



Leslie Morales, Vice President, Operations, U.S. Rubber

A professional mentor with an extensive background in leadership, management training, team building and business improvement, Leslie Morales embodies the motto she works hard to impart to her team: Be a solution provider, not a problem identifier. Morales's no-nonsense yet nurturing approach to building professional relationships makes her an ideal fit for U.S. Rubber, a California manufacturer of fitness flooring and acoustical underlayment that gives discarded tires a second life and provides employment to a second-chance workforce.

As vice president of operations at U.S. Rubber, Morales oversees every facet of its factory in Southern California's Inland Empire, including coordination with sales, workforce recruitment and retention, and production. Since joining U.S. Rubber in January 2021, Morales has helped the company meet ambitious goals by creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and support among workers who often have experienced little of either. In her first six weeks, Morales instituted changes that reduced stress and streamlined operations, allowing her team to handle an enormous new stream of orders through Home Depot.

Morales draws know-how and inspiration from her 34-year career at Enterprise Rent-A-Car in Southern California. She started in the company's lauded management trainee program, rising through the ranks to regional director of operations and business management. Morales promoted more than 100 employees during her tenure, built teams and increased customer satisfaction over multiple branches. She's still in contact with people she mentored 25 years ago.

Morales believes companies that exclude formerly incarcerated people are missing out on a loyal and growth-oriented workforce with an unmatched appreciation for their jobs. She works to create a culture of learning, accountability and teamwork, and has found that even employees who never saw themselves as leaders will rise to the role in this atmosphere.

In addition to working with U.S. Rubber, Morales volunteers with the Orange County United Way, where she was recruited to lead the board's Women Looking Forward group. She also works with the U.S. Marine Corps as a member of its Executive Transition Assistance Service team, which performs mock interviews and offers career coaching to officers transitioning to civilian life.