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CHECKS OUTSIDE THE BOX
As an employer, what should I know about 'ban the box'?

To help employers consider a job candidate's qualifications, without any type of stigma, more cities and states are prohibiting employers from asking prospective employees, "Have you been convicted of any misdemeanors or felonies?"

The logic behind it: hiring reform is needed for people with convictions, since too often this group of applicants is denied employment due to their criminal history.

Most of the ban the box laws refer to public sector, but many private businesses also are eliminating the question from their applications. More than 15 states and 100 cities and counties have passed some type of "ban the box" legislation while several large employers such as Wal-Mart and Target are modifying their hiring procedures.

To understand if your city, county or state has adopted fair hiring practices, start by using the National Employment Law Project, which advocates on issues affecting low-wage workers, as a resource. Your state may be among those where either the localities have banned the box or have a statewide ban, or both.

In regions where ban the box is present, employers can utilize background checks, but only after a job candidate is offered the position, not before. The employer also retains the right to rescind the job offer if the background check reveals a prior conviction that directly conflicts with the position that has been offered.

HIRING BY NUMBERS
What is a good way to screen someone before hiring them?

The first thing I do is create a list of job-related competencies, somewhere between eight to 10 skills depending on the job. I list each skill at the top of the column on an excel spreadsheet and make rows with the names of people I'm considering. Each competency is weighted (typically on a scale of 1 to 10 points) depending on the importance of the skill.

I look at resumes and rate candidates based on this metric, which helps me narrow the field to the top five.

Next, I do a phone interview via Skype, where I ask all the contenders the same set of questions and rate them again, which helps narrow the field to the top three.

I make sure to tailor the questions around the competencies or what some people call key performance indicators. For example if I'm trying to find out how a job candidate handles conflict with union-related employees, I may ask "Could you tell us about one conflict you've had with unionized employees and how you've dealt with that?"

Based on their responses, it becomes very easy on a matrix where one competency is worth eight points and another is worth 10. You add everything up and find the finalist.

This helps you to stay focused and, more importantly, objective.

What kind of leadership training should I consider offering my team?

Since the USDA's new rules on professional standards for school foodservice personnel went into effect July 1, this is the perfect time of year to focus on leadership training.

The final rule instituted hiring standards for the selection of state and local school nutrition program directors and requires all personnel in the program to complete annual continuing education and training in four key areas: nutrition, operations, administration and communications and marketing. Minimum requirements begin for the 2015-16 school year, and increase to ongoing levels in 2016-17 school year.

For this coming school year, directors need eight hours, managers six hours and staff that work more than 20 hours a week and part-time staff that work less than 20 hours a week both need four hours of training.

Numerous opportunities are available online, including webinars and in-person training through USDA and the School Nutrition Association as well as state SNA affiliates and local districts.

While all four areas are important, training that focuses on the communications and marketing and administration categories are particularly valuable in developing strong leaders. For example, an experienced manager with a high school degree can utilize the matrix of course topics to develop leadership skills in staff management, financial analysis, and strategic and marketing plans with the goal of moving to an assistant director position.

Have a question for our Advice Squad? Email us at foodservicedirector@csfn.net



QUICK BITE

21%

Percentage of their spending teens put toward food, surpassing clothing for the first time in five years Source: Piper Jaffray