

Eniel Torres

SBA SMALL BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

Eniel Torres was born in San Germán, one of the oldest towns on Puerto Rico's west coast. In 1995, he graduated from the University of Puerto Rico's Mayagüez Campus with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, and in 1999 he graduated Cum Laude from the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico's School of Law. That same year, he established Productos La Finca, Inc., a food manufacturing company, specializing at first in the production of seasoning –or *adobo*–with a turkey-pork flavor. La Finca's flagship brand name is *Maga* Foods. Eniel's mother suggested the name –inspired by Puerto Rico's national flower– and it was a keeper, as Eniel puts it, "because it's short and easy to pronounce in both English and Spanish." As a matter of fact, both of Eniel's parents have been great influences in the entrepreneur's life, instilling in him and his siblings the value of hard work from a very young age.

That hard work has paid off for Eniel. In 2001, his company launched a hot cereal line, and since then Productos La Finca has developed more than 100 additional products, such as pancakes, seasonings, rice pudding, cod fritter mix, and snacks, among many others under the brand names Jukiao, Buono, Madre, Dulce, La Finca Orgánica, and, of course, *Maga*. Also, the company has developed products for private labels. The company has two distributors that sell its products in Florida, Pennsylvania, NY, NJ and Massachusetts, in addition to a private label manufactured for a big mainland distributor. Moreover, Productos La Finca exports to the East Caribbean from the Virgin Islands to Barbados and Dominican Republic, with export sales representing 10 percent of total sales.

In 2011, Eniel was in the process of purchasing some land, when the seller asked him what he did for a living. Upon learning that Eniel was an entrepreneur; the man explained that he was an instructor of the Puerto Rico Small Business & Technology Development Center's Baldrige Performance Excellence program, and invited him to join that year's session. Administered by the Inter American University of Puerto Rico under a cooperative agreement with the SBA, the Puerto Rico SBTDC provides training, individual counseling and technical assistance to thousands of existing and potential entrepreneurs every year. For the past several years, the organization has espoused the Baldrige Performance Excellence program to help empower small businesses to reach their goals, improve results and become more competitive. Eniel says. "I went in without any expectations, and found everything I need in the areas of human resources and strategic planning in a very integrated manner." Eniel says. Eniel also benefited from the SBTDC's Profit Mastery course, to plan and evaluate company's financials, improving accounts management, financial planning and cash flow management. Over the past few years, Productos La Finca revenues have increased by 102 percent. From Eniel as the company's sole employee, today the company counts with a team of 51, who Eniel is proud to call "the soul of the business."

"My greatest satisfaction is my family – they are number one," Eniel says. "On the business side of it, my work has allowed me to explore my talent, the desire to develop new products, experiment, innovate. Knowing that you have satisfied your customers is incredibly gratifying, beyond financial remuneration. Satisfaction lies in knowing that you did it".

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