thoroughly explain how these technologies are defined and integrated within your screening process. If you don't understand it, or they can't give you an adequate explanation, that's a problem.

### Clean slate laws.

These laws are aimed at helping candidates with a criminal history get better access to jobs by expunging or sealing older criminal records. Twelve states currently have some form of clean slate laws on the books with more in the works. If you and your provider aren't on the same page about what's allowable (and what's not) in these jurisdictions, it could expose your organization to non-compliance and potential lawsuits.

### *DOB exclusions.*

California and Michigan recently limited access to personally identifying information, specifically dates of birth from publicly facing criminal records at courthouses or online courthouse record repositories.  Since the date of birth is a key piece of information used to match criminal records to the applicant's information, this has slowed criminal searches in those jurisdictions. A workaround for background screeners is now available in Michigan, but California remains an issue. Your provider should not only understand these restrictions and regularly update you about their impact on your hiring process, but they should also be involved at the industry level working with organizations like the PBSA to achieve a compromise solution that protects candidates without handicapping employers.

## At First Advantage, our **compliance support** is holistic and engaging.

It's never a "check-the-box" task with us; instead, it's a constantly evolving conversation that spans your entire hiring and screening process. From criminal checks and drug testing to international screening and industry regulations, we bring intense knowledge, insights, and recommendations to the table to keep your hiring process streamlined and compliant, no matter what.

And we're not sitting idly on the sidelines. We're proactive in our compliance approach, from our involvement with SHRM and PBSA campaigns and the compliance capabilities baked into our products and solutions to how we deliver the latest compliance information via emails, webinars, blog updates, in-person meetings, benchmarking reports, and more.

# Better compliance begins with consultative compliance support.

# Encompassing Expertise

Here are a few of the many ways we support you with your screening compliance[9]:



**FCRA pre-adverse action and adverse action letter mailing services**

**Quarterly account reviews** with vertical specific compliance updates and recommendations

**Expert-led webinars** on trending compliance-related issues

**Proactive email alerts** regarding legal and regulatory changes

**Monthly newsletters** on domestic and international legal and regulatory updates

**Annual drug screening report** analytic and trends information from industry experts

**Annual Trends Reports** includes a survey and analytical review of screening ordering trends over the prior year

**Monthly blog articles** around various industry legal and compliance trends

## 5     Service

Background screening is a complex process that involves real people, sensitive data, employer policies, advanced technology, and complex legal and regulatory compliance requirements. How your provider responds to these issues can mean the difference between leading your industry in hiring or falling behind.

Here are a few questions to help you **identify bigger service issues** that could impact your larger hiring process:

- Do your inquiries ever go unanswered?

- How quickly does your provider respond when you have issues, and how would you rate their response?



- Is your provider sometimes defensive when you bring issues to their attention?

- Do you have a clear escalation path to easily engage management when necessary?

- Are there multiple channels available to contact customer support via text, email, and phone?

- Can you troubleshoot via an easily accessible FAQ, chatbot, or another form of self-service customer support?

- When you have bigger issues, are they quickly and fully resolved?

- Does your provider regularly follow up on evolving service issues?

- Are customer support metrics made available to you, either for your organization or the provider's larger business, for benchmarking purposes?

- Does your provider proactively check in with you to inquire about your process and potential issues?

- Are updates and changes made to your screening platform or technology integration without informing you first?

- Are you ever asked to participate in customer surveys, focus groups, or other forums for customer feedback?

You can rely on First Advantage to support you and **quickly respond** to service matters of all sizes and significance.

Our **Click, Chat, Call** approach covers all the bases, so you can easily connect and engage with our teams whenever and however works best for you.

But we also offer personalized support through our tiered, **vertically-focused customer management** that includes:

**1** Frontline support from our award-winning customer care team

**2** Individualized account analysis, reporting, and optimization via a dedicated customer success analyst

**3** Strategic leadership and industry-focused expertise provided by a dedicated customer success director

**4** Alignment between your business leaders and our executive team that drives boardroom-level engagement and progress via an exclusive executive sponsorship.

# Award Winning Service

In the 17th annual Stevie Awards for Sales and Customer Service, First Advantage won **two prestigious awards**.



# Collaborative, face-to-face support

To further support our valued customers, we host **Collaborate**, the first-of-its-kind background screening conference, where customers can:

- Network in person with hundreds of peers, industry leaders, and innovation gurus.

- Learn from top business leaders in information-packed education sessions.

- Benchmark screening performance against other organizations.

- Get practical, real-world guidance on the most urgent issues facing HR today.

**Learn More**

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# Time to switch?
## Let's schedule a discovery session.

If you're thinking about moving to another background screening provider or you're simply curious about pricing, service options, technology integrations, and other differentiators, connect with us.

See for yourself the many ways First Advantage can advance your background screening process to help optimize your overall hiring speed, efficiency, and costs.

### *Hire Smarter. Onboard Faster.*™

## Contact us today

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