



## U.S. Rubber Bounce Back! story: Carlos Arceo

If you met Carlos Arceo today, you wouldn't guess he'd served time in prison. In just over three years since his release, Carlos has built a thriving career as U.S. Rubber's second shift manager, rising through the company's ranks and earning the respect of his direct reports.

Carlos left prison in early 2019 equipped only with the GED he'd earned before his release and a fierce determination to build a better future for himself and his family. His old lifestyle of "making a living on the streets" after dropping out of high school during his freshman year had brought him nothing but pain, earning him a 10-year prison sentence (he served eight and a half) and depriving him of the privilege of seeing his two daughters grow up. This time, he decided, things would be different.

"When I was released from prison, I was flying blind," says Carlos. "I was 37 and I'd never had a job before. I knew I had to get one, but I didn't know where to start. And I'm not sure what I would have done if my counselor at my halfway house hadn't put me in touch with U.S. Rubber. This is my first job ever. I feel lucky that it has been such a great learning opportunity."

Hired on the spot through U.S. Rubber's [Bounce Back!](#) second-chance hiring program after his interview, Carlos started in the re-grind department, where he was responsible for regrinding post-industrial scrap rubber to produce the company's sound-absorbing underlayment. But it didn't take long for him to graduate from this entry-level position. He picked up on the machinery quickly and his production numbers were high from the start. Carlos tried to give 150% whenever possible, and his supervisors noticed. They started asking him what more he wanted to learn.

In just over a year, Carlos rose through the ranks, absorbing new information like a sponge, building strong relationships with his peers and the company's leadership, and earning the role of second-shift manager. He now trains new employees on how to use the company's PLC software, which controls the mold line. Carlos says his management and communication skills came as a surprise. "I didn't really know that was in me," he says, "but I quickly learned how to interact with people. How to lead, how to manage, how to plan."

The most rewarding part of the job, he says, is serving as a role model to others who have faced similar struggles in life and want to turn over a new leaf. "I spent a lot of time in prison," he says. "So I know what our new employees are going through. They still have that mindset that they're a negative to society. They didn't have any opportunities before prison, and they don't know how to succeed now. If I can show them what I did, how I turned my life around, I can help them see that they can do it too."

Carlos says he'd never spent much time thinking about the future. But now that he has one to look forward to, he is eager to keep growing. His immediate next goal is to improve his computer skills. After that, he'd like to learn more about orders and sales and be more involved in operations in the main office.

Carlos's family couldn't be prouder of his growth and his newfound ambition. And his family is growing. His wife, whom he married when he was in his early 20s before he went to prison, gave birth to their third child in 2020. Carlos is ready to do whatever it takes to protect what he has built. "It's been three years since I came home," he says. "There's nothing about my old life that I want to go back to. This is a better way to live. Working, producing, providing. My family is with me. We're moving forward."