# Toyota’s T-TEN Program Takes Technicians Higher

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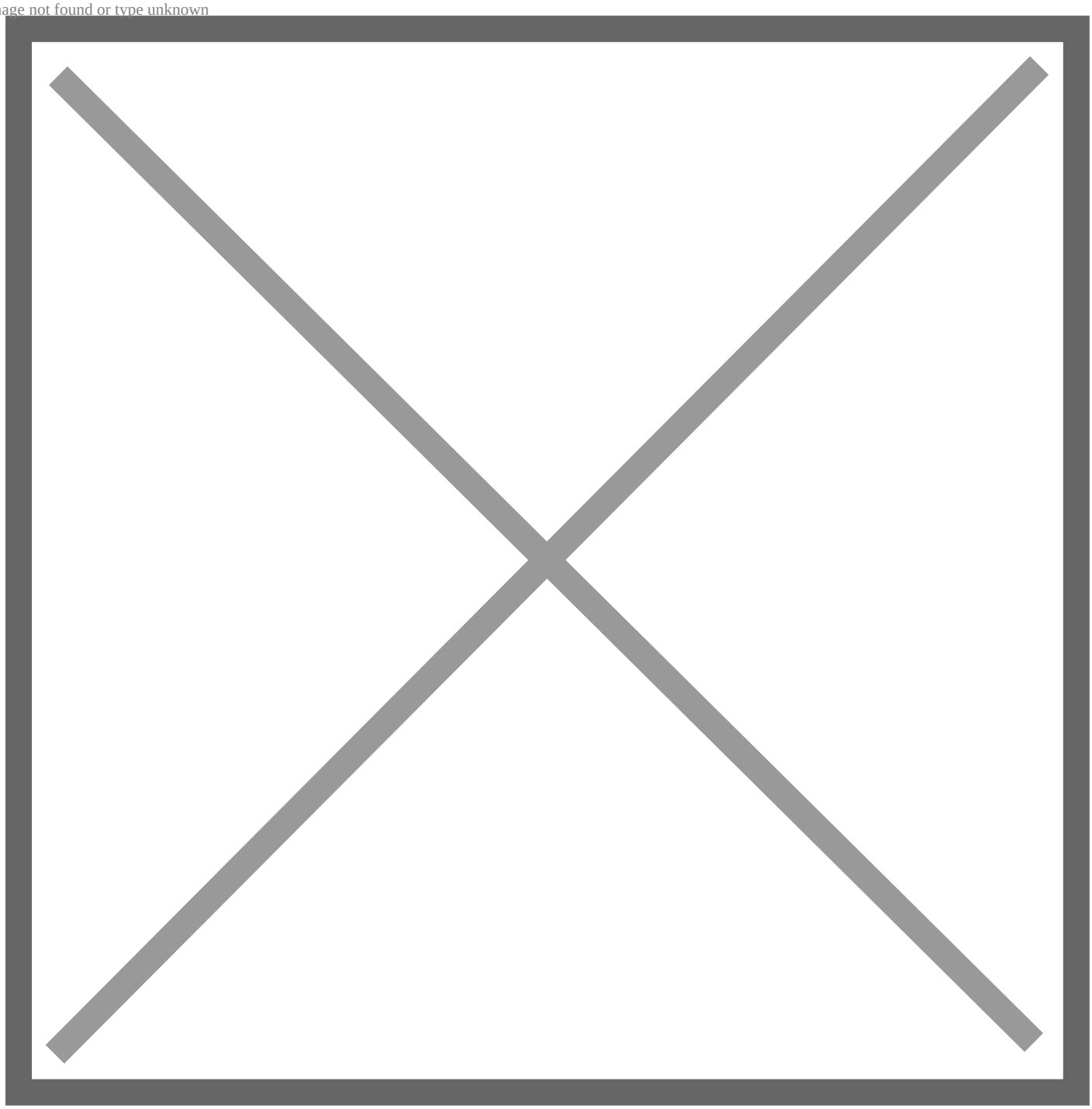

Harley Burns was once a chef who dreamed of working on cars. But he never pursued that passion until Toyota entered his life. “It’s what I’ve always wanted to do. But if it wasn’t for this program, I probably wouldn’t have found my way here,” says Burns.

“This program” is Toyota’s Technician & Education Network (T-TEN). Simply put: T-TEN is a transformer—of careers and of lives. Thanks to T-TEN, Burns is out of the kitchen and onto the path that once seemed out of reach, working as a technician at Tony Divino Toyota in Riverdale, Utah. Burns is excited to go to work, putting his skills and passion into service, his mind no longer thinking about what else he could be.

T-TEN is an industry-leading automotive technician training program that develops and places factory-certified technicians in challenging and rewarding positions in automotive dealerships across the U.S. Since the program’s inception in 1986, more than 23,000 certified technicians have been placed in the service departments of nearly 1,500 dealerships.

According to the National Automobile Dealers Association, just to keep pace with retirements and new jobs in the automotive dealership sector, the industry will need to replace approximately 76,000 technicians each year. The T-TEN program is working to help meet that demand for dealerships—and creating stable jobs in the process.

Stephan Brackett used to be a roofer in Rochester, New York, a job that meant either facing the tough New England winters or going months without working. While looking for a new opportunity, he found T-TEN, and a much warmer full-time job at Rochester Toyota.

“It was an awesome experience,” Brackett says. “I learned so much in those two years, and I really enjoyed it. Now, I’m earning a stable paycheck and doing what I love. My advice to anyone considering it: Sign up, get in the program and focus on the work. It’s well worth it.”

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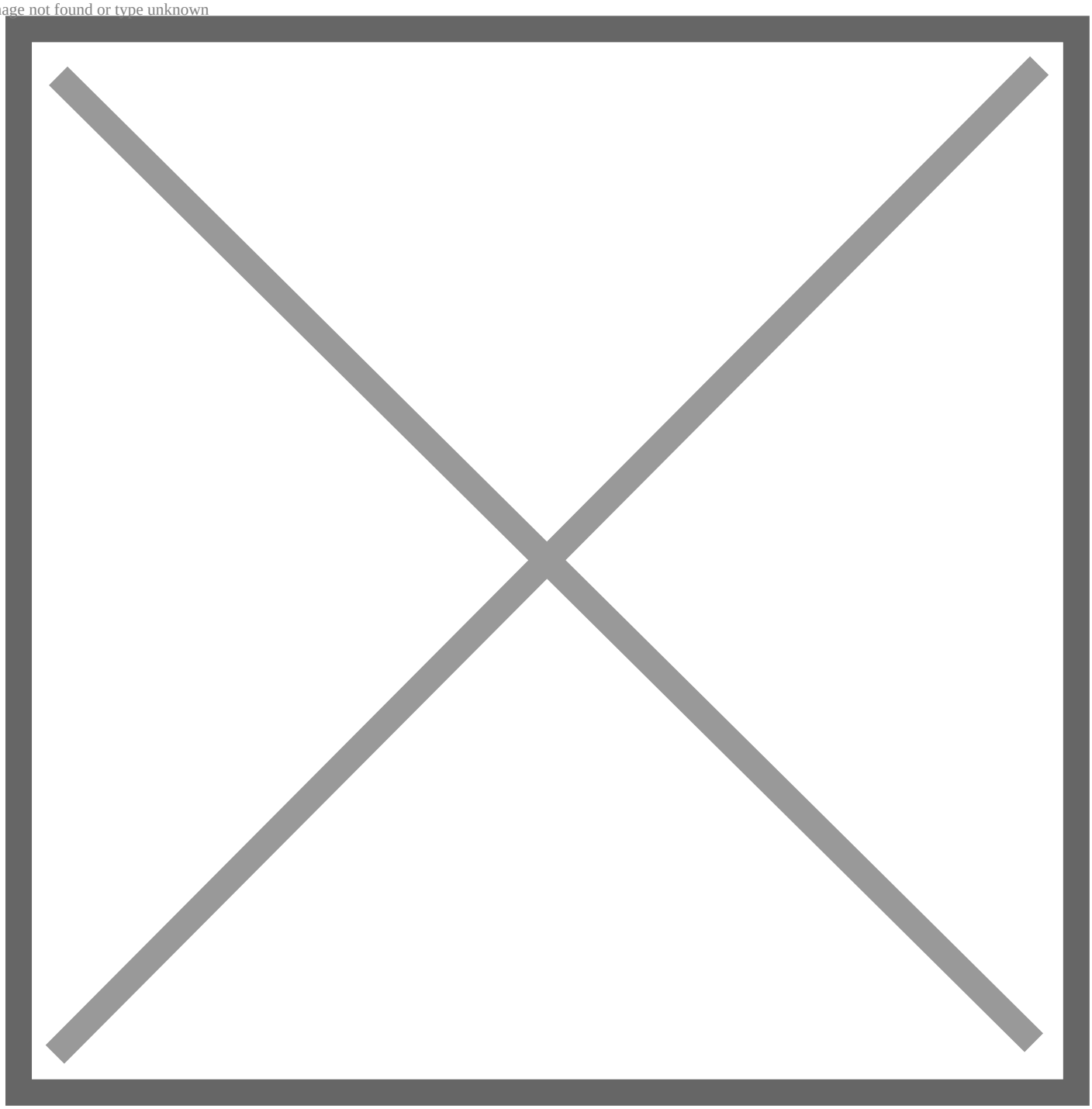


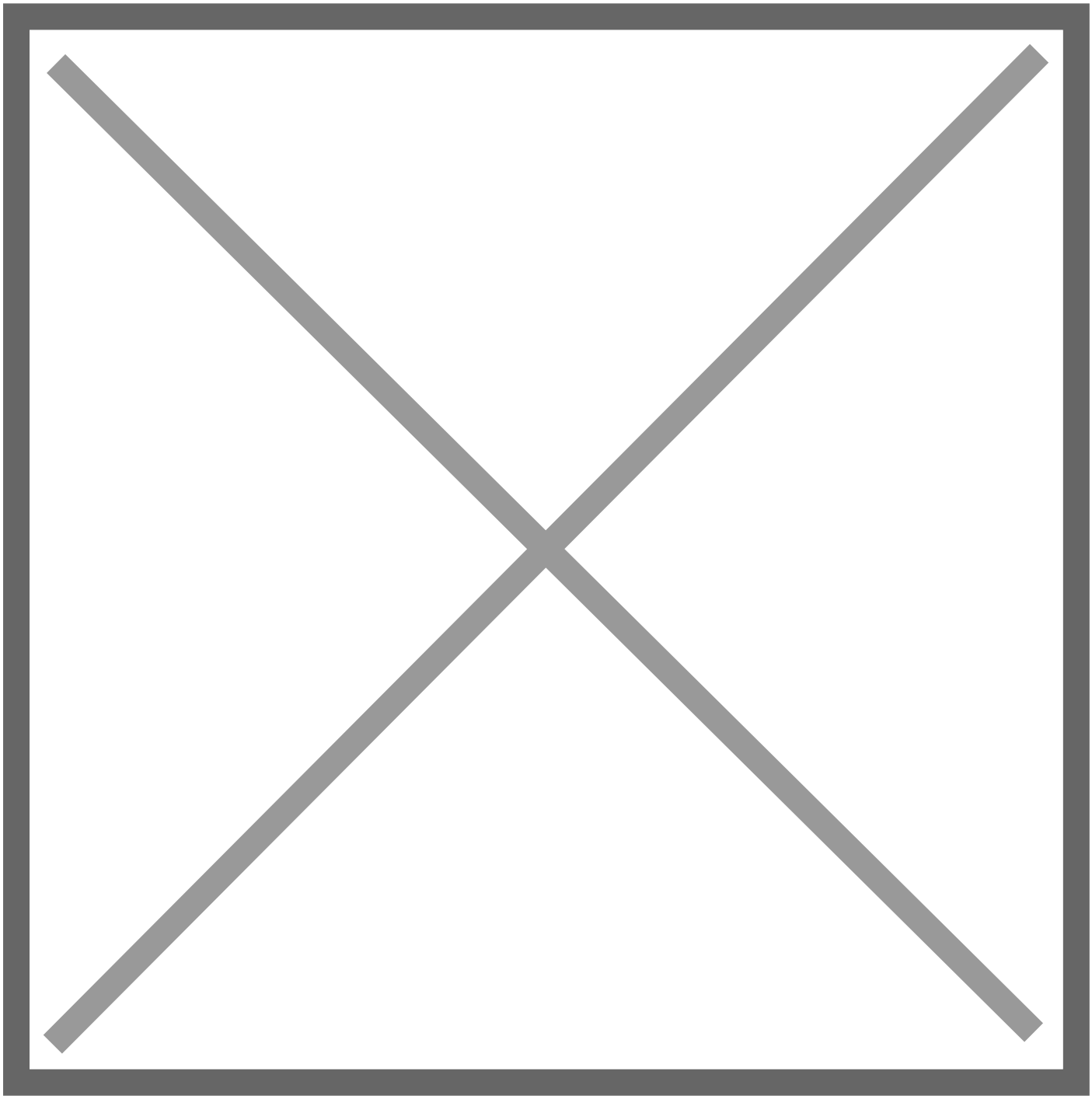
T-TEN alumnus Stephan Brackett

**Hands-on Learning**

With a typical class size of 20 to 25 students, T-TEN leverages Toyota’s industry-leading training with both a classroom and a hands-on laboratory setting. The program offers new recruits’ tuition-free training at a state-of-the-art facility, balancing classroom learning with hands-on diagnostic and repair work to help smooth the transition to a career in a dealership’s service department.

Students can pursue a variety of T-TEN programs, which take about two years to complete. Burns' training lasted about 18 months. After an initial classroom intensive, he split his time between the campus and his internship at the dealership. Once training was complete, the new graduate started at Tony Divino Toyota full time.

Says Burns, "Surprisingly, most of it came fairly easy to me. The one exception was automatic transmissions and understanding how planetary gears and hydraulics work. But mostly it was about getting better at diagnosing problems and figuring out how to solve them. The T-TEN classes prepared me for what I encountered in the dealership."



T-TEN alumnus Harley Burns

After graduating from the program, students can apply for open positions at Toyota and Lexus dealerships or any other automotive service operation, including independent service and repair shops.

For Divino Toyota Parts and Service Director Matt Layton, having a reliable source for well-trained new hires is a huge help to their operation. In fact, about one-third of their current technicians are graduates of T-TEN.

“A good technician is very hard to find these days,” he says. “We want the cream of the crop and Harley is definitely one of those guys. We’re very glad to have him.”

**Expanding T-TEN**

The job market for technicians is expected to grow exponentially, but technical colleges alone are not graduating enough technicians to fill the gap. Training programs like T-TEN help ensure that local dealers have a pipeline of entry-level technicians.

“Trained auto technicians are in great demand and are the key to any successful dealership,” said Joseph Myers, technician development manager for the T-TEN program at TMNA. “We are grateful for the opportunity to expand the program’s reach to not only fulfill our needs, but also provide stable jobs and career security that aims to give guests to Toyota dealerships the most satisfying service experience possible.”

In September, Toyota formally launched its Technical Education College Support Elite (TECS) program, expanding its reach to eight new locations across the country. Today, the program collaborates with 44 schools and organizations across the country that offer a variety of degrees and certificates. Depending on the program, participants can pursue an associate’s degree, National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certifications or Toyota and Lexus technician training certifications. In all cases, the training includes paid internship experiences at local dealerships, so students can work on their skills while they pursue their certification.

Over the years, the T-TEN program has expanded to include its Technical Education College Support Elite (TECS) program and the Military Technician Education Network (M-TEN), which offers active-duty service members and veterans an intensive 12-week automotive technician training program.

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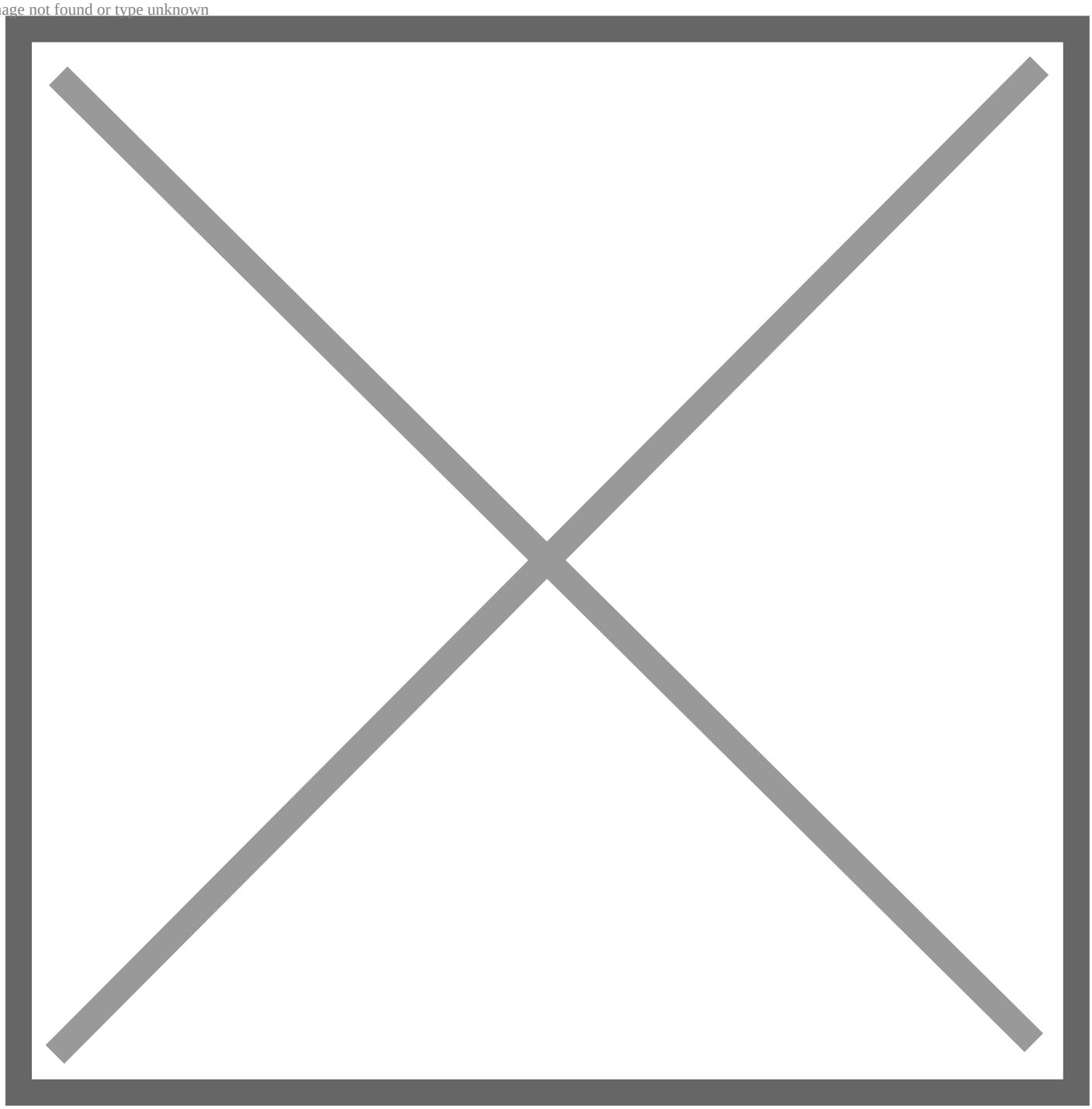

T-TEN alumnus Salvador Alvarado

But the program teaches more than the skills required to be a service technician. It also exposes students to Toyota’s culture of continuous improvement. The curriculum is designed to help ambitious graduates like service technician Salvador Alvarado move beyond the entry-level role and grow into advanced positions at Toyota.

“My goal is to keep advancing, keep learning, keep growing with Toyota so I can get more familiar with new technologies,” says Alvarado, an expert certified technician at Big Two Toyota in Chandler, Arizona. “Talking to techs here who have worked for Toyota for 30 years and hearing their story, it’s inspiring. That to me is the whole idea of having a mindset to keep learning.”

***Want to learn more?***

*T-TEN.com*