

## SO YOU HAVE A CRIMINAL BACKGROUND. HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GET YOURSELF BACK IN THE WORKFORCE



Many people searching for a job are unable to get one because they have had run-ins with the law and this is revealed in their background checks and employers are reluctant to hire them. A recent survey by CareerBuilder.com shows that now hiring managers are giving people with convictions a second chance at life. However, they have suggested that it is for the job-hunters to send positive vibes that their past is past and that they will be an asset at the workplace. The study says, that more than half of the 2,298 human-resource managers who were interviewed, acknowledged that their organizations had hired someone with a criminal record. "The number one recommendation hiring managers have is to own your past and focus on what you learned from it to grow professionally and personally," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder. "You also want to stay active...tapping into social networks can be [a] good way to help overcome obstacles associated with job hunting with a criminal past." According to the US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, upwards of 92 million people have a criminal history. Hiring managers advise candidates with criminal backgrounds not to conceal their convictions but be honest and candid about it. Tell your employer that every single moment of your conviction was a learning experience and you have come out of the trauma more enlightened and a better human being. Even if your qualifications merit a higher ranking job, be prepared to work your way up. If jobs still don't come your way, do a volunteering job. It may not pay you anything but it will establish your credentials and prove that you have put your unsavory past behind you and now can be trusted with responsibility. David Perry, co-author of Guerrilla Marketing for Job Hunters 3.0 said, "Six to 18 months of volunteer work — and I do mean sincere volunteer work — will go a long way in getting a usable reference." Job in the military is not subject to stringent rules that private companies have and it is relatively easier for a man with a conviction record to get employed by the military. A military job also calls for a lot of discipline and corrective regimen and will without doubt erase your past stigmas. Getting back on the right career path may not be as easy as the survey states. Rosemary Hefner says that it pays to stay active. "Taking classes, volunteering and tapping into social networks can be good ways to help overcome obstacles associated with job hunting with a criminal past." Bruce Hurwitz, president and CEO of Hurwitz Strategic Staffing said that people with past convictions have law on their side and they cannot be denied a job simply on that basis. "While persons with a criminal record cannot be discriminated against, they may be prohibited from working in some industries such as healthcare and financial services. Except in rare cases, employers will want to do a background check on the candidate." Unless the crime is really very serious, it may be possible to get your criminal record expunged or sealed. The former means that an employer can no longer hold it against you, whilst the latter means that not all can access it. Many a time candidates do not know much about their conviction which gives the impression to the employers that you are lax about it. Donna Ballman, a Florida based employment attorney said, "Lots of people have no idea about the actual charges that they were convicted of. It makes a difference. If you don't care enough about your criminal record to explain the details, employers may assume you think committing crimes is OK."