

# How Mentorship Set Former Intern Ervin Zelaya Up for Success

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From the first day Ervin Zelaya arrived on Toyota's campus as

an intern, he knew he wanted to be a permanent part of the team.

"I decided that I wanted to work for Toyota Financial Services (TFS), and really get involved in the corporate

world,” he says. “When I began my internship, the people around me, the full-time workers, were nice and so helpful, answering all the questions that I had.”

Zelaya attributes his success to that warm reception, and to the individuals who were eager and willing to help him navigate his internship, which he received through Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Now, as a full-time Toyota Financial Services marketing analyst at the company’s U.S. headquarters in Plano, Texas, the Southern California native is extending that same gracious welcome to incoming interns.

“Every summer, I go out and grab coffee or lunch with interns to share my experience,” he says. “I hope they can take away some tips and learnings from what I did. Ultimately, they can do whatever they want to do, but I like to provide that insight because I had learned from what others did. I feel that’s a way to pay it forward.”

### **Encouragement Is Key**

For Zelaya, the nurturing environment was key, and, as an additional benefit, his manager continued to mentor him even after his internship ended. Linda Iannone, former managing counsel at Toyota, instilled in him the importance of networking through relationship building and always being prepared.

“She taught me to always be ready when the opportunity presents itself,” he said. “She made it about me and not, ‘Hey, I need your help to go do this or do that,’” he said. “It was more about discovering what I wanted to do and what I wanted to learn within the company. I was told, ‘If there’s something that’s of interest to you, I can definitely teach you more about it.’ That was the introduction that I got during my first week at TFS, which gave me a great impression.”

Iannone, along with other supportive team members, helped Zelaya build skills and learn valuable lessons that eventually led to several temporary stints and, ultimately, a permanent, full-time job within the company.

### **Voice Your Aspirations**

When it came to securing a role after his internship ended, Zelaya leaned on this piece of wisdom from his mentors: Always speak up for what you want.

“I was really not the type of person to speak up about my feelings, but it’s one of those things that you had to learn,” he said. “My mentor told me, if you don’t voice your opinion and don’t communicate that you want to be here, people will never know.”

Being vocal paid off.

Today, Zelaya works in his dream role, which can be attributed to the counseling and direction he received from his mentor and other managers.

“People were always so helpful in sharing their stories,” he said. “I spoke to several different managers, and learned how they got to where they were. I was then able to emulate their success, making adjustments along the way to best fit my career goals and aspirations.”