

Professional Screening and Information (PSI)

Over the past several years, security has moved up the priority list of businesses both large and small. **Professional Screening and Information (PSI)**, a background investigation provider, ensures that all employers have the opportunity to make the environment in which they work as safe as possible for their customers and employees.

Since its inception in 1998, PSI has been conducting background investigations for companies of all sizes around the world, becoming an exclusive background investigation company in 2002.

The company's services are valued by "well over a couple hundred" clients, according to *PSI Founder Dr. Greg Sumner (LR, '00)*. PSI assists its customers with criminal history checks that may include county, state, national and international searches, and a long list of other services such as education verification, credit reports, national sex offender searches and social security number traces, among others. PSI will even make reference calls for a company during its hiring process.

What makes PSI's background check different than the typical investigation is the size of its scope.

"There are so many companies out there that are shortchanging their clients because they only do a search that stops at the state line," Dr. Sumner said. "A federal crime does not come up on a state check. It gives the company that wants a background check a false sense of security. They will say, 'We did a background check,' when in fact the only check that was done was a Georgia criminal history. A guy could have committed a murder in another state, and nobody would even know from that investigation."

PSI has clients in various industries from all over the world, including law enforcement agencies, health care providers and colleges and universities with health care-related programs.

"The law enforcement agencies will often have us handle their background checks so they can spend their time on other responsibilities," Dr. Sumner said. "It also saves them money and time. The average background check would take a sheriff's office about 30 days. The maximum it would take us is seven days, and we average three-and-a-half days." He gave an example of one sheriff's office that found out it would cost about half the dollar amount for PSI to handle its background checks compared to what it would cost if that office conducted the checks on its own.

Hospitals and colleges and universities use PSI's services to conduct background checks on employees and prospective health care-related interns.

An upgrade to PSI's software system which will create greater client usability will be rolled out in April. The improved software will allow clients to input information and see it instantly on their own computers. It will also allow clients to set up accounts to send applicants to a website and fill in their own information, and bill either the client or the applicant.

For example, a college may send an applicant for a medical internship to a PSI-related website, and the applicant would then fill in the pertinent information and could pay for the required background check instantly. The college or hospital would then be able to log in to the system and view the applicant's history.

The applicant would also be able to view the same history.

"We believe a large number of individuals like to know what employers know when they have a background check," Dr. Sumner said. "Then they could print or have it online and give it to others, if necessary."

The background checks are conducted by PSI's experienced team of well-educated employees. Each employee has earned a Bachelor's degree and PSI pays for its employees' graduate studies. According to Dr. Sumner, that incentive allows his company to take a more well-rounded approach to understanding various clients.

PSI's employees have plenty to live up to. "We have a saying around here," Dr. Sumner said. "You never have to worry about stumbling on the bar, but you might hit your head on it."

That bar was first set by Dr. Sumner, who is different than most others in the field. "To my knowledge, I am the only one in my profession who is a criminologist," he said. "The others come from corporate or investing backgrounds or have been involved in security work or consulting. *I was a practitioner and this is simply a way for me to practice what I preach,*" said Dr. Sumner, who is also an associate professor of criminal justice at Georgia Highlands College.

Dr. Sumner's background is in law enforcement. "I started as a deputy sheriff in Polk County when I was 19 years old," he said. "My dad had to purchase my first gun, because I was old enough to carry one, but not to buy one."

He worked as an officer while simultaneously pursuing a degree in forensic science at Jacksonville State University, an exhausting routine. "I worked third shift and would get off work at seven in the morning," Dr. Sumner said. "I'd go home and sleep for an hour, then drive to Jacksonville and get to class as soon as possible so I could take a little nap before the professor arrived."

He continued his educational pursuits while working in Polk County for three years, and spending three years each working as a City of Rome police officer and as an instructor at the state police academy. He earned a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from Jacksonville State and a Ph.D. in Human Services with a concentration in Criminal Justice from Walden University. ■

PSI's website is loaded with information. It is located at www.psibackgroundcheck.com.

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