

# GREAT JOB INTERVIEWS & JOBS FOR THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED



Hire the formerly incarcerated



## **Welcome!**

Every action we take propels us in a direction, for better or worse. For many of us, those actions led us to prison which derailed our life and purpose. So, we have to work even harder now to make the right choices, take the right action and turn our life back in the direction of success. Clicking here for this free download is one of those actions! Great work.

When I left prison, I dedicated my life to helping people coming back home and make a fresh start. These tools are designed for that purpose. I hope this inspires you and assists your progress.

In this guide you will find proven strategies to help you find the job you want and to conduct your interview with confidence. You may be wondering how much to say about your past, when to say it, and more importantly, how can you keep it from holding you back! Those are real concerns, but this will help. Be sure to visit my contact page and let me know how it goes. Wishing you success!

Sincerely,  
Bob Pelshaw



## GREAT JOB INTERVIEWS & JOBS FOR THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED (an excerpt from the book “Illegal To Legal” by RL Pelshaw)

**If you remember only one thing** about how to have a great job interview and get a great job it is to **BE PREPARED**. That is what these tips are about: to prepare you for success with jobs and in life. Some of these suggestions may feel awkward to you, but as you use them you’ll get better, faster and more confident. Using these common sense tips will help make you stand out and can get you hired quickly!

**The biggest issue** ex-offenders deal with is how to get a job with a criminal record. Did you know that 89 percent of ex-offenders that are arrested again are unemployed? *Having a job or business could keep you from returning to prison.*

**Why not lie about the criminal history?** The problem with lying about your criminal past is that it’s too easy to find things online. Concealing information is setting yourself up to get fired. Besides 1/3 of Americans have a criminal record, and you’ve paid your debt to society. People **WILL HIRE YOU** if you can convince them your past is in your past. Earning their trust starts with telling them the truth about your past.

Here are a couple of ways to deal with the question when it comes up on job applications. On the job application try answering the criminal record question by writing “Yes. I am bondable, will discuss in the interview” or you can answer it with “Yes. I am bondable, but I was convicted of ...”

**Rather than trying to hide your past, be proactive.** Make a short summary statement about your past and your current strengths that shares the truth but doesn’t go into great detail. In sales we call that an “elevator pitch.” It’s a sales technique designed to give a motivating summary in about the same amount of time as you are on an elevator. Deliver it in a confident, friendly, and truthful manner. You will earn respect for bringing up your criminal history yourself. Disclose your past but **don’t get into personal problems**. Keep it professional.

**The second biggest issue** many ex-offenders have to deal with is their attitude. Have a positive attitude, even if you have to “fake it ’till you make it.” Having a negative attitude or assuming they will not hire you before you go in creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. No one wants to be around a negative person. Display an attitude that gives people a reason to want to work with you--not against you. Keep this good attitude up even when you had a bad day or are getting worn down. Your *attitude* will determine your *altitude*.

**Make it your job to get a job.** You may have to put in 100 applications or more before you find work. Don’t let that scare you. **You’ve survived prison, so you can survive anything.** The truth is the odds are against you, and there’s only way to beat the odds. *Make applying for jobs your job until you get a job.* You’d spend 40 hours a week working for someone else, so work at least that hard for yourself finding work.

Use the resources at the workforce development center. Get help making a resume. Have a phone number or email available so employers can reach you at. Work closely with your counselor or case officer to find out what resources are available. Check job boards, staffing companies and temp agencies. Ask friends and family if they know of any good jobs. Prepare for job applications like you would for interviews because you never know when a company might save you a return trip and give you an interview on the spot after applying.

***REMEMBER: If you’ve survived prison you can survive, and do, Anything!***



**Getting a job is a just a numbers game** – keep putting in applications and eventually something will stick. Following these tips will make your efforts more effective, increase your odds, and may reduce the number of applications and interviews you will need to do to be hired.

**MORE TIPS TO HELP YOU NAIL GREAT JOB INTERVIEWS AND GREAT JOBS:**

- **LOOK AT THE COMPANY’S WEBSITE BEFORE YOUR APPLICATION OR INTERVIEW** to learn about the company and the details of the position they are hiring for. Make notes of several things on each that you can bring up in your interview. It will impress your interviewer with your professionalism, organization and ability to prepare.
- **HAVE A LIST OF YOUR WORK HISTORY/CREATE A RESUME** before you apply or go on a job interview, which includes dates employed, company contact information, duties, pay and personal references. Every company will ask for the same information, so if you have it in one spot you can complete job applications quicker and with less stress.
- **YOU NEED TO BE YOURSELF.** Be friendly, sincere and believable but not overbearing. Everyone can spot a phony a mile away, and employers generally avoid phonies!
- **YOU DON’T HAVE TO DRESS FANCY, BUT** definitely be clean and wear clothing appropriate for the company and the job you are applying for. If you have tattoos, wear clothes that cover them if possible. Don’t overdo cologne, perfume or jewelry either. First impressions will make or break you.
- **YOU’D BE SURPRISED BY WHY YOU SHOULDN’T SMOKE BEFORE THE INTERVIEW.** It’s not just so you don’t smell smoky. *Employers have wised up to smokers* and have noticed that smokers take more work breaks than non-smokers take. Smokers also often have more health issues than non-smoking workers. All things being equal the company **will hire** the non-smoker over the smoker. Improve your odds and don’t walk in smelling like an ashtray, which is exactly how you smell when you smoke in your car on the way to the interview. No, you can’t “air out” or cover it up; that never works.
- **TRY TO BRING A DECENT FOLDER WITH A NOTEPAD** that you can use to keep your resumes and work history notes, references, etc.
- **BEING EARLY ISN’T JUST ABOUT PUNCTUALITY.** Getting there 10 minutes early is a great way to relax and prepare for your interview, and you’re sending a good message to your potential new employer. Check in with the company when you first get there. Often they’ll have you complete application paperwork. Remember to be nice to the receptionist, and act professionally while you wait. Some interviewers will ask the receptionist about you later. While you’re waiting, get a drink of water and make sure you don’t have a scratchy throat. Make sure your breath smells good. If you chew gum or a mint, make sure you get rid of it before you meet your appointment. Take the time and use the restroom. Tuck your shirt in. Relax. Get your head in the game. Breathe.
- **DON’T BE TOO EARLY.** Showing up more than 15-20 minutes early is as bad as being late. Yes, you’re eager, but being too eager can inconvenience the person you’ll be meeting. It’s better to wait outside than show up too early.
- **TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE OR THE RINGER** once you’re at the company. Don’t respond to any texts during your interview. That’s the fastest way to the circular file. Respect them enough and show enough interest in the job to turn it off or leave it in your car during your interview.



- **WHEN YOU MEET SOMEONE** in the company, give them a good firm handshake, try to maintain good eye contact and always ask for a business card if they don't offer you one. Having their card makes the task of following up much easier for you. It also shows them that you are interested enough to ask for one. Sincerely thank them for their time, and be pleasant, professional, and genuine.
- **HERE'S THE BEST TIP:** Within the first couple of minutes after the introductions, repeat his or her name back a few times until you remember it. For instance, if asked about your previous work history, you can say, "Thanks for asking Mrs. Jones, my work history is...."
- **EARLY IN THE INTERVIEW** try to ask "what exactly does the job entail, and describe what a person has to do to succeed in that job." During the rest of the interview try to steer your answers to key points the interviewer is interested in.
- **IF YOU'RE NERVOUS, JUST SLOW DOWN**, breathe deeply and think about what you are going to say. You can even tell the person you're a little nervous and that getting this job is important to you. They will appreciate your directness and honesty. Usually such honesty will not only make you feel more at ease but the interviewer will sympathize. He or she might even remember you in a good way.
- **ANSWER QUESTIONS AS DIRECTLY AS POSSIBLE**, but less is more when answering questions. Be honest, but the interviewer doesn't need to hear every detail. Going into too much detail could kill their interest in you if they think you talk too much. Try to think of how you would react if you were doing the interviewing. Ask yourself "what would you want to know about you?"
- **BE CONSIDERATE AND NEVER INTERRUPT THEM.** Show respect and appreciation.
- **TAKE NOTES WHEN THEY ARE TALKING** or answering your questions. This shows you're organized, engaged and willing to put forth extra effort.
- **SILENCE IS OK** – there doesn't have to be constant conversation during the whole time together. Use any silence to think about the interview and how the interviewer is responding to you.
- **WATCH FOR BODY LANGUAGE** and act or react accordingly. Are they engaged and leaning forward, or have they lost interest and are slouching? Are they writing down your answers?
- **PROJECT THE RIGHT BODY LANGUAGE** and be engaged, leaning forward with eye contact. Don't slouch. Be the confident professional that they need to hire instead of the bum wasting their time. If you're good at this, you can mimic positive body language signals the interviewer offers, like a nodding head or a smile. That is a powerful subconscious way to get people to start accepting and considering you.
- **HAVE QUESTIONS READY** to ask them when they are done. If they don't mention it, politely ask if you can ask a few questions. Before you start with your questions you can say, "I had a list of questions prepared. Please give me a moment to see how many of them you've already answered." If you don't have any more questions just say "Mr. Jones you've done a great job of answering all the questions I had."
- **MAKE SURE YOU ASK THEM** what the next step is or when you can follow up with them about the job. Some interviewers automatically don't consider anyone that isn't interested enough in the job to find out what they have to do next.



- Here's some **“OLD SCHOOL” ADVICE** that will REALLY set you apart from the rest. Go to the dollar store and buy a cheap packet of “thank-you” notes. A day or two later mail them a short, thoughtful, handwritten note thanking them for the interview and asking them to keep you in consideration. If you can't send them a thank-you note, at least send them an email or phone call thanking them for the consideration.
- **PRACTICE** these skills by grabbing a friend and role-playing the interview process. Repeat until you feel prepared.
- **EVALUATE** how you did. Every job interview gives the opportunity to practice being a better job candidate. Look back at what you did well, what you did poorly, and what you could have done to perform better in the interview. Doing so will make the next interviews smoother and more effective for you.

We want to hear how you did with interviewing and how these tips helped. If you have any suggestions or tips we can pass on to others please contact us. Share with us on our Facebook Page, Twitter account, or by emailing us at [info@illegaltolegal.org](mailto:info@illegaltolegal.org).

If someone still can't find a job that pays enough to keep away from returning to crime we have resources to show them how to use their life skills to start their own business, and hopefully become an employer themselves.

Buy a copy of **Illegal to Legal: Business Success for the (Formerly) Incarcerated** for an offender, ex-offender, or person at risk to offend, or their families. Check [www.pelshaw.com](http://www.pelshaw.com) for many free resources as well.

Please “like us” on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

*To order this brochure as a full color trifold brochure please contact*  
[info@illegaltolegal.org](mailto:info@illegaltolegal.org)

**Here's how to help improve *Crime, Recidivism, the Costs of Incarceration, and a Lack of Good Workers.***

**Be part of the solution and**

**HIRE A FORMERLY INCARCERATED**

**CITIZEN!**