

Following work on the Prison Entrepreneur Program (PEP) we undertook an evaluation of our own HR policies and discussed the idea of providing work to ex-prisoners with other employers. Many employers have expressed interest and the reasons are varied. But there is a general acknowledgement that ex-prisoners face discrimination and stigma upon release and that employment can provide a useful path helping ex-prisoners to become productive and law-abiding contributors to society. Building confidence and self-esteem brings personal and societal benefits. The ability to recast oneself as an asset to society provides an opportunity for re-integration. There are also significant public savings. Programmes that reduce the recidivism rates - and the tragic consequences - is what these schemes are trying to prevent. Gaining self-sufficiency and the ability to resist a return to crime is an effective path towards rehabilitation.

The purpose of prison is two-fold: to punish the criminal, keep society safe but also to rehabilitate so as their lives will improve, and they are prevented from committing future crimes. Past lessons in the justice sector have recognised that for most prisoners, a focus on rehabilitation instead of retribution is of greater benefit to society. We have successfully hired prisoners and have worked on creating an open dialogue in relation to HR policies. Having buy in from other team members is also important. We – as a company – have benefitted from this area of reflection and consideration and would encourage other businesses to do the same.

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