

Second-Chance Hiring Best Practices

Creating Opportunity, Building Loyalty, Strengthening Communities


Why Best Practices Matter

Second-chance hiring is not simply about checking a box — it's about building sustainable employment strategies that unlock human potential while meeting your company's workforce needs. Employers who adopt thoughtful, structured approaches see stronger retention, team loyalty, and a measurable positive impact on their communities.

This guide offers a practical overview of how to structure and maintain an effective second-chance hiring program in your organization.

1. Adopt a Fair, Skills-Based Hiring Approach

- Focus on skills and qualifications relevant to the role rather than past offenses.
- Use structured interviews and objective criteria to avoid unconscious bias.
- Consider eliminating blanket exclusions related to criminal records unless directly relevant to the job duties.

 *Tip: Use a job-specific matrix to assess candidate eligibility and ensure consistency in hiring decisions.*

2. Delay Background Checks Until Later in the Process (Ban the Box)

- Give candidates a chance to showcase their skills before considering criminal background history.
- Comply with applicable laws that regulate when and how background checks can be conducted.

- Ensure candidates receive a copy of their background check and have an opportunity to dispute any inaccuracies.
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3. Partner With Reentry-Focused Organizations

- Build relationships with nonprofits (like Your Path Back) that prepare and refer qualified candidates.
 - Tap into training programs, certification assistance, and wraparound services that support long-term success.
 - These partnerships can reduce your onboarding costs and improve employee readiness.
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4. Create a Supportive Onboarding Experience

- Assign a peer mentor or point of contact to help the new hire navigate the first few weeks.
 - Provide clear expectations, workplace policies, and performance benchmarks.
 - Encourage feedback from second-chance employees to improve future onboarding processes.
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5. Train Managers and Staff

- Offer inclusion and stigma-reduction training to all supervisors and teams.
 - Educate managers about the realities of the criminal justice system and the power of employment in reducing recidivism.
 - Normalize support: create a workplace culture where asking for help is encouraged, not penalized.
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6. Utilize Incentives and Protective Programs

- Take advantage of available tax credits, bonding programs, and training subsidies:
 - Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
 - Federal Bonding Program
 - Local training incentive programs
 - These programs reduce risk and can help fund onboarding or training costs.
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7. Maintain Privacy and Respect

- Treat second-chance employees with dignity and confidentiality.
 - Avoid unnecessary disclosure of past records beyond what's legally or operationally required.
 - Focus conversations on the future — not the past.
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8. Evaluate, Improve, and Celebrate Success

- Track retention, performance, and feedback metrics for second-chance hires.
 - Use this data to refine your approach and identify areas for growth.
 - Celebrate your team's success stories to inspire internal buy-in and external visibility.
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The Bottom Line


When done with intention and care, second-chance hiring doesn't just give someone a job — it gives them a future. It strengthens your team, reflects your company's values, and drives long-term success.




YourPathBack.org | 813-434-1112

Your Path Back is here to support you every step of the way — from candidate referrals and onboarding assistance to training resources and best practice guidance.

 **Your Path Back**

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