



FROM BARRIERS TO BRIDGES

The Radius Recycling
Second Chance Workforce Solution

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At a Glance

Radius Recycling (Radius, formally known as Schnitzer Steel) is creating opportunities for individuals with criminal records through its second chance employment program. The program, which started in 2015 and officially launched in 2020, is growing steadily, driven by the need for a dependable workforce and the strong performance of its employees. This initiative is particularly valuable in an industry with high turnover and a constant need for talent.

Key achievements include:

- **Increased Hiring:** About 9 percent of the company's U.S. new hires from 2020 to 2024 had a criminal record.
- **Workforce Stability:** Nearly 23 percent of its second chance hires remain active employees.
- **Expanded Opportunities:** Between 2020 and 2024, Radius placed second chance employees in over 80 facilities across 60 distinct job types.
- **Industry Leadership:** As a founding member of the Second Chance Business Coalition (SCBC), Radius partners with leading businesses to advocate for expanding second chance employment and advancement practices.

From Need to Impact — Formalizing a Second Chance Program

The Radius second chance employment strategy emerged from a pressing need for workforce development. With a growing demand for talent in the recycling industry, employing individuals with a criminal record became a practical solution to meet operational needs while also addressing societal challenges.



[Radius Recycling] looked at [second chance employment] really as a business case proposition. The labor pool we needed to do our business — steel manufacturing and metals recycling — was shrinking, so we needed to find more avenues to recruit talent. We found a demographic — the second chance demographic — that had a huge component: about 30% are looking for work and not being given access to jobs. We figured out that we could develop the framework and methodologies to identify, reach out to, recruit and retain that talent.”

— Tamara L. Lundgren, Former President and CEO, Radius Recycling

The program began in 2015 with the removal of questions about past arrests and convictions from job applications, eliminating a significant barrier for candidates. In 2016, Radius partnered with Dave's Killer Bread Foundation to refine its approach and expand opportunities. These efforts led to the formal launch of the company's second chance employment program in 2020.

The launch introduced an individualized approach to background checks, focusing on the nature of past crimes, behavior patterns and time elapsed, rather than disqualifying candidates based on criminal history alone. This expanded the talent pool significantly, with most applicants passing the screening process — except for those with pending charges or recent repeat offenses.

Commitment From the Top — CEO Leadership in Action

Leadership commitment has been the cornerstone of the Radius second chance employment program, transforming it from a bold idea into a thriving reality. Tamara Lundgren, who served as President and CEO until August 2025, championed the initiative from the outset, framing it as a natural extension of the company's mission to uncover value where others might not see it. Her belief in the untapped potential of individuals with criminal records set the tone for a company-wide commitment.



Our chairman and CEO Tamara Lundgren was our champion around second chance employment. That was quickly followed by our Board. Coupled with that, we operate in large parts of the country, but we also operate in very small remote locations. A lot of our focus was around leveraging our leadership, who oftentimes grew up in smaller communities and had strong credibility with state and community leadership to help open doors.”

— Erich Wilson, Senior Vice President, Chief Human Resources Officer & Chief of Corporate Operations, Radius Recycling

Since 2021, the Radius Board of Directors has actively engaged in the program's progress, receiving quarterly updates on successes, challenges and growth opportunities. This top-down commitment has driven transformative cultural change and positioned second chance employment as a core element of the company's operational strategy.

Modeling Measurable Outcomes for Impact

The Radius program thrives on a data-driven approach, focusing on measurable outcomes in a high-turnover industry. From 2020 to 2024, roughly 9 percent of U.S. hires had criminal records, with nearly 23 percent remaining active employees. Radius tracks job placement types and highlights the contributions of second chance employees in critical roles like production crew member and customer service representative.

In 2024, Radius talent leaders collaborated with five other SCBC member companies to develop the [*SCBC Metrics Framework for Second Chance Policies and Practices*](#). The framework provides practical tools for employers to measure program success, including retention, employee advancement and overall impact.

Unlocking Potential Through Private-Sector Collaboration

Radius is a founding member of the SCBC. This ongoing collaboration with other large employers has enabled the company to expand its second chance employment efforts to include education and upskilling. Inspired by another SCBC member, Radius launched a fully funded high school diploma program in 2022, helping many second chance employees earn their diplomas and advance their careers.

Additionally, Radius introduced the “Building a Better Future” initiative, an online curriculum with over 300 courses in multiple languages covering foundational and technical skills. Since its launch, employees, including those with criminal records, have completed nearly 6,000 courses, advancing their professional development.



[‘Skills first’] means creating a framework where you can analytically assess the skills needed for a particular job and you can agnostically assess the characteristics, the attributes, the qualifications of an individual who is applying for that position and assess their potential to perform successfully.”

— Tamara L. Lundgren, Former President and CEO, Radius Recycling

Recommendations for Business

Based on its experience and success with second chance employment, Radius offers the following recommendations for other employers:

- **Secure Leadership Buy-In:** Engage senior leadership to champion second chance employment as a strategic priority. At Radius, support from the CEO and Board of Directors has been critical in driving cultural change and embedding second chances into the company’s operational strategy.
- **Track and Share Outcomes:** Use data-driven insights to validate program success and guide improvements. Track metrics such as hiring and retention rates as well as the career advancements of employees with criminal records to demonstrate the value of second chance programs and encourage adoption across industries.
- **Invest in Upskilling and Education:** Support long-term growth by offering training and education initiatives. Programs like Radius’ high school diploma initiative and “Building a Better Future” helps employees advance their careers and fosters a culture of continuous learning.
- **Learn From Industry Peers:** Collaborate with other employers to exchange insights, share best practices and understand the challenges and successes of second chance employment programs. Collaboration through coalitions like the SCBC strengthens connections within the private sector and provides valuable resources for program development.