

Employing Ex-offenders: Making the Right Choice

Introduction

Recruiting qualified, experienced personnel in the hospitality industry is an ongoing challenge for many hospitality businesses and competition for well-qualified employees can be fierce. However, there is a potentially untapped resource for hospitality managers: ex-offenders.

According to Nacro, the crime reduction charity, over **10 million people in the UK have a criminal record** and some may already be in your employ. So who makes up this population of ex-offenders? Consider the following key statistics:

- 68% of all sentences handed down by courts are fines.
- Only 7.9% of offenders are given immediate custodial sentences.
- 72% of employers who had knowingly employed someone with a criminal record said they were equally or more trustworthy than other staff.

Source: Business in the Community

For businesses, hiring an ex-offender can satisfy a number of different needs including financial, moral and societal. It can even assist a company in meeting its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The benefits for the individual can be even greater.

Why employ ex-offenders?

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) conducted a survey of employers that showed “the employers’ experiences in employing ex-offenders were far more positive...” than expected. Employers reported that “re-offending when in employment was

very rare indeed, underlining the contribution getting a job can make to reducing re-offending.” In addition, the majority of the employers in the study found that ex-offenders integrated well with other staff, were reliable, had good attitudes and were honest. (*Employing ex-offenders to capture talent*, CIPD, May 2007)

Ex-offenders are often looking for someone to give them a chance, but are anxious about disclosing a criminal record. If given the opportunity, ex-offenders are keen to prove that they are loyal and hard working. Stable employment for an ex-offender can reduce or remove the risk of re-offending and give the new employee independence and confidence. It is a “win-win situation” for the employer, the employee and society as a whole.

Are there any drawbacks?

There are some matters to consider when determining whether an ex-offender is suitable for a vacancy in your business. Luckily, a number of resources exist in the UK - and in many countries - to help businesses make the right decision. Usually, these resources and programmes can be located through a country’s Ministry of Justice or the national or regional prison system.

The Further Resources section (below) lists a few organisations available to assist with hiring ex-offenders. Some questions for consideration when accessing the resources:

- How does my business integrate a new employee and ex-offender into the workforce?
- Are there certain offences which would preclude an ex-offender from working in my business?
- What if a loss occurs in the business as a result of an ex-offender?
- Where can I find a policy to support hiring ex-offenders?

- What is my “duty of care” and other legal requirements for employing ex-offenders?

These questions and more can be answered by many of the organisations below, whose aim is to assist ex-offenders with gaining suitable employment. Institute members can also access the ‘Criminal record disclosures’ section of their BusinessHR benefit (see Further Resources) for comprehensive step-by-step online guidance.

A case in point - The Clink Charity

The Clink Charity provides training and employment opportunities for ex-offenders to reduce reoffending rates. An added benefit of the charity’s work is to help fill a skills shortage in one of Britain’s fastest growing industries, hospitality.

Chris Moore FIH, The Clink Charity’s Chief Executive, says, “Many of the prisoners that graduate from The Clink started out as someone who didn’t believe in their own ability and had very little self-confidence. Our Five Step Programme gives them a comprehensive understanding of how a hospitality-based business functions through work experience in a professional environment.” Chris confirms that the participants gain valuable skills that will help them find employment upon release and break the cycle of crime. The reoffending rate of prisoners is reduced whilst also helping the hospitality industry close its skills gap.

The Clink’s participants are taught skills such as cooking, front of house service, butchery and baking - all services that are valuable to the British economy and unique crafts when done properly.

Upon release, each graduate of The Clink is mentored by a dedicated support worker who helps them find employment, adjust to life on the outside and visits them weekly in their place of work for six to twelve months to ensure they stay on track. This costs the charity about £2,000 per prisoner - a dramatic reduction in cost compared to another year in prison, if they were to reoffend.



Chris acknowledges that the most challenging part of the programme is changing employer perceptions and showing that ex-offenders can benefit the business. Someone who has recently been released from prison and wants to change their life for the better needs the industry to look past their mistakes and take them for what they are now - a skilled professional.

Whilst helping prisoners to regain control of their life, The Clink Charity offers hospitality employers the chance to acquire a new team member who is trained and qualified to an exceptional standard. Employing an ex-offender also offers companies a good opportunity to build and improve their CSR by making a positive contribution to society.

Finding suitable employment opportunities for the graduates is crucial to the success of The Clink Charity so hospitality businesses that are interested in offering an ex-offender a position and a second chance in life

should contact Chris Moore, chief executive of The Clink Charity by emailing: chrismoore@thelinkcharity.org. For more information about the charity and its prisoner training initiatives please visit: www.thelinkcharity.org.



This reissued management guide includes important updates to the employment of ex-offenders and was created with the assistance of The Clink Charity and Nacro, the crime reduction charity. It supersedes the management guide dated 2009 from the Institute of Hospitality and the Apex Charitable Trust regarding the employment of ex-offenders.

Further resources and support

Apex Charitable Trust - the Apex Trust (www.apextrust.com) operates ex-offender support services in Merseyside, England. Apex Scotland, a separate organisation from the Apex Trust, offers preventative, offender and ex-offender services in Scotland. See: www.apexscotland.org.uk

BusinessHR - Institute of Hospitality members have access to FREE online information and customisable documents that can help with employing an ex-offender including criminal record disclosures, pre-employment checks and related employment matters. Find BusinessHR at: www.instituteofhospitality.org under 'Information Services'.

Business in the Community - provides extensive support and resources for the employment of ex-offenders. www.bitc.org.uk

- *Who are 'ex-offenders'? Employer factsheet* www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/who_are_ex-offenders_-_employer_factsheet.pdf
- *Ban the Box campaign and resource bank for employers:* www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/ban-box; www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/ban-box/resource-bank

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) - information on employing ex-offenders. www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/dvsequ/exoffenders

- *Pre-employment checks* (2014) www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/pre-employment-checks.aspx

Disclosure and Barring Service - replacing the Criminal Records Bureau, DBS helps identify candidates who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable members of society. DBS helpline: 03000 200 190. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service

DISCLAIMER

This brief is intended as a guide only. While the information it contains is believed to be correct, it is not a substitute for appropriate professional advice. The Institute of Hospitality can take no responsibility for action taken solely on the basis of this information.

Institute of Hospitality, Trinity Court, 34 West Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1SH, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 8661 4900 Fax: +44 (0)20 8661 4901 Email: library@instituteofhospitality.org Website: www.instituteofhospitality.org

- Employer and applicant guidance on the recruitment process and filtering: www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-filtering-guidance
- Free sample policy for use by businesses in the recruitment of ex-offenders (English and Welsh): www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-sample-policy-on-the-recruitment-of-ex-offenders

Nacro, the crime reduction charity - Nacro provides a dedicated Employer Advice Service which offers free, expert advice and operational support to organisations on how to interpret and manage criminal record information relating to applicants or existing staff, apprentices or volunteers. Nacro's legal officers offer training to organisations on a range of topics including implementing safer recruitment policies and procedures, gathering relevant information to inform risk assessment processes, understanding the relevant legislation and how to avoid potential legal pitfalls. Tel: 0845 600 3194. Email: employeradvice@nacro.org.uk. www.nacro.org.uk

- *Recruiting safely and fairly: a practical guide to employing ex-offenders* (2015) www.nacro.org.uk/recruittingsafelyguide (available from 14 May 2015)
- *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974* (2014) www.nacro.org.uk/data/files/rehabilitation-of-offenders-act-1974-guide-v3-1036.pdf
- *Practical guidance on DBS filtering* (2014) www.nacro.org.uk/data/files/practical-guidance-on-dbs-filtering-1032.pdf

Ministry of Justice - incorporates the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to reduce re-offending and to partner with employers. Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service

The Clink Charity - the charity aims to reduce reoffending rates by working with HM Prison Service to train and rehabilitate prisoners. The Clink Restaurants provide hospitality training and the charity engages with hospitality industry employers to place ex-prisoners on internships or in permanent employment. Website: www.theclinkcharity.org. Businesses can enquire about employing graduates of the programme by emailing Chris Moore at: chrismoore@theclinkcharity.org