



## U.S. Rubber Bounce Back! story: Dino Muniz

Dino Muniz left prison in 2022 a changed man with a fierce determination to “make it this time.” His fire to succeed motivated him to step outside his comfort zone and apply for a job with U.S. Rubber, where he has earned the unofficial title of “top slicing machine operator” as well as the respect of his supervisors, peers and trainees.

Before prison, Dino had spent a decade running around with the “wrong crowd” and getting into trouble. Shortly after graduating from high school, he married and had four children, but he didn’t settle down. When his son was in high school, Dino was still trying to make a little extra “fast money” in addition to the salary he earned from his construction job. He kept pushing the envelope until it all caught up with him. “It sounds selfish,” he says, “but I was in a bad way and just living for the day.”

Upon release after serving eight years of a six- to 10-year sentence, Dino was placed in a halfway house where he met a future coworker who told him about the opportunity at U.S. Rubber. When he called the shop, he reached an employee who told him, “Look, if you want a job, come fill out an application. Don’t play around. There’s work, but you’ve got to come and get it.” He’s glad he took that advice. “Since I started,” he says, “I’ve gained a lot of trust from management. I was very proud when they gave me keys to the shop so I could open up in the morning. I’m proud of the fact that they have faith in me and can depend on me. I’m proud that I came in and earned their respect.”

Hired through U.S. Rubber’s [Bounce Back!](#) second-chance hiring program, Dino now wears many hats, all of them well. He’s not only an expert on the flooring-tile slicing machine, but he’s also discovered he’s good at working with people. “I train all the new slicers,” he says. “I help them for two to three weeks and as soon as I say they’re ready, they’re placed on their own machine. It’s rewarding to know that I’m teaching them a trade so that they can earn a living.” Dino is also “mechanically inclined.” If something breaks in the shop, he’s often able to help get it running again. He says he’d rather lose a little time on his machine than have a whole day’s work come to a halt somewhere else on the line.

Dino says his job at U.S. Rubber has helped him improve his finances, self-esteem, professional and personal relationships, and more. It feels good, he says, to come in to work every day and have his effort be noticed. One day, he hopes to be promoted to manager. It’s not so much about being the boss, he says, as being a role model for others. He explains that people who have been to prison need a little extra help, and seeing someone who shares that experience and is now in a position of leadership allows them to imagine themselves in that role and inspires them to work a little harder to get there.

Today, Dino’s life is stable. He has a strong support network that includes his children from his first marriage and his new fiancé, who he says is not about to put up with any of his prior negative behavior. “I’ve known her for 19 years,” he says. “She’s seen me at my worst and I’m proud now to be showing her my best. She and my daughter have been my biggest supporters, giving me rides when I needed them and going out of their way to make sure I stay on the right path.”

For other people coming out of prison eager to make up for lost time and past mistakes, “the best advice I can offer,” he says, “is that we can do anything we want. If we give 100 percent, it will pay off. It’s never too late to change. We just have to look forward.”