Interview Tips for Ex-Offenders

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Get Into an Ex-Offender Job Placement Program

- There are programs specifically created for ex-offenders. It takes the guesswork out of whether to divulge information about your background. Many of these programs will have classes and seminars to help you prepare for interviews as well as access to courses to expand your skill set. Most employers who work with these programs understand the special circumstances an ex-offender faces, trying to get back into the work-a-day world.

Be Professional

- Regardless whether you are sent on a job interview from the ex-offender program or you find the opportunity yourself, professionalism is key. You are selling yourself, your capabilities, your personality and your suitability for the job. It is akin to warfare in that you must be shod to do battle on the field of play. If it's a corporate job, most assuredly wear a suit and tie. Business casual is an option, but always err on the side of caution. Dress conservatively. If you own a pastel blue suit with a silver pocket square that is fly as all outdoors, now is not the time for it. If you only feel comfortable in your wranglers and your ropers, that is not your prospective employer's concern. Wear a blue or black conservative suit. If you are applying to be a designer or an artist or at an artistic firm, you may have some leeway. The key is to let your humor, acumen and personality shine through in your presentation.

Do Research

- The war metaphor continues. Reconnaissance is of the utmost importance. Read and find out all you can about the company. If you are uncomfortable, have someone else call and ask about the company's hiring policies. Know the lay of the land before you enter the gates. Companies are still run by people. As such, they appreciate when you take the time to know who they are and what they stand for. Be prepared to define your place in the company's hierarchy and show them that you are a good fit.

Be Honest

- If you are asked if you committed a crime, be honest. Yes, it may cause you to lose out on the job, but it may not. Write a well-thought-out and heart-felt explanation for your circumstances as well as any rehabilitative measures that you have taken or are taking to stay straight. Be prepared to share this with the
employer as part of the interview. The goal here is to define a weakness as a strength. Identify the lessons learned through your jail or prison stay. Illustrate how you grew from the experience and how it ties into you doing a great job for their company. The temptation to lie is great, especially when you really need a job. However, they will find out eventually. Occasionally, they will see what a great job you’re doing and keep you. Most of the time, company policy dictates a zero tolerance for falsifying information. That means you will be terminated without recourse.

Get Excited

- The path to a new job may be a long one, so it is key that you make it an exciting one. Get excited about the prospect of a new job. Your joy and excitement can sell you when nothing else will. It is hard to maintain enthusiasm, especially when you’ve gotten a few rejections. Do all you can to maintain your excitement.

Relax

- Find relaxation and restoration techniques to help you decompress. These techniques will also serve you well once you are working. Starting a new job can be stressful as well. Research yogic deep breathing exercises. These are a quick seamless technique that can help you to recharge almost instantaneously. Please check the Resources section for information on relaxation and deep breathing sites.

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