



Trust at Speed: Hiring Fraud, Deepfakes, and the Identity Risks CHROs Can't Ignore

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Host: Dr. Shari Simpson, Thought Leader, Paylocity

Guest: Nik Daruwala, Vice President of Sales, Checkr

[00:00:00] **ANNOUNCER:** You're listening to The HR Mixtape, a podcast for leaders who want to understand people, strengthen culture, and navigate change with clarity. Today's conversation starts now.

[00:00:16] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Joining me today is Nik Daruwala, Vice President of Sales at Checkr. He brings 21 years of business-to-business technology sales experience, including more than 14 years in senior leadership roles where he built and scaled people teams at Microsoft, Gartner, and SurveyMonkey.

[00:00:39] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Nik, thank you so much for sitting down and talking to me on the podcast today. We are at the SHRM 2026 Annual Conference Expo inside the Checkr booth. So glad to have you on.

[00:00:50] **NIK DARUWALA:** Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

[00:00:52] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** So I'm really excited about this topic, and we're going to start here. How has the fundamental nature of enterprise hiring changed over your career?

[00:01:01] **NIK DARUWALA:** Yeah, it's been interesting. I've been at this for almost 24 years and counting in different roles, not only in technology sales. It depends and varies by industry and time. We are seeing a lot of global processes happening. It started all local in hiring, but there are sometimes real competitive advantages to looking at global opportunities to hire. There was always this demand previously that you had to meet the person in person. Now, because the last couple of years we got used to hiring remotely, we're becoming more comfortable with that, although there are some implications of that which we might get to today. The volume of hiring has gone crazy. If you think about the platforms that exist out there, LinkedIn, Indeed, and the number of AI tools that are out there, there's a huge amount of supply, and it's very easy to apply for a job. So I think we democratized hiring for the candidate. We made it much easier to at least search and look for a job. And there's also some implication for all that volume coming in to make sure we hire the right person at the end of it. How AI has changed a lot of the hiring behaviors, I think there are pluses and minuses and advantages to that for both the candidate as well as for the recruiting teams and talent operations teams.

[00:02:33] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** We're going to try to limit how much we say "AI" on this call, but I don't think it's the only thing CHROs are anxious about right now. I think they have a lot on their plate. So when it comes to hiring, what are you seeing as their top priorities or top anxiety drivers?

[00:02:50] **NIK DARUWALA:** I think right now we've seen, at least in our business, a huge amount of inbound demand and interest to solve a problem around making sure that the candidates they're seeing throughout the hiring funnel are actually who they say they are. There's some concern from CHROs: are they hiring the wrong person downstream, and what's the business impact of that? Sometimes, especially if you're working with organizations that manage vulnerable populations, that's a huge concern to get wrong. They're introducing risk into the business, and I think that keeps a lot of CHROs awake at night, because that was a threat surface they didn't need to worry about before. It was mainly all cyber-focused, but we're seeing more and more creative ways that bad actors are trying to enter companies, gather information, and potentially do nefarious things. It was not obvious to a lot of people that CHROs might have to play an outsized role in partnering up with their IT counterparts to prevent that. And if you're a small business, it's equally a problem, because you typically wear multiple hats, so you need solutions, or you rely a lot on technology providers to help prevent some of that risk from entering your hiring funnel.

[00:04:13] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Yeah. Only 31% of CHROs have confidence in their ability to prevent hiring fraud, and I find that really fascinating, especially as we look at all of the tools now available to candidates to help them ace interviews. I recently saw something that was basically an AI version of yourself coming in and doing the interview and answering the questions.



[00:04:39] **NIK DARUWALA:** That's gotta be really scary for CHROs. And I think it's unfortunately just getting started. Some industries may be less exposed if you're doing more in-person hiring, but equally there's fraud that might already be in their company that they don't realize. If you take the question directly, I think there's a threat from deepfakes, the synthetic IDs that are being created, and AI-generated credentialing happening right now. These are all new challenges I don't think the CHRO had to worry about before. We hear a lot from our customers and CHROs that this was a non-issue at the start of 2025. But as AI and the large language models have become more and more sophisticated, the tooling and power to create fraud has become a lot harder to navigate and manage. So it's a new challenge for CHROs, and not an area they typically had to proactively think about worrying about. They're often very reactive to go and solve this issue, but smart CHROs are getting ahead of this. They're partnering up with their technology counterparts, the chief information security officers, if that role exists, or at least highlighting to the C-suite if that role doesn't exist within their organization, especially for small or medium-sized companies that have fewer resources on the technology side.

[00:06:02] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** And potentially they need to rely a lot on the vendor to help guide them and prevent this risk from entering their hiring funnels. I recently attended a conference where they talked about non-consensual intimate deepfakes, and as an HR person, having to pay attention to something like that was not on the bingo card for the year. So how many executives or enterprise leaders are actually prepared to handle hiring fraud? There's the awareness piece. But let's say we catch somebody. How prepared are they to handle that situation?

[00:06:44] **NIK DARUWALA:** I think most are not yet. But they're becoming more and more aware, and it's usually a reactive state. It's very similar to what we saw in the early days of cyber, where until there was a cyber incident, then people react and take action and evaluate vendors in the market and find a solution to close the gap. I think it's very similar for what we're seeing with some of these deepfakes and fraud cases. Until you have your first one, you might not want to think this is a top priority. It maybe sits at the bottom of the list of all the to-dos you're required to do as a senior HR leader. And suddenly, when you have your first one, or there's an impact to your business or revenue or your customers as a result of someone who entered the organization who isn't who they say they are, that's usually when we see the impetus to change. But sophisticated HR leaders are getting ahead of this. It's becoming more and more of a topic. At the time of this recording, if you look at the power of some of these large language models, the US government stepped in to apply export controls on Anthropic from releasing their latest model, just to show the power of these platforms. They want to do some checks and balances before releasing. The power is being democratized, and if you have nefarious intent, it's really worrisome. But there are companies out there that can help. We're one of them, and we're deeply thinking through this problem because we see it more and more from all outcomes.

[00:08:23] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** Where do you typically see the fraud or the deepfakes or the use of AI resumes inside that talent pipeline? Is it right at the beginning, or are people getting all the way to the point where they're starting and you're realizing they don't have any of the skills they said they had?

[00:08:42] **NIK DARUWALA:** We see it everywhere. We see it at the application level, just applying for the job. We see it at the interview level, where there are now deepfakes. You could have an avatar of a human, but actually it's a bad actor or someone faking who they represent on a Zoom call if you're doing a remote screen. When someone actually gets the job, we're seeing it in the background check process as well. And even post-hire, if you don't continuously monitor the identity of the folks working for you, there's risk you introduce to your organization.

[00:09:20] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** What have you said to the person who's like, "Yeah, okay, I understand all of this, but have you seen the reqs I have to fill this week? I'm being told I need to fill them in two weeks. I can't worry about this."

[00:09:41] **NIK DARUWALA:** Totally fair. It's a fair demand that the business places on the talent and recruiting leads. It's always do more with less. If you look at all the funding of resources and where they're adding headcount, HR and TA teams are usually the last to ever get requisitions to hire more recruiters. But I think there are solutions out there like us where you don't need to make that trade-off. The best hiring programs give you the confidence to have that throughput and speed, but you don't need to compromise on compliance or safety. You should have technology automate a lot of that low-value



manual work, but still maintain a high bar for accuracy and compliance with your hiring process. There should be risk controls embedded into the process. We obsess over trying to help our customers remove friction from the hiring process. We try to obsess over that last mile of the hiring process that sometimes isn't the most fun part, which is you've made an offer to someone and then they've got to go through the background check. I think there are other technology providers out there trying to tackle the same funnel challenge. But in our world, we don't see a need for compromise. You get to have your cake and eat it too. You both get the speed as well as the safety and compliance, and I think all technology providers in the HR tech ecosystem should have that as a north star goal.

[00:11:08] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** As Checkr being a premier background screening company, and I'm going to be careful here because that description does not do justice to Checkr's totality, what is the thing you're consistently solving as a pain point for businesses when you come in and talk about your solutions?

[00:11:33] **NIK DARUWALA:** I'll try to be as unbiased as I can. We don't just do background checks. We think about how we can be a data platform for safe and fair decisions. And that covers a lot of things in life. What many people don't realize is that they actually interact with our product indirectly. If you've ever taken an Uber or a Lyft, or had delivery from DoorDash or Instacart, that stranger you just assume you trust, we have been verifying for many, many years. We're actually the background check provider for many of these companies we just take for granted every day of the week. The specific pain points we solve are a couple of things. There's the candidate side. We've spent a lot of time looking at different worker types, and we understand that everyone needs a mobile-first experience. Generationally, if you're trying to staff someone for a front-of-house operation and you send a 16-year-old or 17-year-old an email, they're like, "What's that?" But they can quickly do a background check on their phone, and we meet them where they are. There's the candidate experience aspect, from a beautiful UI to enter data all the way through to the user management of actually using the platform. We've spent a lot of time with HR leaders, talent operations folks, and recruiting coordinators, and we truly try to remove friction from their day. Everything that's manual in their day, we try to automate. We're a technology-first company. We were the first API in the background check industry 12 years ago, and we've continued to innovate, and we're doing that with fraud right now. We fundamentally believe that trust should be a competitive advantage, and that you should be able to develop that trust at speed. We think about speed. We also want to make sure it's incredibly compliant, with no underreporting and a highly accurate result.

[00:13:43] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** You mentioned speed, and it leads me to my next question. When I think about hiring at scale, you have organizations that have consistent knowledge worker hiring replacements, but you also have organizations that do mass seasonal hiring and need to very quickly get through background checks on large volumes. How do they prioritize this process, and what should be coming first as they're trying to make sure they're getting accurate information without slowing down the pipeline?

[00:14:07] **NIK DARUWALA:** I think there are a couple of areas where you can prevent some of the slowdown that happens later in the funnel. They should be checking identities and constantly scanning. It's business-dependent, but there should be automation and workflow efficiency, and a really simple, easy-to-use candidate experience. Because when you spend time with the folks applying for jobs, sometimes they just want the first job that's the easiest to start. They want to start earning income today. Sometimes they have to work two or three jobs to support their families, and they need that first job. It's almost like a competitive advantage if you can have a frictionless hiring process from application through to onboarding and start. Hiring teams should look at that and ask where there are micro improvements they can make in that hiring flow. For our piece of it, the last mile, the background check process, that's what we obsess over, trying to make it as frictionless as possible.

[00:15:34] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** All right, looking forward, let's go two to three years. I feel like asking what's going to happen five years from now is pretty unrealistic. Two to three years from now, you talked about younger generations and their modes of communication. I'm thinking there could be a world where you're applying and doing this entire process through an Instagram message. How is Checkr thinking about the next two to three years? What's going to be different in the hiring space?



[00:16:00] **NIK DARUWALA:** We're constantly thinking and looking ahead. We have 140,000 customers now that use our platform, from very small business owners all the way through Fortune 500, and everything in between. We believe that a lot of what will happen is AI will continue to automate a lot of the administrative tasks, which for anyone in a TA role, recruiting role, or HR leadership, are some of the most non-obvious areas to automate. We talk to a lot of customers who in 2026 are still doing so much manual work. For example, they're manually adjudicating every single flagged record, and there are now ways to automate a lot of that. It will never actually make the hiring decision. I don't believe that will happen. I still think humans should finally make the judgment call on that. But a lot of the administrative tasks of the role should be automated. Because ultimately, hiring is a highly compliant industry, and it's a very important thing to get right. I think one of the most painful parts of being a hiring manager is just sourcing really good talent. A lot of that talent sourcing is going to be done through AI. You'll be able to personalize outreach to top talent you want to proactively find, or if you want to build a bench of talent, you'll be able to use AI to write very thoughtful messages to prospective people you want to bring into your company. That's a very manual process right now. You have to manually look for talent, find the criteria, and if you use LinkedIn Recruiter, you've got to go through all your filters. I think a lot of that's going to be automated. You'll be able to ask AI: "I'm hiring for a role in Dallas. Find me the top talent that meet my criteria. Write the outreach. Send them via whatever method of communication you want." I also think that verification and trust are going to be super important. As AI and fraud continue to increase, we'll see an increasing need for really good verification and trust signals. And whether we like it or not, I think there'll be a need for continuous monitoring.

[00:18:46] **DR. SHARI SIMPSON:** It can feel a bit big brother-ish at times, but making sure you have the right people in your organization, and confirming their identities and any records relevant to their role are still current, is going to matter more, not less. Nik, this was such a great conversation. It's really cool hearing from somebody on the sales side of HR tech, because you get to have all these tough conversations with people as you go in and try to sell Checkr to them. You have a really different perspective than what I've heard from some other people. I appreciate you sitting down and chatting with me.

[00:19:28] **NIK DARUWALA:** Thank you. I hope it was helpful. Appreciate your time.

[00:19:40] **ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for tuning in to The HR Mixtape. Like, share, review, and subscribe to support the show and help more people discover these conversations. Until next time, keep the conversation going.