

EMPLOYMENT FOR FORMER OFFENDERS



Richard Branson is making a stand, and possibly even a statement, for men and women who were once offenders. He is working to encourage his large group of companies to hire people who have been in trouble with the law before. In fact, he would like the companies to hire people who have just been released from prison or are getting ready to be released from prison. This may sound crazy to some but Branson explains his reasoning. He says, "Everybody deserves a second chance." He also says, "A lot of people end up in there [prison] because they've had a lot of bad luck in their lives." He believes that offering these individuals jobs immediately upon release will help them to stay out of trouble and will offer them good luck and an opportunity to turn their life around. Richard Branson is one of the richest businessmen in the UK. And for a few years now, he has been making suggestions that many companies hire these former offenders. Because he is such a powerful man and is well-known in the area, he has the ability to influence these companies to make the right decision and not discriminate on these individuals just because they have had run ins with the law in the past. The truth is, many companies and employers ask for a criminal history and will do a background check to find out information on potential employees. When these employers and businesses find out that the person applying for the job has a criminal record and a past with the law, those people will rarely get the job. In fact, a lot of companies avoid hiring someone who has a criminal past. One of the reasons why Branson was inspired to encourage companies to hire these former offenders is because he got to meet with some of them face to face. His friend, Jane Tweson, invited him to visit a prison in Melbourne. Branson says, "Jane is known for championing unpopular causes." He also says, "She wanted me to see the work that was being done to get prisoners into work after prison and to see why it was so important." Since then, Branson has been working to make sure these people receive the jobs they need. He feels as though most of the former offenders respond very positive to being offered employment. Branson also says, "I think that people at Virgin appreciate the fact that we are an understanding company. I had one or two negative comments on Twitter, but nothing that concerned me. One of the prisoners I met in Melbourne told me he'd been released with no money. He had to find his own way to the city. He was thrown back out into this world with no help whatsoever. The end result was that he was back inside in a very short time. For people coming out of prison it's a vicious circle. If they can't get a job, the only thing they can do is reoffend. From society's point of view that can be very painful."

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