

12 Reasons Small Businesses Hire Ex-Offenders

Author: Marcy Fletchall



Yes, We're hiring!

Have you ever thought about hiring a formerly incarcerated convicted felon? If you haven't, maybe you should consider it. Hiring convicted felons is an excellent opportunity for several reasons.

No one wants to work

We've all heard that mantra for several months now. Today, the unemployment rate is 3.8%. Finding candidates remains a challenge. Why? However, a pool of overlooked and underserved groups of employable people need a job, are willing to work, and want a second chance. Not all ex-offenders are criminals.

Ex-Felon Statistics

In a study by the Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), one in four adult Americans – about 65 million people (Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian, male, and female) – have an arrest or conviction that will show up in a routine criminal background check.

According to the [Prison Policy Initiative](#), using a nationally representative dataset, among the 5 million formerly incarcerated people living in the U.S., formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at the rate of over 27%, greater than any historical

period, including the Great Depression. Unemployed offenders who are released and have no job will be more likely to offend again versus those with a job (Lockwood et al., 2012; Skardhamar & Telle, 2012).

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (**DoJ**), state and federal prisons release over 10,000 ex-offenders every week, or more than 650,000 ex-offenders every year. Today, over **70 million Americans** have criminal records. **75%** of formerly incarcerated individuals are still unemployed a year after release.

A 2022 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (**BJS**), about 60%: the report showed more than 50,000 people were released from federal prisons in 2010; 33% found no employment over four years post-release, and at any given time, no more than 40% of the same group was employed.

This data reiterates that formerly incarcerated people want jobs, continue to look for jobs, may just need a chance, and are available.

Giving an ex-offender a job

Hi, are you hiring? Oh wow, that's great. My name's Ray. I'm an ex-convict. Yeah, I was in the big house for three years with many other guys who made mistakes. But before we go further, I have something I'd like to share with you. Like many other men and women, I have been arrested. Would you be surprised to learn that one out of four American adults (men and women, all races) has a criminal record. Now I've served my time and been released. I'm trying to get back on track. Here's what I learned while there: I would not commit the crime that put me there if I could redo it. I know my record is a little iffy, and my credit isn't the best right now. But I'll work hard, provide references, and I'm willing to be flexible as far as pay goes. I'm hoping for a second chance to prove myself and get back into decent work.



Most employers are apprehensive about having an employee on their payroll who committed a felony. The idea of hiring ex-offenders seems so unfair, immoral, and disgusting. After all, these people have done something unforgivable. They have defiled the sanctity of our society by committing a crime. Society will never see them the way same again, even if they change for the better. Although understandable, it isn't necessarily true. [There are no studies](#) showing hiring workers with criminal records contributes to increased crime, violence, theft, or dishonesty in the workplace.

Released ex-offenders need stable jobs for the same reasons as everyone else: to support themselves and their families, pursue life goals, and strengthen their communities. Employment provides an ex-offender with independence, status, earning power, structured routine, social contact, and a sense of purpose and direction. It directly affects reducing reoffending and cutting the number of crimes committed in our communities.

Some employers are concerned that hiring a person with a previous conviction is too high of a risk for the organization, mainly if they cause a problem in the workplace. Since keeping the workplace safe is the responsibility of the employer, a negligent hiring claim. Theft is also a concern. However, a free government-funded bond protects the employer to cover the risk for the initial few months of employment.



12 Benefits of hiring an ex-felon

Remember that not all former offenders present a risk. In most cases, the benefits outweigh the risks. Providing second chance opportunities for ex-offenders to successfully integrate with friends and family, society as a whole, and communities can be financially, personally, and professionally rewarding for both the employer and the ex-felon.

1. Employment gives an ex-offender a second chance at life and helps them integrate back into society after serving their time in prison. Research shows that having a stable job is critical of an offender's journey back into society. You may help someone stay out of prison by giving them an opportunity.

2. **Northwestern University** research showed that people with criminal records are retained much longer and less likely to quit their jobs than other employees voluntarily. Although they may have a less favorable past, it is the ability to look forward and find a candidate grateful for the opportunity, and has a good chance of remaining with the organization.

3. Employers are offered tax credits for hiring ex-offenders within specific target groups. The government-funded Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) has no limits on the number of individuals an employer may hire within the target group of ex-offenders. These tax credits could significantly reduce an employer's tax burden.

4. Another featured benefit is the automation process of the WOTC. From screening to onboarding and completing the forms, the WOTC makes the process for hiring an ex-offender easy, taking the confusion and frustration out of the process. It ensures employers can maximize tax credits available to them.

5. Hiring ex-offenders can provide evidence of nondiscriminatory practices. Some protected classes are more likely to help employers qualify for tax credits.

6. Expanding the applicant pool is essential to any organization. Hiring those with prior convictions expands the low talent pool, where employers need more applicants.

7. Ex-offenders are an incredibly hardworking group. They are grateful for the opportunity and are motivated to prove they can do a good job. You will get 100% effort from them. Because the ex-offender recognizes they don't have a lot of opportunities, they are grateful to have the chance to excel with an employer.

8. The ex-offender has no desire to return to prison. They want to keep their job. They will be looking out for the employer, because they know the employer is looking out for them. The prospect of moving into a job upon release is incredibly motivating for an offender. It begins to establish loyalty towards an employer, because the ex-offender knows they are a risk to an employer.

9. They have more tolerance when dealing with workplace problems. Ex-offenders bring a fresh perspective on solving problems in your company. Living the company values is important to all employees. This process brings diversity into the workplace and an incredibly positive experience for all involved.

10. Ex-offenders are eager to learn. Some prisons offer training programs, which may mean the individual brings a specialized skill or that the training your organization needs has already been taught. If they haven't learned a particular skill, an ex-offender is willing, able, and eager to learn it.

11. Ex-offenders are less likely to steal from you while on the job. The Employment and Training ADOL studies They understand the consequences of damaging their probation, and the thought of returning to prison isn't appealing.

12. Ex-offenders make great security guards, since they've had experience dealing with criminals and often know how their minds work. It helps break down stereotypes about ex-offenders in general, and shows that not all are bad or unproductive members of society.

The stigma about hiring an ex-offender has been dwindling over the years. As more people realize that these men and women are like everyone else, our fear of their inclusion in the workforce diminishes. Restoring the rights of ex-offenders is beneficial to society. It also boosts the economy due to increased opportunities for employment and increased tax revenue from the more than five million felons in the working age population currently unemployed. America was built on giving second chances. The employer will be paid back ten-fold in hard work, reliability, and commitment.