

THE SECOND AND MAYBE THE LAST CHANCE

Tomáš Volek, statutory director of TV Facility Group, has many years of experience in employing people with a criminal record. He has been cooperating with the RUBIKON Centrum since September 2013, as an employer of its clients and also as an external professional consultant in founding a social enterprise. His company is mainly engaged in property management and maintenance, real estate activities, provides cleaning, gardening and security services, maintenance of roads and machinery, technological cleaning, etc.



What led you to the decision to hire the first candidate from the RUBIKON Employment Agency?

We have been in contact with the RUBIKON Employment Agency for a long time through the job counsellor Renata Hovorková, and after signing the framework contract we actually just waited for the moment when the corresponding jobs would be vacated or created, which we would be able to offer to candidates recommended by the RUBIKON Centrum. The reasons why we decided to work with the RUBIKON Employment Agency are actually quite simple. First of all, our company has been trying for a long time to help where, in our opinion, it is most needed. And if we also meet candidates who, thanks to the RUBIKON Centrum, are really above standard prepared not only for an interview, but also for situations and conflicts that they may encounter in the work process, there was no need to think long time. But there are a number of other reasons why we can only recommend this option to other employers. From the RUBIKON Centrum, we obtain information that we usually have no way to get from "ordinary" job seekers. Applicants recommended by the RUBIKON Centrum have a real interest in job and in the case of concluding an employment contract, they really value their job. Even in the case of job positions that the majority of our population considers inferior.

Have you had previous experience with people with criminal past as employees or job applicants?

Long before establishing cooperation with the RUBIKON Centrum, we have been employing people with a criminal past and did not see anything exceptional or extraordinary in it. It is true that first we had a legal analysis carried out, to see if this wasn't in conflict with the Trade Licensing Act, but after the positive opinion of our lawyers, nothing stood in our way. For us, only the individual approach of employees to the assigned tasks and the desire to develop personally in the given area have always been decisive, regardless of the burden that these employees carried with them from their past. Some of them have been employed in our company for many years, and in one case we even hired a person who was currently accused of a crime, which he told us quite openly during the job interview. After about a year, he was sentenced to imprisonment, however, due to his work results, we promised him that he could return to our company after serving his sentence, at the same job position. This exactly happened when he was released on parole, and in my opinion, our active approach had an effect on shortening of his sentence. We never regretted this, but only then did I understand how important it is to support people after release from prison, because it took this particular employee several months to fully rejoin the team and have the same work results as before.

What were your expectations or concerns?

As I have already said, the employment of people with a criminal record did not raise any major concerns, mainly because we are not a company large enough not to have a permanent overview of our employees. However, I admit that we have been more vigilant with employees with a criminal record and, in particular, with those who have been convicted of property crime, than with the others. It took us a longer time to put such trust in them to entrust them, for example, with keys and access codes for warehouses and technical premises. With one exception, this has always happened in the end, and there are no differences between our employees in this respect. However, it must be said, that not only for people with a criminal history, but for people in any way disadvantaged in the labour market, we have always expected their above-standard efforts and approach to work, knowing that we give them the second or even the last chance to live with dignity. Applicants themselves were also aware of this fact and often performed significantly better than other staff. Eventually I must admit that it was only thanks to this interview that I realized that some of

our long-term employees have or had a criminal record, and I have simply forgotten this fact...

How are the first days of the candidate at work? Do the staff know that the new colleague has a criminal past?

I will start by answering your second question, because already during the job interview with the candidates we are dealing with the issue of possible revealing or not-revealing of their criminal past in front of future colleagues. We leave the decision itself exclusively to a specific candidate and we respect them without exception. On the other hand, I always recommend applicants not to keep the criminal past from their colleagues. An additional finding could result in the employee being excluded from the team of other employees, which has never happened before in cases where he or she has informed colleagues about his or her criminal past. As for the first days after joining, they usually do not differ significantly from the beginnings of every other employee in the new staff. We are only initially in greater contact with candidates with a criminal record, because they are often a little more closed, more often afraid to ask when they do not understand something or are not sure, they are afraid to show more initiative. The reason is usually that they are worried about a job that they value. However, these are "labor pains" that every new employee goes through to some extent. Rather, we encounter problems when these workers establish themselves and often begin to feel a certain daily work stereotype or even vanity or burnout, especially when a large part of their salary is deducted from repaying their debts. Again, this is not a problem that would only concern employees with a criminal past, and moreover, it is usually enough to talk openly with the employee about feelings and positively motivate him.

What would you recommend to people who are hesitant about whether and how to share information about their criminal record with a potential employer?

I unequivocally recommend that everyone communicate such information to a potential employer quite openly. Sometimes it can be very uncomfortable for applicants to talk about the real reasons for the criminal record, other times revealing the true info can even be a reason why the employer will not hire the applicant. On the other hand, if the employer is morally strong and empathetic person, he will certainly appreciate the sincerity of the candidate. I wish all the applicants a good luck and employers a good hand in selecting new employees.

Thank you for the interview!