



# Pre-employ: Best Background Check Service for Small Businesses

by Chad Brooks, BusinessNewsDaily Senior Writer | January 08, 2015 09:14am ET

After much research and analysis of employee background check services, **we recommend [Pre-employ](#) as the best background check service for small businesses.**

Conducting background checks on new employees is a critical step in the hiring process for small businesses. While hiring a candidate who is unqualified can have some negative effects on productivity and office morale, hiring someone who is a potential danger to your workplace can come with even worse consequences.

Even though you can learn a lot about job candidates from their résumés, there are some details, such as whether a candidate has a criminal history that résumés won't disclose. A résumé also won't tell you how truthful the applicant is being about his or her past employment and education.

That's why more and more businesses are turning to background check services to help them with the final stages of the hiring process. Background check services run in-depth criminal searches to see if a candidate has been convicted of any misdemeanors, crimes or felonies, and take the time to verify past employment and educational degrees to ensure the applicant was honest on his or her résumé.

When you're choosing a background-check service, you should look for a company that can conduct these searches in a timely manner and provide results in an easy-to-understand format. Pre-employ does all of these things while also offering excellent customer service. Those are just a couple of the reasons why Pre employ is our choice for the best background check service for small businesses.

## Why Pre-employ?

### Services and cost

Of all of the background-check services we reviewed, Pre-employ — which serves small businesses through its [MyBackgroundCheck.com](https://www.mybackgroundcheck.com) website — had the most background-check packages for small businesses. This large selection is nice because it gives you the ability to pay only for the services you need most. For example, if you only want a simple criminal search, there is a package for that. But if you want a deeper search that includes employment verification, there are packages for that, too. There are also packages for businesses that specialize in transportation, child care, financial services and health care.

It's important to note that the Pre-employ packages must be purchased in bundles of 10. So, rather than paying for background checks one at a time, you have to pay for all 10 up front. However, the checks don't have to be completed all at once, and they never expire. So, if you purchase the bundle of 10, there is no pressure to use them up right away.

We found a variety of packages that would be beneficial to small businesses. The cheapest package offered is the basic criminal background check, which is \$249 for a bundle of 10 and includes a Social Security number address locator search and a nationwide criminal database search. The national criminal check is designed to search for any serious misdemeanors or felonies throughout the entire United States.

If you're looking for a more in-depth background check, the Employment Background Check may be a better option. This service costs \$489.95 for a bundle of 10 and includes the Social Security search and the U.S. criminal database search, as well as a county criminal search in three separate counties, employment verification for the candidate's most recent job and college degree verification.

The county criminal search is a deeper criminal background check service that investigates the specific counties where the employee has lived for any misdemeanor or criminal convictions. We liked that when searching the counties, Pre employ told us that if an arrest or conviction were discovered, a court runner would visit the courthouse in person to gain more details about the incident. Having someone visit the courthouse in person helps ensure everything found in the court database is accurate. The verification services can be used to help ensure the person you're considering for the job is being truthful about where he or she has worked and went to school. This also helps ensure that the candidate has the experience you need for the position for which you are hiring.

The most in-depth package for general business purposes is the Corporate Small Business Background Check. This package is designed for businesses that are hiring executives or managers and costs \$986 for a bundle of 10. In addition to everything offered in the

Our questions focused on the services the company provided, the costs, how the background checks were conducted and how easy the system was to use. Once those questions were answered, the customer service agent offered to have a background-check Employment Background Check, this package includes criminal searches in every county in which the candidate has lived (not just the previous three), and verifies two previous employers and the candidate's references.

We like that you also have the option to combine packages. For example, if you want the basic criminal search, but also want employment verification, you can purchase the basic background-check bundle for \$249 and a package of 10 employment verifications for \$149.

In addition to the basic business background checks, you can buy background checks for positions that involve driving. These packages, which cost \$539, include a U.S. criminal database search, a country criminal search in three counties, a motor vehicle report and a drug test.

There are also financial services checks, which, in addition to the criminal searches, include civil court record searches; child care provider checks, which feature a deeper criminal history search; and a health care industry background check, which includes a special search to determine if the applicant has committed any type of fraud against Medicare, Medicaid or other federally funded health care programs.

The full list of packages, services and costs can be viewed on Pre employ's [MyBackgroundCheck.com](https://www.mybackgroundcheck.com) website.

## **Customer service**

What really separated [Pre-employ](#) from its competitors is its customer service. To get a better sense of what it would be like to work with this company, we posed as a small business owner looking for background-check services. Of all the companies we spoke with, Pre employ offered, by far, the best customer service. When we called the company, we were immediately connected to a customer service representative who spent time walking us through all of the services the company offered. The customer service rep provided clear answers and took extra time to make sure we understood everything he was saying. Rather than providing some simple "yes" or "no" answers to our questions — which reps from many of the companies did — Pre employ representatives went the extra mile to thoughtfully give us their answers. It was clear they cared about getting us the answers we wanted and weren't just trying to get us off the phone as quickly as possible.

specialist give us a one-on-one demo of exactly how the system works. While many of the other background-check services we spoke with provided sample copies of the background-check reports they provide to clients, Pre employ was the only company to offer to walk us through the system step-by-step. Within one hour, the background-check specialist had set up an online meeting to go over the system. The specialist took nearly an hour to walk us through every aspect of the system, including how to request reports, how to get the candidate's authorization for the background check, how to input information for the employment and education verification, how to check on a report's status and how to read the final report.

The next day, one of the company's managers followed up with an email, saying he was willing to answer any follow-up questions we may have had. The system demo and follow-up email provided the level of detail and response you would want from a company you are hiring to complete such a critical task.

Once you are signed up with Pre employ, you may be given (depending on how many checks you are running each month), a specific account manager who will be your main point of contact for any questions or concerns you have. If you aren't given a specific point person, the company has hundreds of customer service reps and background-check specialists available to help you with your questions. The background-check specialist we spoke with said all of the customer service representatives are fully versed on the system and criminal records, so they can help you both understand how to use the system and answer any of your questions about the crimes that may have been flagged in your reports. When you do need help, representatives are available via telephone and email.

## **Ease of use**

Since we got a demo of [Pre-employ's](#) online system, we were able to see firsthand how easy it is to use. The first step is to purchase the bundle (or bundles) you think makes the most sense for your business. You can select and pay for the bundle through Pre employ's [MyBackgroundCheck.com](#) website. Then, you will receive an email asking you for your business information, such as the name of your company and contact details. Once that information has been filled out, a customer service representative will call you to help you log in to the Pre employ online client portal, walk you through how the system works and answer any initial questions you may have. Through this online portal, you can request background checks, see the status of a check and review the final background-check reports. When you are ready to start conducting background checks, you have two easy ways to request them. In the first method, you fill in the candidate's information — such as name, birthday and Social Security number — directly into the website.

The second option —which we really liked — is called "Quick Invite." With this method, all you need to do is fill out the candidate's name and email address. Pre-employ then sends the job candidate an email with a link to the system, asking them to log in and fill in all of the details for him or herself. This is also an opportunity for candidates to electronically sign the forms they're required to sign by law that show they understand a background check is being conducted on them. This not only makes less work for you, but also makes it their responsibility to make sure all of the details they submit are accurate. This can also give you clues to whether the job applicant has a past he or she is trying to hide. If the candidates don't submit their information quickly enough, or don't provide all of the required details, it may be a sign that the candidate is worried about what the search may uncover.

Once you (or the candidate) have submitted the information, the background check is started immediately. On average, each check takes about two days to complete. However, it can take a bit longer if an employment verification is being conducted, or it might be quicker if only a simple national criminal database search is being performed. Throughout the process, you can log in to the system to check on the status of your searches. One of the website pages allows you to see all of the background checks that are in progress, as well as those that have been finished. In addition, Pre-employ will send you an email each time a background check is finished.

When you log in to the system to view a completed report, you will know immediately if the background check turned up any red flags. Next to each candidate listed, you will see either a green or red box. The green box means the background check came up clean, with no criminal records or employment or education verification concerns, while a red box indicates that something negative was uncovered. To get more details, you just click on the candidate's report.

Each background check is laid out in an easy-to-read format. We liked that the background checks that found a criminal record or a discrepancy in past employment or education are marked at the very top, indicating that your review is needed. As you scroll through the report, you will see results and details of each type of search that was conducted. For example, if a county criminal search was done, the status will say "clear" if nothing was found or "hit" if a criminal record was discovered. For those that have a hit, Pre-employ displays all of the details it found about the case, such as when the incident occurred; the exact charges and any details on those charges; whether the incident was a misdemeanor or a felony; and what the sentence was. In some cases, a mug shot will also be included. This is a nice feature because if a candidate tries to deny a charge, you have a mug shot to prove otherwise.

Once you are done reading the report, you have the option of printing it out for your own records. The records are also saved on the website for your review at any time.

## Other benefits

In addition to its array of background checks, [Pre-employ](#) offers several other services that you may find beneficial. For example, the company provides drug testing services, which can be ordered and reviewed through the same online portal you use for your background checks. Within the portal, you can start a drug test, view work in progress and look up past reports. The online system also provides businesses and applicants with a list of preapproved drug testing sites in their area. We also liked that Pre-employ offers I-9 compliance and E-Verify management options. Every business requires new hires to fill out these critical documents to ensure they are legally allowed to work in the United States. What's nice about these added services is that they allow all of your hiring needs to be handled by one service. It provides you with all of the information and details you need to hire the most qualified candidate.

## Limitations

The biggest drawback to using Pre-employ is that the background checks must be purchased in bundles of 10. Many of the other services we analyzed offered the ability to purchase individual background checks. However, we thought that purchasing 10 background checks at one time wouldn't be a big inconvenience for small businesses that make at least five new hires each year, since they likely would be conducting background checks on several candidates for each position. In the end, we think that the easy-to-use systems and superior customer service outweigh the downsides of purchasing the background checks up front. However, for businesses that plan to make only a couple of new hires a year, our choice for the best background-check service for very small businesses may be a better option. Another potential downside is that Pre-employ doesn't offer its services on an a la carte basis like some other companies do. Some background-check services give small businesses a full list of all of the checks it conducts, and allow you to pick the ones you need in order to create your own specialized package. What's nice about this method is that it gives you the ability to conduct some simple criminal checks on employees and deeper investigative searches on others, without having to purchase a complete bundle of background checks. The downside to this option, however, is that when the cost of each service is added up, it often is more expensive than the preset packages Pre-employ offers. For the instances in which the background-check bundles don't have everything you want, Pre-employ is willing to design a screening program for your specific business and budget.

*We chose Pre-employ from a pool of the dozens of background-check services we considered.*