

# How to be a justice-engaged business.

A Practical Guide

## Why care?

Problems in systems of justice are problems of social justice; they *reflect* those problems and they *cause* those problems. Fixing issues in our systems of justice is critical to ending racism, poverty and inequality in our communities.

Here are some examples:

If you are poor and get arrested in America you go to jail. If you are rich, you go home.

If you are Black, you are 9 times more likely than a White person to be stopped and searched by police in the UK.

1 in 4 Black American men will go to prison at some point in their lives.

If you're too poor to pay a fine in America, you go to jail, lose your job and get banned from driving your car.

Around 1 in 5 people in US jails are there because they can't pay a fine. 70% are there because they can't afford bail.

50% of people serving time in America have a diagnosed mental illness.

This all costs a lot of money—the cost of incarceration in the US exceeds \$1 trillion. And it doesn't work. America incarcerates more people per capita than anywhere else on earth, yet states that use the harshest punishments (like the death penalty) have the highest homicide rates.

## Why you?

Businesses are powerful catalysts for change. When companies use their social capital and big platforms for education and leverage, they create impact. Many corporations have already embraced this position of responsibility, and in the past decade there has been a "moral revolution" in capitalism. Study after study shows that businesses that take on controversial political and social issues can both be effective in creating change and earn more customers by doing so.

As economies reopen after the global coronavirus pandemic, the imperative for businesses to integrate social impact into their core operations and company mission has been brought into yet sharper relief. The murder of George Floyd narrowed this focus on the importance and relevance of engaging on justice.

We are at a tipping point. And that's where businesses can create real and lasting impact. Criminal justice reform is one of the most talked about issues: from Kim Kardashian to Donald Trump, from hit Netflix documentaries like 13th to blockbuster films like Just Mercy and seminal podcasts like Serial. Criminal justice reform is primed for progress, and it's one of the only truly bipartisan issues in US politics.

The groundswell of support, both political and public, is overwhelming. The stage is set for far reaching reform.

So join us at the table. You will be putting your voice behind something with real traction, visibility and the opportunity for lasting impact.

## Why us?

At RBIJ, we have a unique mission and a unique team. We get the needs, limitations and aspirations of you as a business leader. We also get the goals and challenges of activists and campaigners, and the daily struggle of our lawyers trying to make things better one client at a time. Why? Because this is where we come from. Our team is made up of campaigners, business and trade leaders, lawyers and activists; many of us would count ourselves in several of those categories.

We hope you are reading this because you care about social justice and equality. Your business and brand are expected to support and actively promote it. But perhaps it isn't always totally clear how to engage in justice reform. So that's where we come in. Our job is to support you in finding definition around goals, to vet and assess opportunities, and to figure out when to keep your powder dry and when to light it up.

From our team's diversity, we've found where the real magic lies: 99% of the time we're all on the same page. There is something you can do today that will create change.

We hope this toolkit can be a starting point.



Celia Ouellette  
CEO, Responsible Business Initiative for Justice  
[celia@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org](mailto:celia@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org)



# Use your voice.

## Why?

Businesses are influencers. They have the power to shift narrative, encourage people to think differently and shed light on important issues. Using your public platform to give power to the powerless and lift the voices of those least heard in our societies is critical. Campaigners need to educate the public and keep the spotlight on criminal justice related issues; businesses can be valuable and impactful allies simply by repeating, amplifying and supporting them.

## How?

Social media is a crucial tool, it requires low resources, and is incredibly influential.

Follow criminal justice campaigners' social media handles and retweet. We love:

### Twitter

[@keribla](#), [@GalvinAlmanza](#), [@radleybalko](#), [@glennEmartin](#) and [@jduffyrice](#)  
(also us! tweeting at [@ouellette\\_celia](#) and [@RBI\\_Justice](#))

### Linkedin

[Michelle Cirocco](#), [Jeff Korzenik](#), [Jenny Kim](#) and [Nyra Jordan](#)

[Reach out to RBIJ](#). We create custom press and social media toolkits on justice issues.

Participate in podcasts and live events on justice-focused issues to voice your support.

Commit to at least one op-ed, blog or piece of written content over the next 6 months. The RBIJ communications team will support you. Do not let perfection get in the way of progress; it is better to say something than nothing at all.

## Examples.

Jeff Korzenik of Fifth Third Bank used [an interview with Jill Wagner](#) on Wake Up With Cheddar to talk about why criminal justice reform is good for business and what the bank is doing to support it. "If we can improve our criminal justice system, we can improve the prospects for labor force growth and labor force productivity."

Virgin's Richard Branson blogs and speaks regularly about how and why we need fairness in our systems of justice, for example [here](#) he writes about racism and innocence in capital punishment cases.

Koch Industries' Silas Horst [wrote an op-ed](#) in the Financial Times outlining corporate efforts to deliver fair and equal justice systems as well as the business case for reform.

Ashish Prashar of Publicis Sapient participated in [a broadcast interview](#) with Angel Alejandro from Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth about the need for corporate engagement in the campaign to reduce prison populations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



# Use your leverage.

## Why?

Businesses have huge social capital. They have an unparalleled ability to call governments, leaders and change-makers to account. They can press for change with currency on the table. They have sophisticated systems of lobbying and long-standing relationships. In the post-COVID world, and after the murder of George Floyd, businesses are being called on to become active participants in social justice issues, especially criminal justice reform; not only to speak loudly about systemic problems, but also to actively drive change.

## How?

Sign letters to lawmakers organised by campaign groups.\*

Call legislators, prosecutors, departments of corrections, governors and sheriffs. Write to them directly.\*

Build criminal justice reform advocacy into the conversations you have with state and federal leadership; let them know this is important to you especially during investment and site selection.\*

Join amicus briefs filed with courts.\*

"Lend" your lobbyists to state campaign efforts. Facilitate information sharing, skills development, mentorship or provide in-kind donation of lobbyists' time.

*\*RBIJ supports the campaign movement by circulating opportunities like these to justice-engaged businesses. We provide information sheets about the proposed action, key messaging and hands-on support to answer questions.*

## Examples.

Business leaders in the UK, including Lastminute.com Founder, Martha Lane Fox signed [a joint letter](#) calling on Justice Secretary Robert Buckland to release certain inmates to prevent COVID-19 spread in correctional facilities. The letter successfully resulted in a U-turn by the UK Government.

Koch Industries [successfully advocated](#) in their home state of Kansas for a state Supreme Court rule change that allowed more in-house attorneys to provide pro bono legal services to their communities.

JP Morgan Chase [publicly supports a suite of policy initiatives](#) designed to remove barriers for formerly incarcerated citizens returning to the workforce, including Clean Slate legislation.

The CEOs of Netflix and Salesforce [publicly supported California Proposition 62](#) to end the death penalty.





# Build an inclusive workforce.

## Why?

Businesses can create change through employment. One of the most powerful positions a business can take is to champion a diverse workforce and provide second chances to those with criminal records. One in three American adults have a criminal record and a principal cause of re-offending is the lack of job opportunities. Hiring formerly incarcerated citizens reflects a company's commitment to hire the best person for a job, regardless of their background. It demonstrates a sincere and far reaching commitment to diversity and inclusion. It also supports the economy by increasing productivity. Due to barriers upon re-entering the workforce, formerly incarcerated people are frequently under-employed or unemployed, despite their desire and willingness to work.

Employers of any size—large or small—have an obligation to build diverse workforces, drive truly inclusive growth, and help educate and change the culture within their company.

## How?

[Dave's Killer Bread Foundation \(DKBF\)](#) has free video content, and bespoke support tools for businesses starting the process of hiring formerly convicted citizens.

The Society for Human Resource Management has produced [a digital toolkit](#) for employers as part of their "Getting Talent Back to Work" initiative.

[70 Million Jobs](#) provides an online platform for advertising jobs to those with previous convictions

DKBF's Second Chance Ecosystem points committed Second Chance companies to recruiting partners to connect employers to talent.

Create opportunities for staff and contractors to attend learning opportunities, facilitate dialogue and share your journey.

## Examples.

Businesses that are leading the way in second chance hiring—and, crucially—speaking up about it include [Nehemiah Manufacturing](#), [CKS Packaging](#), [Televerde](#) and [Hot Chicken Takeover](#).

In the UK, [Greggs](#) and [Timpsons](#) support employees reentering society after prison sentences.

[Marshan Allen](#) recounts his experience as a former employee of a second chance hirer. [Starbucks](#), Marshan's former employer, is now a leading advocate and campaigner for prison reform.



# Innovate with your product and service.

## Why?

By design, businesses have products and tools that are valuable to currently and formerly convicted citizens, and criminal justice reform campaigners.

Some companies have adapted their products to not only make them fairer for those caught up in the criminal justice system, but also to help remove barriers and create equality of opportunity. If you are poor, disadvantaged and a person of color, the criminal justice system is far too easy to fall into and far too hard to get out of. Use your product or service to build ladders.

## How?

This is simple: if you build it, sell it or offer it to your clients, it will be of value.

Do you skill train your employees? Then provide that skill training behind bars. Do you sell groceries? Then offer grocery vouchers to those returning home. Do you create tech products for mass communication? Then offer it to campaigners.

## Examples.

Cisco offers [free courses](#) to inmates on IT skills and training. The end result is an industry-recognised certificate that offers access to further education and jobs.

Televerde [provides skills training and job offers](#) to currently incarcerated women to help them bridge the gap from incarceration to success outside the prison gates.

Checkr is a background check company and [a champion for fair hiring practices](#). They created products that allow companies to take bias out of the hiring process, making it easier for those with prior criminal records to become employed. They actively hire formerly incarcerated individuals in their California and Colorado offices and advocate throughout the US on policies to reduce barriers to employment.

Gallup has been using their [CliftonStrengths](#) tool to develop confidence and communication skills for inmates in Nebraska's prisons.

Microsoft used their technology to create [a calculator](#) demonstrating the crushing weight of fines and fees.

Google used their [virtual and artificial reality tools](#) to create a simulated experience of youth incarceration.

Lush Cosmetics [created a bath product](#) to help fund organizations fighting to end the death penalty. They also place campaign petitions in stores and use store windows to draw attention to social justice issues.

Ben & Jerry's have [used their voice and products](#) to create social change. From ice cream flavors like Justice ReMix'D that bring attention to structural racism and a broken criminal justice system, to calls of action against mass incarceration and support for vulnerable prisoners, Ben & Jerry's has become a stalwart of the criminal justice reform movement.



# Use your investment power.

## Why?

Businesses can vote with their feet and with their dollars. Where you choose to invest and who you choose to invest with is important, and both decisions present an opportunity to create change. When Coca Cola threatened to pull out of South Africa in 1986 it was instrumental in ending apartheid.

There is power in your hands.

## How?

Do your due diligence: refuse to invest in companies that directly or indirectly support mass incarceration or perpetuate human rights abuses in systems of justice.

Use your shareholder power: can you call for a company to become a second chance hirer because you hold a majority interest? Or, divest from companies that negatively impact criminal justice reform?

Review your contracts and partnerships: can you end those that are perpetuating inequality and unfairness?

Impact invest: build a portfolio that reflects your values. Find companies that are led by formerly convicted citizens, or provide opportunities for change.

Build criminal justice reform into your environmental and social governance program.

## Examples.

Microsoft and IBM terminated and/or refused to contract with law enforcement for the sale of facial recognition technology over concerns of racial profiling.

Shareholder action resulted in Microsoft creating an industry-leading program for screening for prison labor in its supply chain.

The French state pension fund blacklisted the US Treasury market due to the United States' use of the death penalty.

Columbia University divested from companies engaged in private prisons and committed to refraining from making new investments in them in the future.

JP Morgan stopped financing the largest operators of private prisons and immigrant detention centres.



# Inspire + Lead.

## Why?

Businesses have unparalleled networks. They have the unique ability to recruit their peers. Nothing demonstrates the relevance and impact of business engagement in justice reform quite like another business creating real and lasting change. Nothing motivates a business to act more than seeing their competitors doing something better than them. Be that inspiration. Be the business to chase. Create a race to the top.

## How?

Name a team member to be responsible for criminal justice reform, give them the bandwidth, authority and operational support to get to grips with the many ways your business can build and grow its engagement.

Get buy-in from leadership. Commitment from the top not only empowers and authorizes those who are motivated, but also creates a trickle down of engagement throughout the organization.

Convene and create networking opportunities for information sharing and engagement.

Support campaign organizations' events and gatherings.

Build learning and training platforms to share acquired wisdom.

Use your membership in roundtables, Chambers of Commerce and other networking groups to bring the need for change in our justice systems to the table.

## Examples.

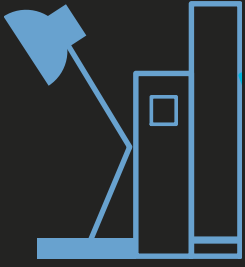
Fred Keller of Cascade Engineering and JT Weis of Abcor Industries [led a coalition of businesses](#) in West Michigan to understand their role in justice reform.

Uber [hosts second chance job fairs](#) across the US.

[Dave's Killer Bread Foundation](#) has created an entire training and learning platform for equipping businesses with the information and tools they need to make second chance hires. They host the Second Chance Business Roundtable and tour the country educating on the benefits of hiring formerly convicted citizens.

The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly and emphatically [supported criminal justice reform](#), providing learning opportunities and practical tools for businesses in the state to engage.





# Learn.

## Why?

Now, more than ever, we must take the time to learn and understand the systemic racial bias and inequality that exist at every level of our justice system. We can make suggestions and recommendations for action, but really only you know what you can do. The more you learn, the more you'll see opportunities for engagement.

## How?

Talk to formerly incarcerated citizens. Join us on our leadership program. Reach out to the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, the Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth, The Ladies of Hope Ministries, Just Leadership and the many, many other organizations lifting up and supporting those who have been incarcerated.

Sign up for our [newsletter](#).

Read! Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson (and watch the movie), The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander, Prisoners of Politics by Rachel Elise Barkow, The Devil in the Grove by Gilbert King, The Brain Defense by Kevin Davis and everything on The Marshall Project and The Appeal websites.

Watch! 13th, When They See Us and Time: The Kalief Browder Story on Netflix.

Listen! "Justice in America", "The Appeal" or "The Death Penalty Information Center" podcasts.

Attend! Join us for RBIJ's ongoing webinar series that will take a closer look at each recommendation in this toolkit. For more information email [lena@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org](mailto:lena@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org).

Deep dive! Recent research and studies around [policing and profiling](#), [traffic citations](#), [drug charges](#), [wrongful convictions](#), [juries](#), [death penalty](#), [sentencing](#) and [incarceration](#) provide great insight on the depth of racism in our systems of justice.

Talk about your journey; share what you are learning. Empower others to take a first step and reassure them that none of us have all the answers.

## Examples.

Jack Salzwedel, the CEO of American Family Insurance, [shared](#) his learning process on social media.

Verizon's Chief Legal Officer, Craig Silliman [shared](#) "over the past year, I've grown increasingly focused on the inequities in our criminal justice system. The more I've learned about the problems that plague nearly every phase of the system, the more I'm committed to being active in reform."



# Donate.

## Why?

Real change requires resources. Incredible organizations have never been so needed, and also never been so in need. The post-COVID economy threatens the progress of campaigners, service providers, activists, non-profit law firms and many other organizations working to build new and fairer systems of justice.

## How?

Donate money.

Donate time and skill, for example pro bono legal time or lobbyists' time.

Donate physical space for events.

Donate technology for virtual convenings or to facilitate organizational activities.

Donate office space, supplies and computers.

Donate memberships and services: for example, pay for a non-profit law firm's Westlaw access, or for an organization to be a member of a Chamber of Commerce.

Donate items of need like toiletries, grocery gift cards and internet access provision to returning citizens.

## Examples.

Facebook founder [Mark Zuckerberg's initiative](#) has donated millions to support criminal justice reform organizations.

Sidley Austin LLP donated webinar services to RBJ to support a virtual convening. Georgia-Pacific has pledged to donate event space to RBJ to host [a Summit](#).

Bank of America donated over \$1 million as a founding supporter of [Unlocked Futures](#), an accelerator program designed to support entrepreneurs affected by the justice system.

The CEO of Slack became so inspired by the work of "Just Mercy" author Brian Stevenson, he [offered up his company as the test case](#) for getting prison-trained coders into high growth tech companies.

JP Morgan committed \$7 million to [remove barriers to employment](#).

The CEO of Paypal [made a statement](#) and set up a donation page where 100% of money received will go to a number of social justice charities.

**Thank you.**



The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ) is an international non-profit organization that works with companies to champion fairness, equality and effectiveness across systems of punishment and incarceration.

We can be found at [www.responsiblebusinessinitiative.org](http://www.responsiblebusinessinitiative.org) and [info@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org](mailto:info@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org)