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Subject: The term, "Ex-Offender"

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"Ex-Offender"

Is this term considered
politically incorrect?

In This Issue:

"Ex-Offender" - The Politically Incorrect Term.

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“Ex-Offender” is touted in recent years as a politically incorrect phrase. There are some who suggest that the term infringes on an individual's capabilities to obtain gainful employment. Others argue that this only serves as an excuse or rationalization not to put forth all of the necessary energy and effort to make a successful community reentry.

There have been a number of initiatives to attempt to somehow camouflage the term *Ex-Offender* with a myriad of other sugarcoated designations that include, *Formerly Incarcerated, Returning Citizen, Rehabilitated Felon* and a host of other terms that are supposedly intended to provide a much smoother path to employment and a life of prosperity for Ex-Offenders.

The name or term is meaningless to the individual determined to make a successful reentry into mainstream society. Much of the challenge is: 1.) Believing that a legitimate life after conviction or an incarceration event is attainable; 2.) Start from where you left off; 3.) Take the job that no one else wants (*temporarily*); 4.) Be willing to work, and continuously supersede your most recent significant event.

I was personally an Offender. However, for the past thirty-plus years, I have been an *“Ex”-Offender*, which is an accurate and appropriate characterization for a person who once engaged in behaviors that were antisocial, but since ceased those behaviors.

Post conviction and post incarceration I worked hard and achieved such recognitions as; Certified flight and ground Instructor, Airline Transport Pilot with jet aircraft type ratings in the Learjet, Cessna Citation and Israeli Westwind, Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist, Best of Business / Best Advertising Campaign of the Year, twice distinguished as the CEO on the *Inc 500 List* of America's Fastest Growing Companies - #68 nationally and # 1 in Ohio, and a host of other mainstream accolades that were all achieved via completely legitimate agendas. *“Ex-Offender”* simply means that a person no longer engages in offender behavior.

As an employer, if I am hiring someone who has some blemishes in their past, I need to know if they are an *“ex”* offender or if they are still a practicing offender. I simply cannot afford the risk of hiring someone who is still a practicing offender.

As an avocation, I engage in helping Ex-Offenders reestablish a life-path that is

productive and rewarding. In many instances, I am mischaracterized as a “prisoner advocate.” I am not an advocate for prisoners or practicing offenders. Being a *practicing offender*, or being an *ex-offender* is a choice.

After an individual has made the conscious decision to cease wallowing through life by committing any variety of crimes (*offending*), then I can become involved in helping to guide that individual. However, if they are “*sort-of*” trying to be an ex-offender, but still playing games on the side, and not doing the work that is an integral component to making a successful community reentry, it is a waste of both theirs and my time.

The term recidivism is frequently used within the judicial, rehabilitation and corrections communities. It is frequently defined as an individual who served time in prison, was released and then subsequently returns to prison on an administrative or parole violation, or as the result of a new case.

Although state and federal governments universally define recidivism as the statistical rates that only include individuals who return to prison for a variety of reasons, I personally define recidivism as it pertains to behavior. If an individual serves time in prison, alleges to have become rehabilitated, is released and then engages in criminal behavior, then the individual has recidivated irrespective of whether or not they have been re-arrested, re-sentenced or re-incarcerated.

The same holds true for any other relapse into a poor habit pattern. We can of course characterize these individuals as formerly incarcerated, returning citizens, rehabilitated felons (albiet temporary), but they cannot be defined as an ex-offender – an individual who no longer offends.

I realized that the greatest challenge for most people is simply believing that life after incarceration is possible - the fundamental belief that it is possible for someone to have a life of legitimacy and normalcy after having served time in prison. The challenges that people face when they are released from prison provided the motivation and definitiveness of purpose to write this book.

If an individual has spent a little or a lot of time in prison, there is a good possibility that they have seen people who were released and subsequently returned. What you don’t see while in prison are all of the people who didn’t come back. Statistically, it is an enormous number - between 32 and 44 percent of people released from prison move on with their life, in a different direction, and they never return.

Given the challenge, I think that the percentage of people who successfully reenter mainstream society is a remarkable success rate. Compare that success rate to the success rate of other endeavors. For example, most people who enroll in college expect to earn a degree, yet only 17% of students who enroll in secondary education graduate.