

## Holistic Candidate Screening Ensures Best Practices; Due Diligence for Financial Services Firm

### A Barada Associates Case Study

For MainSource Financial Group, superior candidate screening is a cornerstone of its operation. The firm maintains a 13% employee turnover rate—7% lower than the industry average of 20%. Furthermore, as a publicly traded entity, the company is subject to intense scrutiny from federal examiners and regulators in all areas, including Human Resources (HR).

Nevertheless, when MainSource VP and Director of Human Resources Jennifer Bullard came to the firm in 2001, components of the employee screening process were outsourced to various service providers (credit checks were and continue to be handled in-house). The resulting product was "fragmented in terms of content as well as turnaround," Bullard notes. In 2008, that outlook changed dramatically when Bullard turned to Barada Associates for what she calls an "objective, holistic standard of excellence" in looking at candidates.

### The Shift to Excellence.

Prior to 2008, Bullard's job did not involve selection of candidate screening providers. As soon as that area came within her purview, she turned to Barada for help streamlining



and improving the screening process. Bullard had become acquainted with Barada and its competency more than a decade earlier. "I felt very confident that I wasn't going to find another provider that would exceed the standards of quality that exist at Barada," she notes.

Barada offered full-service screening—not only criminal checks and drug screening but also background profiling including employment, education and reference verifications. Choosing them would enable Bullard to centralize with a single provider all aspects of employee screening previously handled by multiple providers.

Bullard had an additional goal in mind when she selected Barada, which was reducing bias to the lowest possible level.

### Client: MainSource Financial Group

MainSource Financial Group is a publicly traded financial services company (\$2.9 billion in assets) specializing in retail and commercial banking, insurance and investments. The firm has 85 branch locations and 1000 employees across four states (Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky) and hires between 200-250 employees per year.

### The Services:

Barada handles all of MainSource's prescreen sets including criminal check, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) when appropriate, pre-screen testing (Barada sends appropriate tests to the candidate to take online, at home), reference reporting, academic and employee verification, and pre-employment drug testing. MainSource also has a random drug screening program that it runs through Barada.

"When [screening] is done internally, there is an orientation towards examining some specific or critical areas of interest [in relation to] the opening—what the screener considers to be essential criteria or skill set," says Bullard.

With Barada, Bullard notes, "I can suggest to them to examine those pieces but they aren't going to overlook the complete range of credentials [important in] a high-performing candidate. They are truly neutral and have no vested interest whatsoever in the candidates that are presented."

### Meaningful Impact.

According to Bullard, Barada's value to MainSource extends far beyond comprehensive screening and encompasses valuable decision-making efforts that not only result in better hires but also enable Bullard to shift more of the workload away from

*"Barada applies an objective, holistic standard of excellence in looking at candidates."*

the HR team. "When we send applications to Barada, we may or may not suggest to them which references to choose," Bullard says. "They are very savvy at discerning whose perspective is best for us."

In fact, Bullard's confidence in Barada is so complete that she lets the firm work directly with field HR personnel and hiring managers. "They are able to interface from their remote location directly with Barada and Barada with them if they have questions or want to gain additional insight about candidates being profiled," she says. "It covers our whole footprint in terms of Barada's interface with our organization. Managers recognize that Barada is an expert at what they do."

The holistic approach of Barada's comprehensive service set provides MainSource with a "richer view of the candidates under consideration for employment," Bullard notes. "It is not coming to us in fragmented format. It comes in a complete

reporting package." This is beneficial, not only during hiring, but as part of the firm's due diligence requirements as a publicly traded firm. "The strength of the complete profiles Barada generates in personnel files demonstrates credibility comparable to nothing else," she says.

"I have worked with all sorts of reference reporting services along the way and many offer very shallow, cursory points of information that lack substance," Bullard concludes. "Barada is anything but that, and this is what sets them apart."

"With their level of expertise, the holistic approach and the integrity of the data, they provide a genuine product that truly gives you a good handle on the candidate that you're going to be bringing in the door. This [results in] lower turnover, enhances the level of confidence of hiring managers in the field and mitigates the risk from examination that we would have on the regulatory side."

