

# Recovering What Others Lose

Guatemalan businessman creates one of the few Hispanic disaster restoration businesses.

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DAILY COLABORATOR

Guatemalan businessman José Cruz assures us that when he immigrated to the United States, it was hard work to adapt to his new country and that he was rejected for many jobs due to his lack of English. Regardless, he knew how to take advantage of the opportunities offered by his new county and is now the owner of a 15 million dollar annual company.

Cruz states that he arrived in Chicago by an “accident of destiny”, and that it was not his dream to live in the United States.

Disappointed with the authorities in his country, Guatemala, for having accused him of a crime that he did not commit, he took advantage of an invitation in 1969 from a firefighter friend in Chicago to begin his trip north.

Surprisingly his friend decided to return to his country and left Cruz and his wife in an unfamiliar setting. “We were left alone without knowing anyone, we were cold and had no money, to the point where we had to go to The Salvation Army store to get coats to protect us from the cold” confessed Cruz.

In those harsh economic times Cruz never imagined that founding JC Restoration, Inc. would open a path for a generation of restorers that includes his son Warner.

Like that, father and son have built said business that has impacted the community through the

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generation of dozens of jobs and whose annual sales have reached 15 million dollars annually.

### Starting from the bottom

After working several jobs, the big opportunity came for Cruz when he was hired by a company that cleaned windows and carpets, among other things.

On one occasion they were called to clean a basement that had caught fire, “they asked my boss if he knew how to restore a building, he asked me if we should take the job and impulsively I said yes, not knowing that it would be the start of my disaster restoration business” said Cruz.

The work consisted of profoundly cleaning burnt buildings to kill the bad smell in the homes, then came the painting and the restoration of the furniture. “I did this work from 1974 to 1982 and there I met a lot of people from different businesses, insurance agents, and banks who would later help me to start my own business” stated the founder.

Cruz now knows that when one door closes, and even bigger one opens, which is why when the company he worked for closed in 1982, Cruz knew that it was the opportunity of a lifetime that would allow him to open his own restoration company.

“My old boss offered me his equipment, the chemicals and



José Cruz and son Warner Cruz speak with a J.C. Restoration, Inc. employee after a demonstration on how to recover damaged property.

even his contacts to use at my new company; he just asked that I pay him back little by little. I invited an American supervisor to come work with me and he did all of the marketing, promoting the company around the entire state, and we received a lot of contracts” said Cruz.

### An example of overcoming

Nevertheless, not everything was milk and honey for Cruz, who admitted that his was not an easy business to run, and in spite of going out and finding customers, the majority of his work depended on insurance companies.

He admitted that those years were very difficult economically that almost forced him to quit, but the fear of not being able to find a well paying job to support his family forced him to stay with his business.

Now things are different under the direction of his son Warner Cruz, eldest son of José, who has taken the business to the top,

converting it into one of the few flourishing Hispanic companies in the area of disaster restoration.

His consistency in his work was recognized this past April by the Congregación San Jose, who gave Cruz an award for breaking the language barrier as an immigrant and integrating into the economic life of the United States.

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