



THE NATIONAL HIRE EX-FELONS CAMPAIGN

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10 KEYS TO HIRING & MANAGING EX-FELONS

Thank you for considering hiring ex-felons. The purpose of the National Hire Ex-Felons Campaign is to raise awareness that ex-felons who can't find a job may revert to crime to support themselves. We want you to have a great experience employing an ex-felon, and hopefully recommend other business owners to follow your lead and consider providing a decent job to an ex-felon.

You're making a difference that helps our society, strengthens our economy, and gives someone a second chance. HOWEVER - not everyone is ready for a second chance. This brochure presents keys to hiring and managing an ex-felon that is ready, which hopefully creates a win for everyone.

In general, hiring and managing ex-felons isn't much different than your other employees, and despite these steps contained herein you will still have to rely heavily on your intuition, common sense, best judgment, and personal references if available.

If you only remembered one thing from this brochure it should be this: consider each individual person and don't just look at the fact they have a criminal history. Over 70 Million Americans have some sort of criminal history, so this is an issue that affects us all. While most people who paid their debts to society deserve a second chance, not everyone is ready for that opportunity. Your mission is to identify applicants who are ready and have moved past their past. These often make great loyal workers.

We suggest you do your normal candidate screening, just don't automatically disqualify a candidate because they have a criminal record unless their offense is directly related to the job duties you are hiring for. If the person is still a possible candidate, or you've already decided to hire them, then follow these steps before you offer them a position:

1. **What have they done with their life** since their conviction? How can they prove that their past is in the past? Their hobbies, any groups they are involved with, and what they do with their free time will give you additional insight to help you determine what the applicant's patterns and habits of life are.
2. **Was the offense recent or more than 7 years ago?** Credible studies prove that if a person remains out of jail for more than 7 years they have no higher likelihood to commit crime than the rest of the population.
3. **Expect complete disclosure.** You don't need to know the gory details, but get the exact conviction(s), dates, sentence served, and whether there are any court ordered provisions they still need to fulfill. These could include restitution payments, parole, community service, or something else.

Was the candidate truthful and sincere in describing the offense, or did you have to drag the facts out of them? Anything less than full disclosure and complete cooperation is a red flag.

Please be sensitive to the fact that some job applicants will be very nervous talking about their mistakes, if for no other reason than they don't want you to punish them for being honest with you.

4. **How do they explain their crime?** Do you get a sense that they have accepted responsibility for their crime? Do they make excuses, or have reasonable explanations? A reasonable

explanation could be that someone may have gotten involved in gang activity when they were young and became involved in criminal activities, but they have since outgrown those connections and activities. Another reasonable explanation could be that they abused substances but have since conquered those demons. Again, use common sense and your best judgment to evaluate this.

5. **Are they on parole?** If so, ask how much parole remains and get the contact information of their parole officer. Parole is a specialized “leash” that is additional assurance that the ex-felon employee will usually try hard to be a model employee for you. If the job applicant isn’t on parole try to get personal references and check them for a better picture of the person.

Many ex-offenders have to obtain work, and perform well at work, as a condition of their parole, so they have a vested interest in doing a good job for you. Contact the parole officer to see what they know about the applicant, confirm what the applicant told you their criminal issues were, determine the length of remaining parole, and see if the parole officer feels the applicant is ready to be a productive member of society, and why. Ask the parole officer if the applicant has regular drug screenings, and what the result of the last one was. You can even let them know that a condition of hiring is that they do a drug test, and share the results with you. Get to know the parole officer. Chances are the next time you have a job opening no one would work harder to help it fill than them.

6. **How is their life different from when they committed their crime, and what did they learn?** Was it a violent crime or a non-violent crime? The majority of offenders have committed non-violent crimes. Many violent crimes were committed while participating in a lifestyle with drugs or alcohol so make sure these aren’t current issues now.
7. **What’s the pattern?** We’ve all done things we knew were mistakes while we were doing them. These are things we often regret most. Find out why they committed the crime to begin with. Crimes that are committed are often a result of those types of thinking and behavior errors. What you need to know is if those thinking errors are patterns that will continue or if the person will not repeat those mistakes. This is where knowing the crime, and whether they are taking responsibility for it, helps give you the best insight into that person. For instance, their crime likely was something they knew better than to do, such as embezzling funds. Why did they embezzle? Was it to fuel a gambling addiction or a drug habit? If so, have they completed treatment? Do they remain active in Gambler’s Anonymous or some other support group?
8. **Don’t create problems.** Obviously use common sense and avoid putting a person in a position directly related to their crime, but don’t be afraid to use their skill and expertise as long as their duties don’t allow them or tempt them to re-offend. For instance: some ex-offenders, particularly white-collar ones, may have a strong track record of success in their professional career, and likely would add the most value if they could perform work in their field. Find a position that uses their knowledge and skills without exposing them, or you, to an instance where a crime can be committed. Employers that practiced this have been able to hire very capable professionals at a fraction of what their skill set warrants, while getting the full benefit of their expertise.
9. If you want respectable workers, treat them with respect. Don’t steal their dignity by letting everyone know about their past. As it relates to anyone other than those with an absolute direct “need to know” let the employee reveal what they feel comfortable with to whom they want to, when or if they want to. Instruct anyone on your team who does need to know about their past to maintain strict confidentiality and dignity.

10. Don't treat them any differently than other employees, but realize some ex-offenders may need a little extra instruction on things that come naturally for other workers – particularly if the ex-felon was incarcerated for a long time.

Our website www.hireexfelons.org has helpful hints and other free resources to help you have a successful employment experience with ex-felons. Over time we also will add free videos you can use for employee training. Please share your questions, suggestions, and your experiences with us. We will maintain your confidentiality, but hope we all can learn to better maximize the ex-felon labor pool.

If things don't go as well as you had hoped, before deciding not to hire another ex-felon, ask yourself if the problem was a "normal" employee issue or was it caused by their criminal past? Please consider each individual applicant based on their own merits, and don't hold one person's mistakes against someone else who could be a great new employee. It's likely you didn't take the same steps to screen previous ex-felons as you now know to do so you can now better screen and make better hires of ex-felons.

THANK YOU for your efforts to give someone a second chance.

*The **NATIONAL HIRE A FELON CAMPAIGN** is brought to you by www.hireexfelons.org our partners and www.illegaltolegal.org. Thank you for reading this, spreading the word, and for your consideration!*

For those ex-felons who still can't find a job that pays enough to keep away from returning to crime we have resources to show them how to use their life skills to start their own business, and hopefully become an employer themselves.

Buy a copy of **Illegal to Legal: Business Success for (Ex) Criminals** for an offender, ex-offender, or person at risk to offend, or their families. Check www.illegaltolegal.org for many free resources as well.

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info@illegaltolegal.org

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