

UPWARD: An Employer Symposium on Second Chance Hiring

April 13, 2023

Speakers

Keynote



Christopher Watler, Executive Vice President, Center for Employment Opportunities

Christopher is responsible for overseeing CEO's national fund development, communications, and various special projects dedicated to advancing CEO's mission. Prior to joining CEO, Chris worked for the Center for Court Innovation in several key roles. He served as the project director for the Harlem Community Justice Center, where he developed evidence-based reentry programs for youth and adults, diversion programs for juveniles, and eviction-prevention programs for housing court litigants.

Chris also served as the Deputy Director of National Technical Assistance, providing information and assistance to justice systems. He was instrumental in the launch of both the Red Hook Community Justice Center and Crown Heights Community Mediation Center. Chris was also the Operations and Training manager for City Volunteer Corps, and the Community Center director for the Union Settlement Association. He is the immediate past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club of Harlem. Chris holds a BS in political science from the State University of New York at Purchase and an MPA from John Jay College.

Panelists

Part 1: Second Chances in Tech (30 min)



Justice Through Code – Aedan MacDonald

Aedan Macdonald, conceptualized, and developed Justice Through Code (JTC), a partnership program between the Center for Justice and the Tamer Center for Social Enterprise at Columbia Business School. JTC aims to end the cycle of poverty that contributes to incarceration by providing life-changing access to the education, opportunities, and networks necessary to enter into careers in the tech industry.

In his role as Executive Director of JTC, Aedan oversees the growth, development, and management of the program. He also serves as a professional skills instructor for the program, teaching workshops on networking, leadership, and career management.



Second Chance Studios – Lajuanda Asemota

With two decades of experience creating impact across sectors, Oakland-native Lajuanda M. Asemota's leadership includes venture building and strategy in technology, education, and media organizations. Currently, she is the Chief Executive Officer & Co-founder of Second Chance Studios, a nonprofit digital media company that trains and employs people who were formerly incarcerated. Previously, she served as the Executive Director of /dev/color, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering Black software engineers to help one another grow into industry leaders. Lajuanda also led Diversity & Inclusion, as well as Program Operations, at Singularity University (SU), working with thousands of global leaders to fuel innovation at the intersection of technology and social impact.

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Part 2: Building Equitable Workplace Cultures (30 min)



Second Chance Inc. – Clayton Shelhoss

Clayton has 30 years of experience in sales, business development and operations planning with early stage, private and publicly held companies. Currently he is the COO of Second Chance, Inc, a social enterprise that provides people, materials and the environment with a second chance. Second Chance, Inc deconstructs buildings and homes, salvages usable materials, and makes those and other donated items available to the public for reuse at their 200,000 square foot retail center. With the revenue generated, they provide job training and workforce development for those with various employment obstacles in the Baltimore region.



MOD Pizza – Amy Weber

Amy Weber is the Social Impact Program Manager at MOD Pizza. In her four years at MOD, she’s played a vital role in developing the company’s social impact strategy, which focuses on four areas: Opportunity, Stability, Mobility, and Advocacy.

She has managed MOD’s Opportunity Employment program and worked with community-based organizations around the country to provide meaningful employment opportunities to individuals with Justice Involvement as well as individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. MOD is a proud member of the Workforce & Justice Alliance, a coalition of businesses committed to advancing systemic change in the justice system and removing workforce barriers for individuals with justice involvement.