



FROM SUPPLIER TO 'STRATEGIC SCREENING PARTNER'

How a major financial services company transformed its global recruitment process in Asia Pacific

A WHITE PAPER FROM FIRST ADVANTAGE

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First Advantage

A Symphony Technology Group Company

From Supplier to 'Strategic Screening Partner'

How a major financial services company transformed its global recruitment process in Asia Pacific



Who: One of the largest financial services companies in the world

Employees: 200,000+ globally

Issue: 15+ regional vendors providing inconsistent services and quality

> OVERVIEW

Our client is one of the largest financial services companies in the world, with more than 200,000 employees globally. Prior to working with First Advantage, our client's pre-employment background screening operations were very de-centralized, with more than 15 local vendors providing different services with varying quality in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region.

Realizing the need for global consistency, the decision was taken to centralize pre-employment screening. A great deal has been achieved – and learned. While there have been significant obstacles on the road to centralization, there have also been significant rewards which were only possible through our strategic partnership – something the client hadn't foreseen at the outset but now truly values.

> THE CHALLENGE

Our client's de-centralized pre-employment screening (PES) process of yesteryear involved more than 15 vendors in various countries each of whom approached and measured screening in different ways. As well as being inconsistent, screening was difficult and time-consuming to manage and involved many staff in various countries. The organization lacked comprehensive management of their background screening program.

A series of major events gave impetus to the leadership team to instigate significant change in the business's recruitment operations, including centralization of the PES process. The business demanded ambitious improvements with ambitious timescales, as part of an effort to demonstrate heightened controls, greater efficiency, and enhanced quality.

Specific business objectives to which the PES program contributes include:

- Minimize risk and ensure consistent process against Global Background Screen Policy and country Regulatory Requirements
- Mitigate fraud and criminal activity through comprehensive and consistent management practices
- Increase quality standards and reduce cycle time
- Operationalize the management of vendor-conducted screening and leverage cost savings through economies of scale
- Ensure Key Risk Indicator (KRI) and Manager Control Assessment (MCA) targets are achieved



Client required a strategic background screening partner who could:

- Minimize risk and ensure consistent process
- Mitigate fraud and criminal activity
- Increase quality standards and reduce cycle time

Aligned with these objectives, the following goals were established for the PES centralization project:

- Ensure compliance and mitigate risk
- Reduce process cycle time and variation
- Develop comprehensive regional reporting, tracking and metrics

Having clarified exactly **what** they wanted to achieve and by **when**, all that remained was to determine **how** and with **whom**. Following a thorough request for proposal (RFP) process, the client chose First Advantage – and not for the reasons you might expect...

> THE SOLUTION

There can be few purchasing decisions where cost is irrelevant, and our client's choice of screening partner was certainly not one of them. While important, cost was not the most critical consideration. Value (a combination of price and quality) matters more and First Advantage was chosen because of the value we illustrated and have been retained because the value we have consistently proven.

An important aspect of this value, particularly in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, is that First Advantage conducts the screening ourselves, rather than out-sourcing to third party vendors. As the Senior Executive Managing Director commented: **"I'm comfortable to out-source, but I'm not comfortable to out-source to out-source."**

Roll-out of the program was phased, starting with the highest volume areas such as India, China and the Philippines, to allow sufficient time to manage each country's individual data privacy requirements and offshore restrictions.

Ambitious targets were set for the roll-out of the program as well as turn around times (TATs) for individual screenings. As the client now concedes, these TAT targets were not appropriate and turned out to be undesirable because they failed to balance **quality** and **speed**. The client decided that quality is their priority and accepted that TAT targets would need to be adjusted to allow the required quality to be achieved.

Somewhat unintentionally, the client reports that focusing on quality has indirectly benefited them through cost avoidance- high quality screening results in high quality hires, improving staff retention rates and minimizing the costs of training and re-hiring.

"Our quality targets have undoubtedly been met. We know that because we have clearly defined quality standards and measurement tools, which we didn't have before."

> THE RESULTS

The clear goals set for the PES centralization project provide a useful means by which to gauge its success.

- **Ensure compliance and mitigate risk**

This has been achieved through the development of comprehensive supporting documents, including:

- Component process flows – these ensure that screenings are always performed in accordance with internal policies and regulatory requirements.
- Change and control request process – all program changes are clearly documented, ensuring accountability and that appropriate approvals are obtained as well as providing a robust audit trail.

- **Reduce process cycle time and variation**

The introduction of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which documents the operational relationship between First Advantage and the client including each party's 'roles and responsibilities', ensures consistency and quality of service that is repeatable at large scales.

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) provides turn-around time (TAT) targets for all screenings, regardless of role and location, using candidate start date as the anchor. Additionally, using agreed upon adjudication guidelines that take into account industry best practices as well as client standards ensures a reliable and quality screen for all candidates. In other words, similar circumstances around the world will have similar screening conclusions.

- **Comprehensive regional reporting and tracking**

Having a single screening provider delivering a consistent service across the APAC region allows comprehensive reporting, accurate tracking and insightful metrics, which are delivered to the client on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Volumes, timelines for candidate data submission, final report analysis, and overall timelines, by country, and at the aggregate, are significant components to maintaining appropriate management oversight of the program.

> CONCLUSIONS

A recurring theme throughout the relationship to date has been the importance of our **strategic partnership**. The client tells us that this is single most important reason why they continue to work with First Advantage.

So, what exactly is a strategic partnership?

Naturally, it's open to interpretation and will mean different things to different people, but both First Advantage and the client believe the pillars of our strategic partnership are joint **accountability, trust** and **commitment**.

It is a relationship based on trust, which takes time to build and effort to maintain. We communicate openly what is happening and work together to find solutions. Best intentions are always assumed, and both parties do whatever it takes to clear the backlog, remove the obstacles, and plug the gaps because we realize that it is in both of our interests to do so.

The importance of both parties' commitment to the success of the program is difficult to overstate. Throughout the roll-out, senior management representatives from both sides met regularly to ensure operational stability – meetings which continue to this day, even if there are no live issues, in order to maintain close working relationships. Both parties value and are committed to making the partnership work. Failure is not an option.

Intrinsically linked to the strategic partnership is the integration of screening into the wider recruitment process. Rather than screening being treated as a stand-alone entity which is only concerned with itself, the client insists the candidate experience is at the center of the process. From selection to onboarding, the process is measured straight through as one, with start date as the anchor. This ensures coordinated efforts and fluid transition through each set of hand-offs. The result is a win for the candidate, a win for the client, and a win for First Advantage.



"We consider First Advantage to be our strategic partner. They have done everything we asked of them and much, much more."



"We've gone from having lots of people doing screening as a small part of their job to having a team of 20 who do screening exclusively. We now have much greater control over and understanding of our PES program."

**We can help. For more information,
contact First Advantage today:**

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As the trusted partner of over 35,000 organizations worldwide, we at First Advantage provide easy-to-understand background screening results so you can confidently make decisions about prospective employees. Not only does this safeguard your brand, but you also arrive at dramatically better background screening insights - insights you can rely on.

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