



## **U.S. Rubber employee story: Kyle Sweeney**

In 2018, Kyle Sweeney was working a desk job as a marketing analyst. He'd started to find the day-to-day routine dull, and when the company announced it was moving its operations to Florida, Kyle realized it was time to make a change. Today, his job training U.S. Rubber's second-chance employees is anything but boring, and he relishes the opportunity to help others discover the pride and satisfaction that comes from growing as a professional.

Hired in July 2018 as a "last line of defense," Kyle started out performing quality control checks on the rolled flooring before it went out for delivery. After that he operated the peeling machine, which cuts the flooring molds to size for each order. He then moved on to the mold line, creating product batches and coordinating the daily production plan.

"Since I started here, I've basically worked every job on the shop floor, following the production line from finish to start," Kyle says. "It's been helpful to gain an in-depth understanding of what happens at every step in the process. I also got to know everyone on the team as well as the common challenges they face in their jobs. The knowledge I built up really prepared me for my current role."

Today, as quality control manager, Kyle wears many hats. His primary role is making sure the rubber flooring meets industry standards. He also trains employees on company procedures to make sure they are doing everything correctly. He teaches them what to look for to make sure the product is up to spec. He also works with potential new vendors to make sure their raw materials suit the company's needs.

Kyle's eagerness to learn impressed U.S. Rubber's leadership from day one. He actively seeks critiques, and his openness to coaching helps him model positive behavior for his direct reports, many of whom are formerly incarcerated employees hired through the company's Bounce Back! program.

Kyle was aware of U.S. Rubber's second-chance mission before he accepted his first position with the company, and he appreciates the chance to watch his teammates grow. "When I was younger, I had some friends who got into trouble," Kyle says. "They weren't bad people; they just made bad choices. But as a result, they were totally discounted by society and never got the opportunity to grow professionally. Bounce Back! proves that most people are capable of improvement. It's a great program."

According to Kyle, the two qualities that indicate the best chance of success in new employees are curiosity and pride in the process. It's rewarding, he says, to work with people who have just been released from prison—many of whom have never held a steady job before—and watch them learn to appreciate working hard and taking pride in what they do. "I tell my direct reports, 'Just be honest and do the work. Learn from your mistakes and help each other out. The rest will come.'"

Ever growth oriented and future minded, Kyle's next goal is to earn an applied associate's degree in business. He hopes the knowledge will help him continue to advance at U.S. Rubber and help the company reach its full potential. "We're trying to grow this business into a \$55 million company," he says. "And I want to be there every step of the way."