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SUDDEN CHANGE, LLC
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**REBUILDING
LIVES
ONE JOB
AT A TIME**

Sudden Change
gives past offenders
a second chance



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REBUILDING LIVES ONE JOB AT A TIME

Sudden Change Gives Past Offenders a Second Chance

by Steve Freeman

A work crew enters the construction site and gets to work. It happens hundreds of times every day in Ohio, but not this way, not with this backstory.

These workers are affiliated with a construction staffing company called Sudden Change, LLC. What's more, they are all past offenders who need a "second chance," but who usually hit the wall of background checks, preventing them from getting even nominal employment.

Background is important in the construction field. The experience and credentials of a construction firm and its crews can make or break winning a project. And when a firm lands a project, the backgrounds of the individual members of a project team are checked. Backgrounds: It's what you build on—literally.

Sudden Change takes men with criminal records who are unable to land jobs and counsels, trains and manages them through work at a construction site. The temporary employees get money to live on and the construction firms get bodies for hard-to-fill jobs.

"From the start, we help those who have blemished records—assault and drug offenses and some who are on probation," says Seron Brooks, Founder and President of Sudden Change, based in Cincinnati, Ohio. He adds, "We build relationships—with these workers and with businesses. Most companies are scared to hire felons, which limits opportunities for these guys."

RISING ABOVE CHALLENGES

Brooks' personal experiences make him uniquely qualified to help people trying to turn their lives around. He, too, is an ex-offender who lived his young adult life on the street, committing misdemeanors and felonies and was caught in a cycle of jail and probation.

Brooks shares that his life was positively changed through a spiritual journey with Jesus Christ. Part of his rehabilitation also came through work (odd jobs, really) on construction sites. Now he offers others a similar path out of a life of crime.

Today, Brooks' credentials include skills in carpentry and masonry. Plus, he worked in construction for 15 years, mostly buying, fixing and reselling homes in the city. After his personal transformation, in 2008, Brooks started his construction clean-up service, Sudden Change. His first job involved partnering with Conger Construction Group Inc. to clean up after the North Avondale Montessori Elementary School in Cincinnati was rebuilt.

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-Seron Brooks, Founder and President, Sudden Change, LLC

A Sudden Change work crew arrives at a job site in Lebanon, Ohio. In an effort to transform lives, the organization helps individuals with past criminal histories find work performing construction clean-up activities.



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Crew members at Sudden Change go through a mentoring and training program to prepare for work assignments and to stay motivated while learning new trades.

In just eight years, Sudden Change's annual profit has grown from \$16,000 to \$1 million. Brooks employs 40 to 50 people (full- and part-time) and participates in about 25 construction projects a year. The minority-owned business provides construction clean-up, brick cleaning, janitorial work, carpentry, demolition, and other services.

A HIGHER PURPOSE

Early on, Brooks looked for a way to pay back the blessings he had received. He decided that because slow training and mentorship in the construction field helped him change for the better, his calling in life should be to run a program that did the same for others.

He came across men whose life patterns matched his and brought them onto his team. He found businesses willing to hire his crews, which are well supervised so that firms can retain their high safety and security records while the men learn trades and make money to live on.

"We mentor the men. We do drug testing. We have a form they fill out requiring that they commit to no drugs, no alcohol, no guns. And the training comes from the companies," explains Brooks.

Companies and organizations that support Sudden Change's cause include Conger Construction Group, HGC Construction, the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp., Blankenship Masonry Inc., Turner Construction Co., 3CDC, and Haller Homes Inc.

"I've used Seron's workers on a number of projects and I can't remember a time I have had an incident," says Robby



Sudden Change Founder and President Seron Brooks (left) oversees and mentors crew members at construction job sites so that workers successfully accomplish their assignments.

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A Sudden Change crew member cleans a brick wall at a newly completed masonry project.

Wilson, Senior Project Manager for Conger Construction Group in Lebanon, Ohio. He adds that Conger Construction also gains a "very competent crew."

Bennie Fluellen, the Pastor of Cincinnati's Overflow Ministries Covenant Church and also Brooks' mentor, shares: "Seron has a tremendous amount of compassion for these guys. The companies he works with are aware of his mission and they have been stellar in giving these guys jobs so they can become gainfully employed—and give them a fresh start."

A WIN-WIN SITUATION

According to Wilson, Brooks has achieved a rare thing in starting a profitable business that purposely hires down-and-nearly-out individuals. Wilson calls this a "win-win situation" that pays off for the workers, and society in general, too. "You put a paycheck in their hands and they start making some good choices. If you don't, they continue down the wrong road," he says.

From the get-go, Conger Construction, a general contractor of commercial, medical, public, recreational, educational and religious developments, has backed Brooks' mission to help former criminals obtain gainful employment. The company even runs an apprenticeship

program that could lead to future employment; this training helps to gradually move a worker from Sudden Change employment to Conger Construction employment, from non-skilled to skilled status with real-world credentials, such as OSHA training.

In this regard, Brooks represents what is possible in rehabilitating and re-assimilating ex-offenders into productive society. He now leads that transformation for others.

"To Seron, it's not just a job; he makes a bond with the guys," Wilson says. This helps with strategic planning too. "We know and trust how we can use his crew for projects in the future." Conger Construction has already engaged Sudden Change for a major four-year, \$96 million restoration of schools in nearby Middletown, Ohio.

It's a project that Brooks is sure will lead to the transformation of many more lives. 🙏

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A Sudden Change crew member provides repair work on a masonry project.