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GO TO GREG

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Q. I don't have a great credit history, and I'm worried it will prevent me from getting a job. How important is the background check in determining whether I'll get an offer?

A. Years ago, I conducted a background check on a candidate for an accountant position and discovering a conviction for fraud. Which kind of, you know, gave me some pause. So it depends on what's discovered and whether it's consistent with the way the candidate represents himself. Given the legitimate concerns about everything from workplace violence to illegal immigration, it's understandable why the vast majority of employers conduct some level of background check. I wouldn't sweat a few late payments on your credit cards. Basically, we just want to make sure you are who you say you are, and that there aren't skeletons in your closet that would reasonably prevent us from considering you.

Background checks are regulated by the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act. If a negative report is the basis for you not being offered a job, you're supposed to be notified so you have a chance to correct any inaccuracies in the report. To nip such problems in the bud, it's prudent to investigate yourself periodically, particularly before embarking on a job search, so that you can see what prospective employers will see. There are numerous, credible online firms that can conduct various degrees of searches for anywhere from \$10 to \$100, depending on how widely and deeply you want to snoop on yourself.

Q. 'Tis the season for a casual dress code on Fridays, which always makes me nervous. Do you have any tips for guys who don't read GQ?

A. Every company has its own dress code, so there isn't any one-size-fits-all fashion

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advice I can give you. But here's a general head-to-toe primer: Start with a good haircut (and the more follically challenged you are, the shorter it should be - not even The Donald avoids ridicule for a comb-over). People notice shoes - no sneakers or flip-flops. Unless you're auditioning for one of those Geico caveman commercials, button up at least enough to hide the chest hair, OK? And keep the slacks and shirt understated and classic. Anything with a Hawaiian print, and you're getting voted off the island.

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