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## Are Inmates an Option?

*Ellen C. Wells*

We're right at the spring busy season with a tight labor market. Finding folks to work for agricultural and retail positions is difficult. Would you be willing to consider formerly incarcerated individuals?

It's a legitimate question. According to a recent INC.com report called "Why Hiring People Out of Prison Will Be Your Next Workforce Strategy," more than 10 million inmates return to communities from prison each year. Returning to prison is in the future for many of them, unfortunately. That's where job training coupled with counseling and the easing of rules limiting types of jobs nonviolent former inmates can hold may be able to help them steer clear of prison.

The article is a good one—and definitely thought provoking. It was brought about by a roundtable on the subject hosted by the White House and attended by reps from big businesses as well as small. Interestingly, the business that was present that has had the greatest success with hiring ex-inmates is a \$20 million/year bakery in New York. Read the article on Inc.com to get the CEO's thoughts on the benefits and risks of hiring formerly incarcerated folks.

Meanwhile, I'd like to know if any of you have hired folks out of prison and what your experiences have been. Drop me a line about it at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com). **GP**