

Break The Bars Business Plan

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Executive Summary

Business Description

Break the Bars is a Career Connection Agency geared towards not simply finding jobs but also finding meaningful career paths for ex-convicts to sustain themselves. First, we will provide training in areas such as resume development, networking, and interview skills through the Success Training Employment Partner (STEP) free program offered by United Against Poverty (United Against Poverty, 2021). Phase one is 20 days, ex-offenders will take classes in the previous areas we have mentioned as personal classes such as personal budgeting and emotional intelligence. In Phase two, ex-convicts' interests will be aligned with employers where they are more likely to succeed. This is where we step in and offer our services to help them get into their desired career. In Phase three, the focus is on how these ex-offenders can keep their job to prevent them from relapsing into recidivism (the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend) and is focused on how they can maintain this new career path.

The careers we hope to give them will include trade skills. Trade skills programs focus more on technical, practical skills, rather than the academics and general education required in traditional college degrees. They are always in demand. Society will always have teeth to clean, hair to cut, and office buildings to wire. These are some examples of trade skills and their projected growth and their salaries showing that they are indeed in demand (Classes And Careers, 2021).

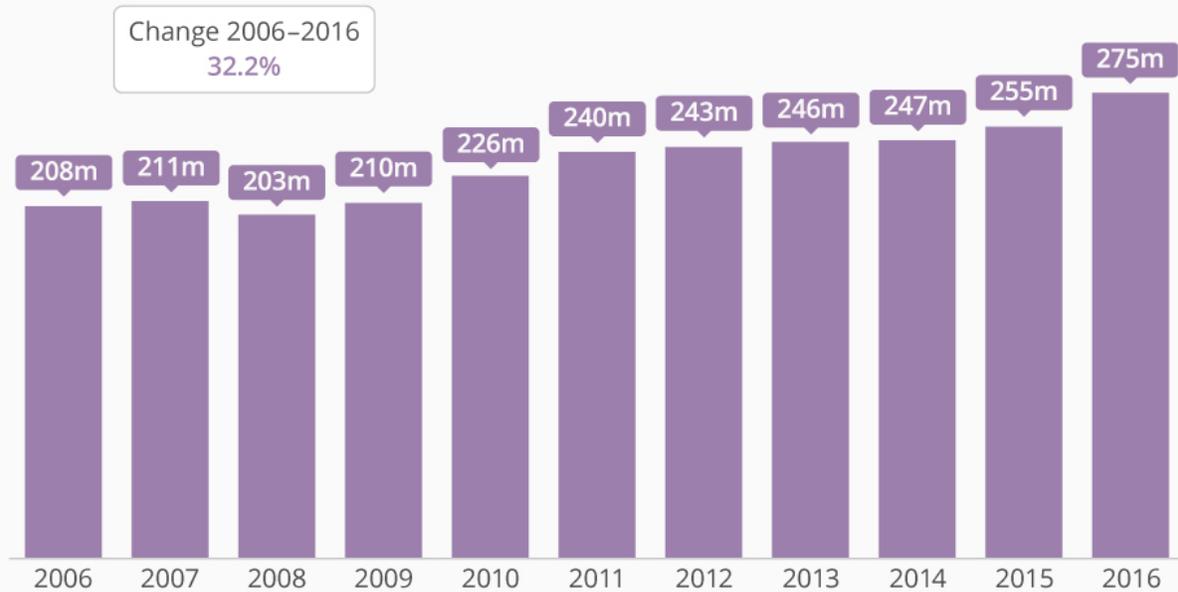
Why aren't Ex-convicts hired?*How did we get here to this point of the societal issue?*

Legal Liability is one reason why employers tend to shy away from employing ex-convicts. These employers do not want to be held liable, because it can hurt their reputation. They are also perceived as unreliable due to their criminal background (Fredman, 2016). Their criminal record is extended to their personalities deeming them incompetent of being able to be trusted as a non-convict. Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to re-offend and this is what the employers feared. That their ex-convict worker would re-offend and worsen the reputation of their establishment. Workplace morale is another reason why employers find ex-convicts a controversial topic of hiring. Most workers do not feel comfortable working next to ex-convicts. When workers go to work, they do not expect to be cooperating with people who spent time in the “slammer”. It did not come with the job description so when they see who was in prison at one point. Decker et al. 2016 was a three-year study done by a team of researchers from Arizona State University on the impact of a criminal record on employment-related outcomes on white, black, and Hispanic men and women. The researchers organized pairs of different applicants, including black men, black women, Hispanic men, Hispanic women, white men, and white women. Each pair included one person with a criminal record, and one without, other than that the resumes were practically identical. They found that having a criminal record significantly decreased the chances of acquiring a job position. Less than 10% of the participants with prison records received a call back. Thus, showing that having a criminal record lowers the chances for ex-convicts to get employment especially in the foodservice industry, which is where ex-convicts are most likely to target. Black and Hispanic men were less likely to receive a

positive response from employers compared to white men. White men who have a criminal record were found to have more positive responses than black men with no criminal record.

Drug Use Continues to Rise

Global estimated number of people who use illicit drugs*



* 15–64 year olds that have consumed drugs in the past year.

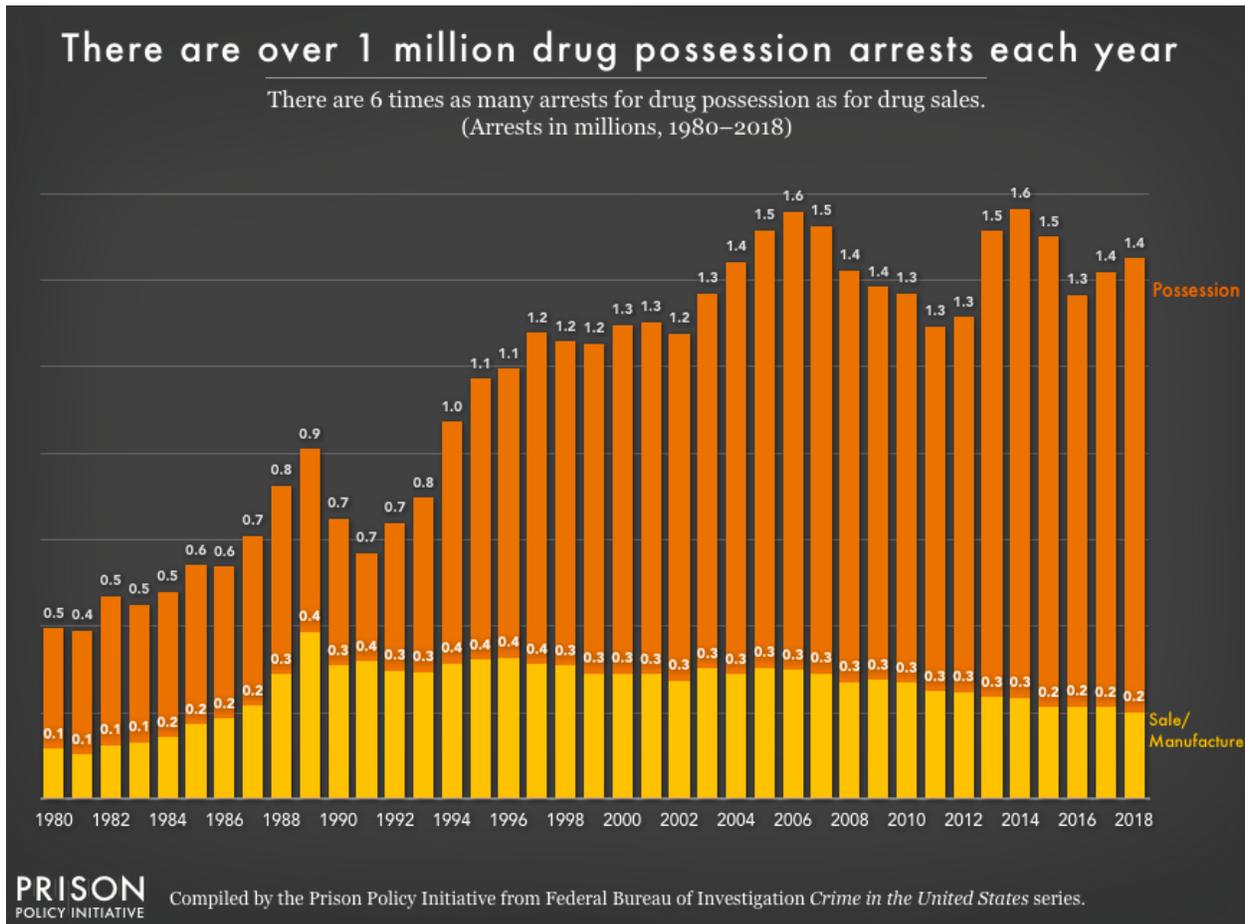
@StatistaCharts

Source: UNODC

statista

Political environment: On the news, we are constantly bombarded with information about drug usage. Over the years, drug usage has significantly increased. Between 2006 and 2016 there has been a 32.2% increase in drug usage in a 10-year timespan (Armstrong, 2018). Nearly 300,000 people are held in state and federal prisons in the United States for drug-law violations, up from less than 25,000 in 1980 (Brady, 2018). This shows that as drug usage is going up so are drug convictions which in turn leads to increased drug-related laws. There has been a surge in the

prison population especially for drug possession.



(Sawyer & Wagner, 2020)

With the rising number of drug arrests each year, more laws and restrictions are passed creating a greater negative stigma of drugs and those who use them especially with those who are persons of color.

Micro and Macro causes that harm Societal Reentry

What are the micro- and macro- causes of this societal issue?

Micro causes relating to the difficulty of societal re-entry after being justice-involved include substance abuse, strained relationships with family/friends, gender inequity, etc.

Substance abuse is a coping mechanism used by many inmates once they are released from

prison or jail. Substance abuse is the excessive use of alcohol, drugs, medication, etc and it can result in physical, mental, or emotional harm. When a person is sustained by the use of drugs their ability to behave is diminished which can make it harder to become a fully functioning member of society. More than 80% of people in jail or prison report having used illicit substances in their lifetimes. After release from incarceration, resumption of substance use carries risks, including parole revocation, exacerbation of mental health conditions, the transmission of infectious diseases, and drug overdose (Chamberlain et al., 2019). Gender inequity also contributes to the difficulty of societal re-entry. Women, for example, are more likely to have experienced traumas such as child abuse and interpersonal violence that put them at greater risk of revictimization and recidivism once they are released (Great Valley Publishing Company, n.d). It's harder for women to fully integrate back into society due to past traumas, which can result in them going back to prison.

Macro causes include a rise in homelessness after being incarcerated. The high risk of residential instability can lead some to experience homelessness after release (Fontaine, 2020). Residential instability is where a person cannot live in housing for a long period of time due to various reasons such as money problems, drug abuse, etc. Mental health issues amongst ex-offenders are the biggest cause of why many offenders cannot enter society easily. To begin, the reason most people even enter the prison system is that they already suffer from past mental disabilities and resort to either drugs to ease the pain or violence to release the violence they feel inside. Mental health problems are three times higher among prisoners than in the general population. After release, reentry barriers and other factors can exacerbate mental problems (Carlos C. Mahaffey, n.d). Mental health issues and homelessness go together when discussing how ex-offenders cannot re-enter society without help. Among ex-offenders, those with mental

illness have higher than average rates of homelessness and housing insecurity. Homelessness is not just a public safety issue but also a public health issue. New Jersey has successfully reduced its state prison population by nearly 37% since 1999, in large part by creating alternatives to incarceration and providing community-based reentry and treatment services (Homelessness and Prisoner Re-Entry: Examining Barriers to Housing: Volunteers of America n.d).

Negative impacts of being an Ex-Convict

What are the micro-and macro- impacts of societal reentry?

Challenges also arise when entering back into society, for many inmates have issues seeking employment, getting an education, affording a house, etc. Employers who deny work to people with criminal backgrounds are arguably one of the biggest challenges' felons face. In America today you need money to do everything and without that then many people cannot make a proper living and become functioning members of society. Admissions officers turning away applications for criminals trying to get an education is another reason why many people who were previously in prison do not have an education. Education can play a role in helping those leaving prison stay out of the justice system, but obstacles can stand in the way of providing such opportunities. For instance, until recently, prison inmates were not eligible to receive Pell grants to obtain a college education (Lbogle, 2021).

Landlords who refuse to house criminals force many people back into a life of crime because they would rather not be homeless. Most individuals leave prison with limited finances to secure an apartment. Additionally, strict housing policies make it harder for these individuals to be considered as viable candidates for housing (From prisons to communities: Confronting re-entry challenges and social inequality n.d). A macro impact of societal re-entry includes the inability to adjust to technology advances. Technology is constantly changing today so for someone to be

incarcerated and not be able to learn about computers, phones, television is troubling as this also impacts their efforts to get a job. Many employers require you to apply online and many prisoners do not have the knowledge on how the internet works after being locked up for a period. Laws set in place taking away ex-felons' rights to vote is another major topic that isn't talked about as much, but it really does impact many lives. Once you have a criminal background it can be hard to vote and many people can't even vote at all, however, voting is a human right. Every one of the things mentioned result in the reason why societal re-entry for those incarcerated has become so difficult.

Barriers to improving societal reentry

What are the inhibitors that explain why this societal issue has not been fixed yet?

There is not a strong media focus on fixing this issue. Most people do not watch the news that mention rising the prison population and think about how to help end recidivism. There is not adequate showings of programs that ex-convicts can turn to in the media. Bottom line is people do not like ex-convicts due to the negative stigma placed on them and will not want to converse with them, let alone give them access to employment. After leaving jail, there is a residential instability where there is nowhere for these ex-convicts to turn to, leading to homelessness. (Li, 2018). It is also difficult for ex-convicts to have a high paying job as many high paying jobs require a college education which as we mentioned earlier is difficult as well. This leads to ex-convicts having to resort to low paying jobs just to make ends meet and when that falters, they resort back to their old bad habits for a financial advantage.

Marketing Analysis

Target Population

Those in transitional homes and ex-offenders who have adequate housing whether it is a shelter or family/friends' home. If they do not have a home, we can give them information about where they can go such as the *Coalition for the Homeless*.

We will have Prison Outreach employee and Advertising personnel to go to these establishments and get us our potential clients. We are open to accepting any ex-convicts regardless of race, gender, and ethnicity. However, we will do a screening where we find out why they were incarcerated and how their behavior was in prison. If they have done a very serious aggressive offense that resulted in the physical harm of another living thing such as murder, manslaughter (unintentional killing of another), aggravated assault or battery, and animal cruelty, as well as a history of serious maladaptive behaviors towards other people, then we will not accept them as a client.

Location

The first office of Break the Bars will be based in Downtown Orlando at 815 N. Magnolia Ave, Orlando, FL 32801. A 16-minute drive from Valencia West Campus, 17 minutes from Mid Florida Tech, and 15 minutes from Orange Technical College. It is also seven minutes from Host Transition Services which is a nearby transitional home for offenders. Lastly, it is 11 minutes from the Orange County Corrections Department.

Competitive Analysis

One change we have made to set ourselves apart from the competition is that we are not focused on giving our ex-offenders jobs, rather we want them to enter whole career fields. These career fields, we are interested in putting them in are ones such as the one below that are trade skill careers. These are growing trade careers as seen by the Projected Job Growth table showing that these are viable career options that are increasing in demand.

Projected Job Growth, 2016 to 2026

Automotive Mechanic	6%
Chef	10%
Carpenter	8%
Electrician	9%
Hair Stylist	13%
EMT	15%
Plumber	16%
Dental Hygienist	20%
Veterinary Technician	20%
Massage Therapist	26%

Median Annual Salaries, May 2017

Hair Stylists	\$24,900
EMT	\$33,380
Veterinary Technicians	\$33,400
Medical Transcriptionist	\$35,250
Automotive Mechanic	\$39,550
Massage Therapist	\$39,990
Carpenters	\$45,950
Plumbers	\$52,590
Electricians	\$54,110
Dental Hygienist	\$74,070
Chef	\$45,950

We are aware some of our clients have transportation issues which is why we will offer bus services to come and pick up our clients and take them to the trade training for a fee of \$10 for a full week's worth of ride. Normal week-long passes for other bus services are \$16 so we will be a more cost-effective option.

Marketing Plan

As we start our business, we will use grant funding to get our foundational structures paid for. From the third month of our business opening to the fourth, we will use this time to collect clients. After we have successfully gained enough clients, we will use the fifth month to a year to

make sure those clients have jobs and focus on profit. Our social media team will be the key members of this part of the process, they will be responsible for gaining clients and promoting our business.

Ownership Plan

Employees

Year 1 costs

Ralph ((Prison Outsource Reach (Parole Officer Check-In))	CEO \$50,000
Cinnamon (Advertising/Social Media)	CEO \$50,000
Two Bus Workers	\$10.98/hour each person \$22,000/year each person \$44,000
Information Technology Specialist	\$12.02/hour \$25,000/year
Two Receptionist	\$8.65/hour \$18,000/year \$36,000
Two Security Guards	\$15.38/hour \$32,000/year \$64,000/year

Total costs per year	\$269,000
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Operating Plan

Our business is specifically designed to target individuals who have been released from the justice system and are looking to change their life. In the time span of two-three years, our clients will have learned how to prepare for a job, gain a job, and most importantly, learn how to maintain that job. We will have a location in Downtown Orlando near businesses and jobs so that our clients can have access to them. Our office will be used as a place for people to come in and start their new journey, returning clients to check-in and meet with their required mentors, and much more.

Start-up Plan

As a beginning business, we plan to start off by utilizing our social media marketing team and advertising our services through social media and reaching out to transitional housing and halfway houses. Transitional housing refers to a supportive – yet temporary – type of accommodation that is meant to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support (for addictions and mental health, for instance), life skills, and in some cases, education, and training (Transitional Housing, n.d). This will provide us with a smaller client base of ex-convicts who already know the basics of being reentered into society. Having this smaller base to work with gives us the chance to get an understanding of how our business will run. Our receptionists will be the main communication once a former convict has entered our agency. Receptionists will guide them through the breakdown of our services and connect them with our STEP partners.

Breakdown Of Our Business

After the ex-convicts have been connected to the STEP program, ex-convicts will start their 20 days of phase one where they develop skills such as how to network, send emails, and use Excel which then will all be used to further expand on professional development. The STEP program is just the basics of learning how to re-enter society. Not only will they receive help on their resume and interviews, but they will also receive help with their emotional intelligence. This includes self-esteem, goal-setting, positive thinking, etc.

Once they have finished the 20 days working with the STEP program, they will then be referred to us where we connect their skills to a workplace. This is Phase Two of the program, if they have previously invested in one of the trades, we offer such as plumbing or welding we will set them up in a job that works with those skills. If they have never had a job before we will connect them to a workplace with little skill such as fast food or truck driving. This will be the ground point until they have gone through the technical program offered by Mid-Florida Tech, which will give them the chance to get a long-term job (electrician, construction, etc).

Once a client has started receiving paychecks, they will be required to meet with our Prison Outsource Reach to make sure they are in contact with their parole officer (if they have one). After they have held their jobs for one-two months they will return to the STEP program for the final phase, learning how to maintain their job. Once they have been working with us for three years, they will have their graduation ceremony from our program. We will hold this for everyone because we do want to give them the chance to use their skills without guidance from us. We also will hold check-in meetings every month that all our clients will attend at the same time. We want to not only provide jobs but provide a community for these people because some of them may not have families to go back to.

Financial Plan

The ex-convicts will receive pay from their job. For example, they make \$10. The company will then have to pay us the set percentage of that income. Our set percentage is 40%. So, if the convict makes \$10, then we make 40% of that \$10, which is \$4.

Assuming we have 50 clients who make an average of \$15.77, which is the median salary in Florida. It also falls within the amount they would make in entry-level trade skills and other professions that do not require a formal college degree. Then, we earn 40% of \$15.77 which equals \$6.30. That gives us \$6.30 X 40 hours which is the average hours people work during a week that will amount to \$252.00. Assuming our clients were to work 48 weeks in a year, we will have received \$12,096.00. By multiplying \$12,096.00 with our 50 clients, we will make a total income of \$604,800.00 within that year.

Cash Flow Statement

Operating Activities	
Total Income	\$604,800
Net Income	\$278,400
Rent	-\$2,600
Salary and wage payments	-\$269,000
Furniture	-\$20,000
Bus Cost and Maintenance	-\$34,800
Total Loss	-326,400

Future Goals

By year five, we plan to have helped over 1,000 people find jobs, maintain those jobs, and have built a community that they can always come back to. We also want to expand our office and add more rooms so that every employee can have their own office. As a business, we hope to be able to open food drives, car washes, etc to be able to reach out to ex-convicts that are still lacking those services.

Five Year Plan

Ralph	CEO \$50,000
Cinnamon	CEO \$50,000
Three Bus Workers	\$14.00/hour each person \$28,860/year for each person \$86,580
Information Technology Specialist	\$15.38/hour \$32,000/year
Five Receptionist	\$13.94/hour \$29,000/year \$145,000/ year for all five
Prison Outsource Reach (Parole Officer Check In)	\$16.50/hour \$33,000/year

Advertising/Social Media	\$16.50/hour \$33,000/year
Janitor	\$12.00/hour \$25,738
Two Security Guards	\$15.38/hour \$32,000/year \$64,000/year
Total costs per year	\$519,318

By year 10, our goal is to have helped over 5,000 people. Our main focus during these years is to not only focus on new clients but make sure those we have helped are doing well. As well as make sure the people in our program currently are experiencing improvement and growth. Our plan is to expand to be able to reach out to therapists, mentors, etc.

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