

Selina Mitchell – 10 July 2007

IT professionals are subject to an increasing number of background checks from potential employees who no longer trust the positive spin provided in CVs and by referees.

Once-popular psychometric tests are out of vogue, and are quickly being replaced by comprehensive probity checks, recruitment companies say.

"Probity checking provides a level of independence and objectivity - and it's definitely on the increase," Candle ICT national manager Jane Bianchini said.

"Twenty-five per cent of people, when given the opportunity to come clean on their work experience and qualifications, still lie," Ms Bianchini said.

The four most common things people lie about are academic qualifications (failing to mention incomplete study), job title, salary levels (often exaggerated) and employment dates.

Federal and state criminal records, human resources employment dates, bankruptcy lists and press clippings are all checked by many clients now.

"These days a lot of organisations, especially those for which security is a high priority, will put all all of their employees through probity checks," Ms Bianchini said.

Ambition Technology managing director Andrew Cross said background checks were becoming much more prevalent for security reasons, as well as to combat a dramatic drop in levels of trust. "The power of the CV and the referee is diminishing," Mr Cross said. "Psychometric tests are hardly ever used now - whereas five year's ago they were widely used."

Mr Cross said the increase in background checks inevitably meant employers were waiting longer to obtain staff.

"We need to manage the expectation. IT can now take six to eight weeks for a someone to be checked and approved."

Most IT professionals looking for work now expected to be carefully checked, he said.

Michael Page technology associate director Emily Holman said her company conducted almost no psychometric testing for clients any more, but background checks were on the rise.

"No one gives a bad reference," she said.

The checks were always conducted by a third party nominated by the client, and paid for by the client.

"This is being driven by Human Resources departments not by line managers, who always want to move ahead as quickly as possible," Ms Holman said.

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,22045938-15306,00.html>