Driving Growth From Within: How Toyota Empowers Employees Through Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

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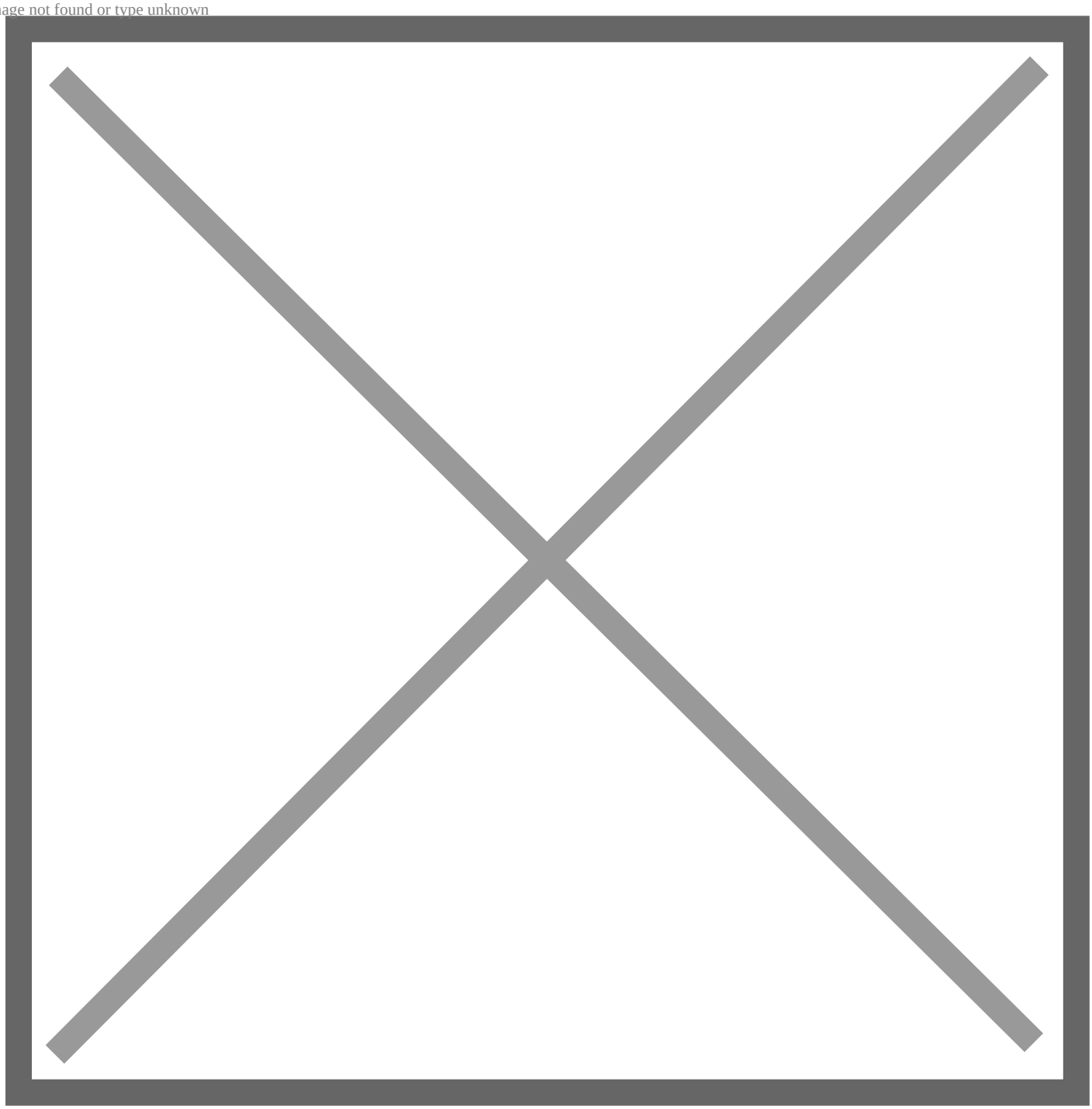


Across the company, from manufacturing locations to corporate offices, Toyota is invested in building teams that bring a range of perspectives to better serve customers and drive innovation.

Toyota helps and supports all team members with mentorship, networking and professional development opportunities. One way is through engagement with business partnering groups (BPGs). BPGs, such as African American Collaborative (AAC), Toyota Organization for the Development of Latinos (TODOS), Spectrum, Young Professionals, or Toyota Christian Fellowship, to name a few, are open to all team members, regardless of team members' backgrounds, and they can be a way for team members to find the resources and support systems that resonate most with them.

Some team members believe that community, educational programs and resources are important for new members and seasoned professionals. They're essential to how Toyota develops all talent, fosters collaboration and ultimately drives long-term success.

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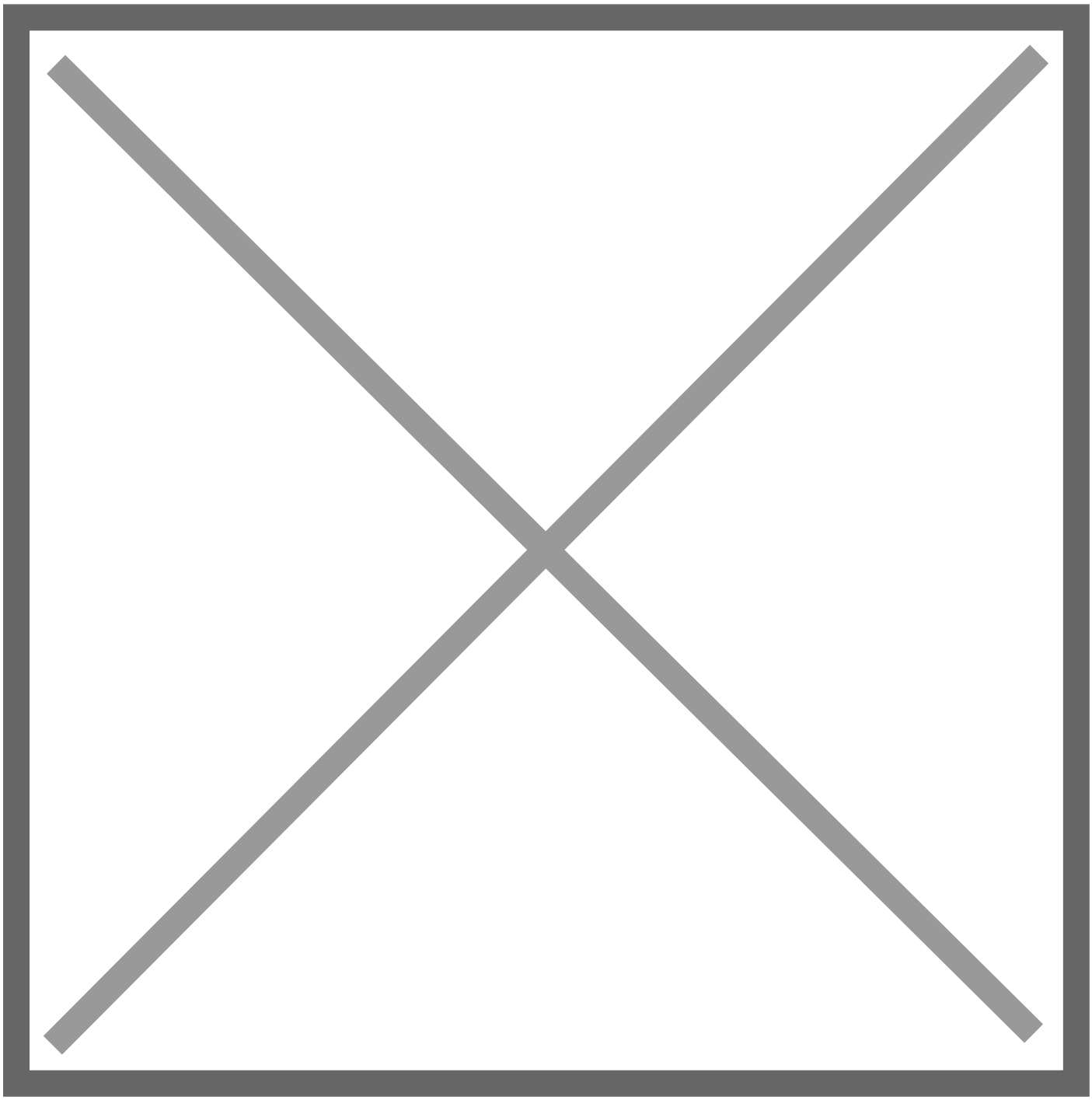
The Power of Mentorship
Mentorship at Toyota is an intentional, strategic initiative that fosters meaningful relationships across the organization.

Whether it’s a formal mentorship program with structured goals or informal, peer-driven support networks, Toyota creates space for team members to learn from one another.

“You have to be intentional,” says Pepper Johnson, first line compliance complaints manager with Toyota Financial Services (TFS). “One of the pillars within the AAC is dedicated to fostering an environment that elevates and enhances our awareness of Toyota’s various career development offerings, mentoring connections, and networking opportunities.”

The company’s mentorship programs are designed with growth in mind — both personal and professional. Team members gain access to guidance from leaders who’ve navigated complex challenges, advanced through different roles, and now understand the nuances of Toyota’s culture. For mentees, this translates to faster integration, broader exposure to career possibilities and confidence in their development.

“The AAC allowed me an opportunity to fellowship and establish relationships,” says Mike Reid, a senior manager of the Finance Product Development Group at TFS. “I feel like the relationships encouraged me to develop my skills and grow as a team member.”



Deborah Velazquez, a customer services field manager at TMNA Lexus Southern, has been a mentor and mentee and experienced positive outcomes in both roles.

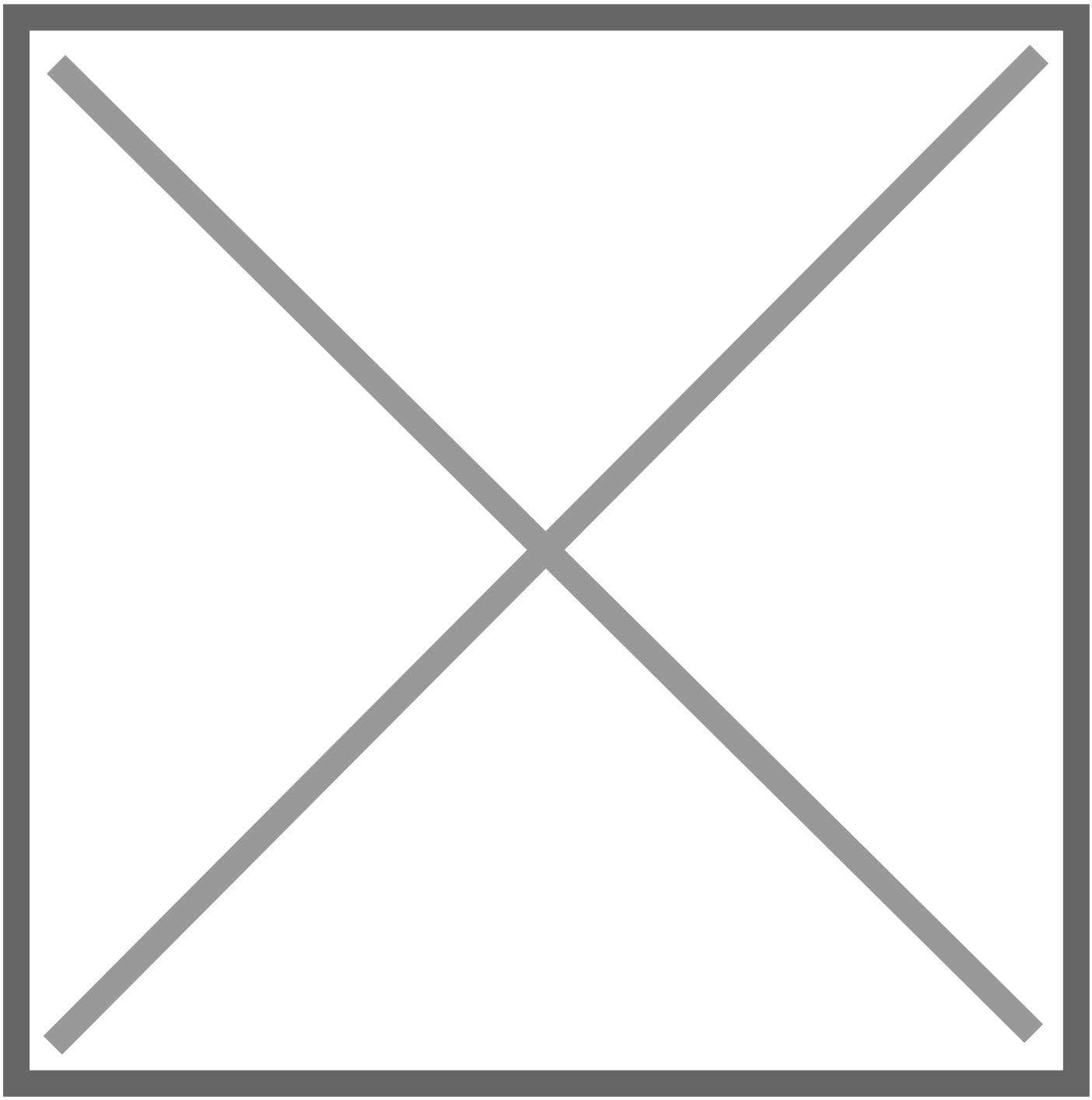
“Being a mentor has allowed me to encourage others to push boundaries and to remind them that no career path is impossible within Toyota,” says Velazquez, a TODOS member. “You must be willing to be uncomfortable, ask questions and accept opportunities that you may not think are in your wheelhouse. As a mentee, I love receiving feedback on how to better myself, grow as a leader and connect with more of our amazing TMNA team members.”

What makes Toyota's approach especially impactful is its emphasis on all-around mentoring. The company actively encourages various mentorship pairings — across departments, generations and backgrounds — which helps break down silos and spark innovation. It also ensures that a wide range of voices and perspectives are uplifted, aligning with Toyota's broader commitment to a sense of belonging in the workplace.

For example, Spectrum, the BPG devoted to the LGBTQ+ community and allies, has a mentoring circle. It's a small group session where the circle of five mentees and a mentor meets five times over the course of a year.

Erik Dickamore, a process innovation analyst in Manufactured Parts operations at Toyota and a Spectrum member, participated in the program and was paired with Sandy Lobenstein, group vice president of Flying Mobility at Toyota. Throughout the sessions, Dickamore had the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities.

"One session focused on personal branding, while another introduced us to reverse mentoring," he said. "We were able to receive some great insights from Sandy, and during the reverse mentoring session, the roles were flipped, allowing us to share our insights with him."



Fueling Connections Through Networking
Beyond traditional mentoring, Toyota empowers team members to grow through rich networking opportunities. An effective pathway for these opportunities is through BPGs because they provide platforms on which team members may connect across departments and roles.

“When TAASiA started up here after the move to Texas, I was really excited just from a networking standpoint and being able to meet other individuals, other team members and network with them and be able to both have a mentor and be a mentor,” says Kevin Kinneer, parts data quality manager at TMNA.

Kinneer adds that he appreciates the sense of community the BPG provides. “I really like the events where they bring many cultures together from all the varied areas of Asia. Also, I appreciate the networking opportunities where we come together, and we have different events and places to meet new people.”

The BPGs foster camaraderie and open dialogue, and in turn build understanding. By engaging in these networks, team members find community and safe spaces to share their experiences.

Kinneer’s mentee, Nicole Yin, a senior analyst at Toyota Financial Reporting, agrees.

“Being a mentee, I have learned from my mentor how his experience made him successful at work and in life. I’ve discovered other ways to find opportunities to boost my career and expand my skill set. As an analyst, it is great to hear about how some managers think and plan,” Yin said.

Kinneer adds, “Listening to the needs of mentees and hearing about their desires to develop professionally and grow their skills has encouraged me to think of ways to help them learn and grow. I like sharing lessons from my career and life that have taught me important things.”

Building a Culture of Continuous Growth

What ties all this together is Toyota’s focus on continuous learning. Mentorship and networking are cornerstones of a much larger commitment to professional development. Team members have access to a multitude of opportunities, including leadership training, panel discussions, skill-based courses and more that help them evolve within the company and beyond.

By investing in its team members’ career journeys, Toyota supports individuals that help strengthen the organization.

“It really helps us be able to think beyond the seats we occupy and elevate the consciousness of wanting to grow and be better — not only for your own personal brand, but also for the company’ brand,” says Johnson.

“You must take hold of your career, and you have to be willing to do the work to see the fruits of your labor. Toyota creates opportunities for that to be done.”