

# Switching Gears: How Toyota Encourages Exploration Across Disciplines

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Like various parts of life, careers can take many twists and turns. As a leader in mobility, Toyota offers a wide range of career options for prospective employees, as well as those already working at the company.

From marketing to manufacturing and everything in between, at Toyota, career versatility is what drives innovation and supports the company's philosophy of continuous learning. Plus, it keeps employees curious and open to new opportunities.

We're sharing the stories of six individuals who started in one area at Toyota and are currently in completely different professional positions. Here's what they had to say about their career journeys and how changing disciplines can be beneficial:



### **Never Giving Up**

After having been a production employee for three years at the Toyota plant in Indiana, Luis Almarza wanted to take a step in a new direction. When a leadership position opened in his department, he applied.

Although he didn't get the job, he wasn't discouraged.

"The first time that I put in for it, I wasn't able to pass," Almarza says. "I still remember that day when my group leader sat with me and explained the reasons why I didn't pass. He told me that I have a lot of potential and he

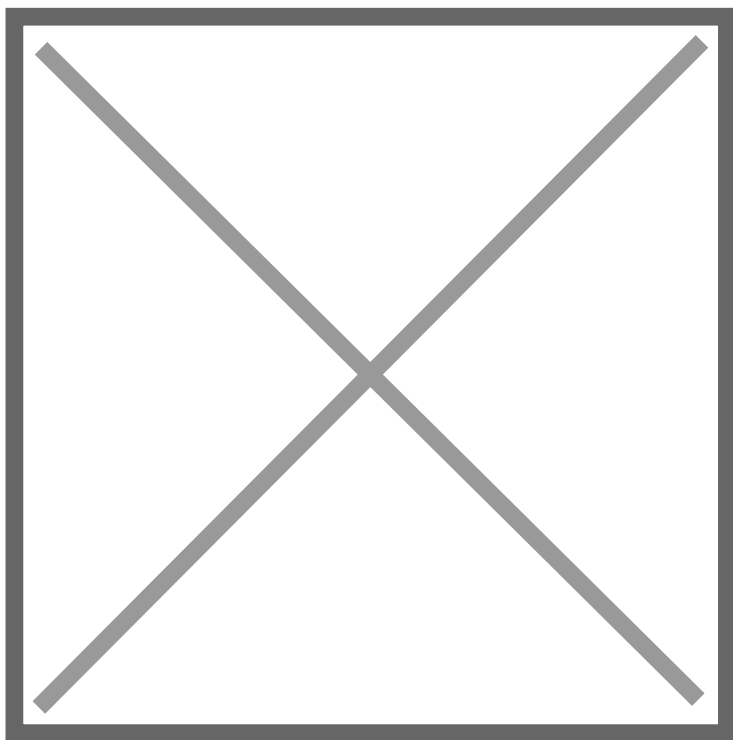
will work with me through the process to be able to succeed, so the support from your supervisors is really amazing.”

Almarza didn’t give up and eventually applied again, ultimately landing the role. He credits his success to key leadership.

“I can name a lot of people that helped me throughout the process, but all I can say is Toyota really cares about you when you are trying to move up in your career. My transition wasn’t hard because I have good leaders around me.”

Almarza wants to be an example and offer the same support and encouragement for his team and those who may come after him.

“As a leader of a production team, one of my priorities is to support every employee and help them to develop their skills to be successful in their role.”



### **A Second Act in Customer Service**

Hospitality and customer service go together. Some might even call them synonymous. For Marta Portugues, the two are intertwined and something she excels in equally.

Working for two luxury hotel brands in the world, which also granted her opportunities to travel and live around the globe, Portugues sought a change. She wanted to explore new challenges and be closer to family. Her solution? She joined Toyota.

“Sadly, my father was diagnosed with cancer,” she says. “I made the decision to move back to the U.S. to be closer to him as well as other family. My siblings were already residing in Texas, so I was able to transfer my skills to hotel chains in the area. Eventually, I realized that I needed more work-life balance and heard Toyota

was a great place to work. I applied, and the rest is history.”

Portugues started in January 2018 as a customer service representative in the Brand Engagement Center (BEC) at Toyota, where she primarily assisted customers with questions regarding their vehicle systems, navigating the owner’s manual, service concerns and more.

“Prior to Toyota, I was not familiar with the automotive industry, so this position leveraged my ability to learn with my extensive customer service experience,” she says.

While in the BEC, Portugues made a lateral move to a customer service representative for Toyota of Puerto Rico for which TMNA does the customer service. Nine months later, she was also promoted to a case manager for the East Coast also located in the BEC.

“I truly enjoyed doing customer service for Puerto Rico since that’s where I was born and raised. The case manager position was also very interesting working hand in hand with the regional offices & the service side of the dealers, but I was ready for a new challenge,” Portugues says. “I’m an agent of change who likes to learn new things and keep myself engaged. I saw the credit analyst position at Toyota Financial Services (TFS), which sounded extremely interesting.”

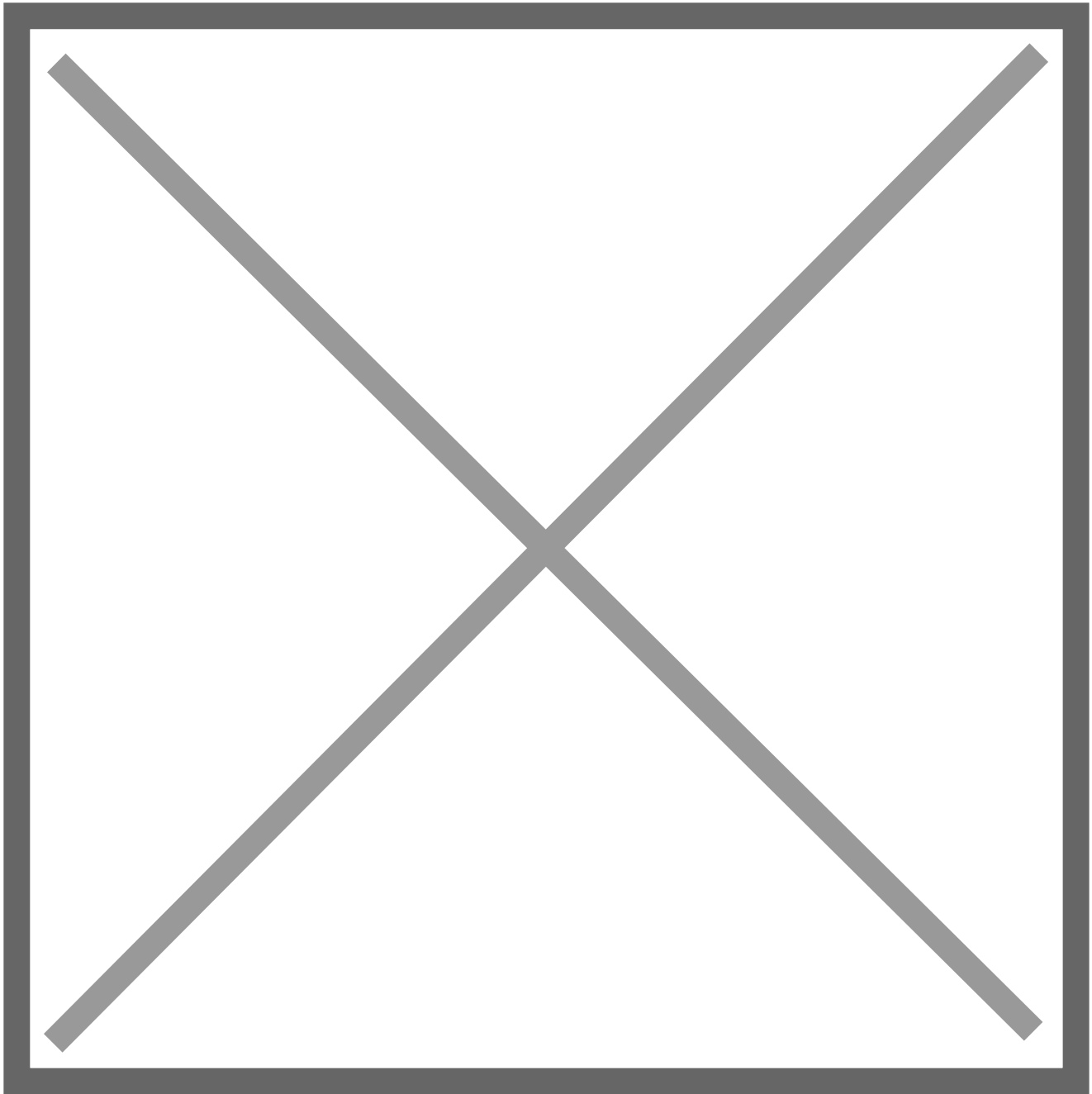
Her supervisor was very supportive and encouraged her to go for it, despite not having any auto loan experience.

“I thought it was a long shot,” Portugues says. “I was hoping that my positivity, perseverance and customer service experience would make me shine, and the rest I can learn.”

Portugues adds, “My interview went great and here I am. I had the best trainer and mentor who taught me everything about credit. He is an integral part of my success in this position.”

She also praises Toyota for giving her the opportunity to flourish in a different area, something that she wouldn’t have been afforded in her previous career.

“For me, in the hospitality industry, it was almost impossible to explore new disciplines,” says Portugues. “My career was in the rooms division, and if I wanted to maybe try finance, that was not a possibility. Look at me now as a credit analyst. I did not have any previous experience buying car deals, but I brought my customer service skills to the table and Toyota gave me the opportunity to learn something completely new and gave me the tools and support I needed to excel.”



### **A Winning Chance**

After working in sales for 10 years and teaching for five years, Charles Briggs received some great news on his birthday. Toyota was hiring him to work in their customer service department in Maryland, also known as Customer Care. While he was elated for the new position, he always had his sights on a different department.

“When I first started at Toyota, I had my eyes on working as a trainer,” he says. “I was hired for Customer Care, but I quickly went into the Escalations pilot. From there, I moved into Quality (for 13 years) and learned about much of the business. When Quality closed in the East, I chose to move into Customer Assistance as this was a department that I had less experience with. Since then, I have worked in Predictive Outbound, Inbound, and currently in CPG (Customer Partnering Group) with a stretch assignment of over a year working with Training

of Customer Assistance.”

Briggs attributes some of his success and unique career trajectory to being open to learning and listening.

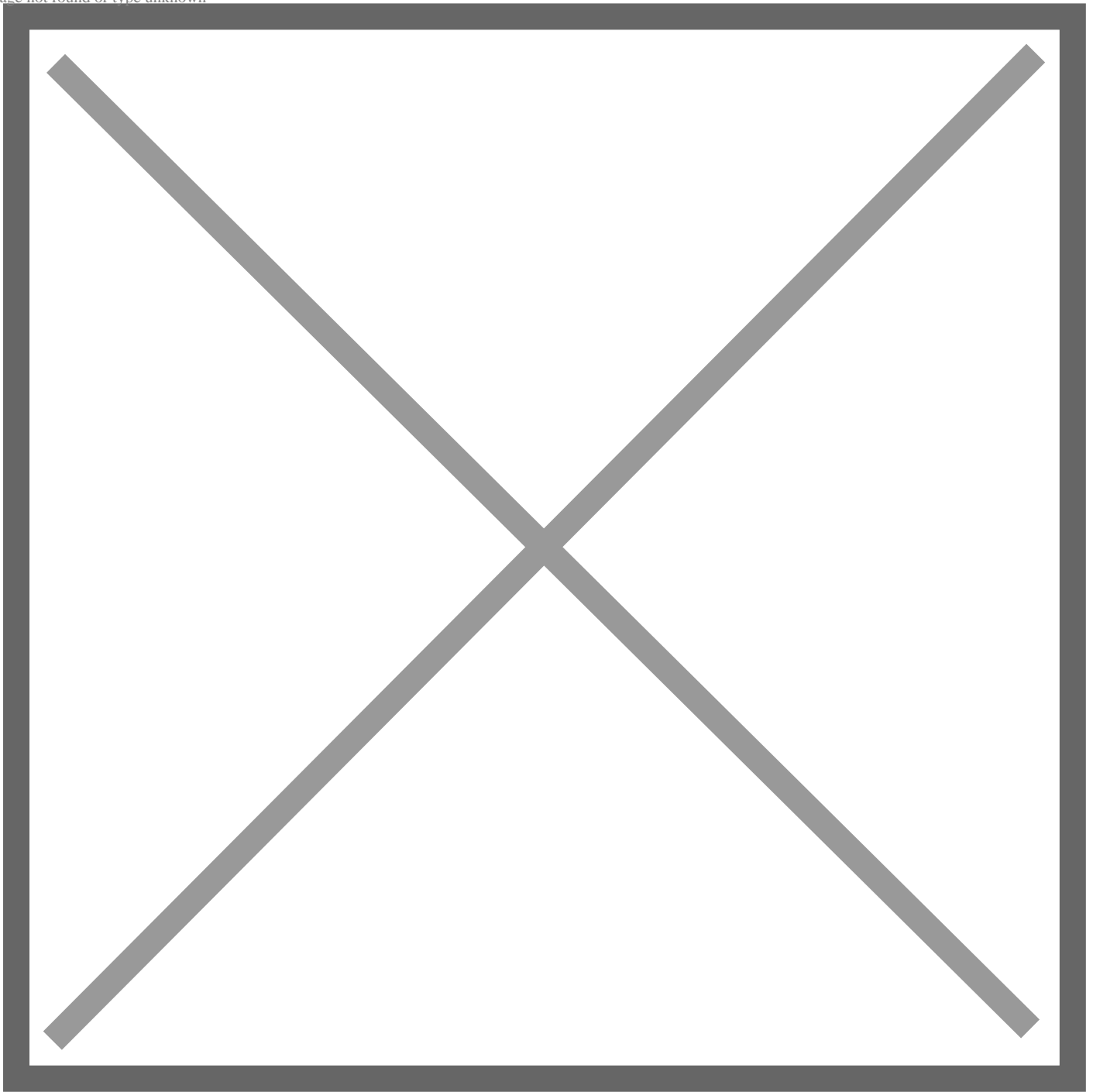
“I have had a few mentors along the way who have been helpful with sharing their journey with me,” he says. “I have also learned from many of the supervisors, managers, and peers as well. I always stop to listen to pearls of wisdom from my supervisors and managers.”

Briggs takes that same approach and pays it forward.

“I have also had the joy of being helpful in mentoring others both personally and through my quality, producing and nesting roles,” he says. “You do not have to have ‘leader’ in your job title to start being a leader. My philosophy is that leaders always build four to five leaders behind them. You can start leading others by investing your time in them and coaching them before even having ‘leader’ in your title. I find what I do a JOY, not a JOB, especially when I am able to coach, train and develop others.”

When it comes to changing roles, he adds, “Be open to try new things even if they seem intimidating, as you will gain much of your experience, knowledge and growth in your endeavors.”

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### **An Impressive Introduction**

Daniella Solis' first glimpse into life at Toyota started when she was hired by a third party to work at an event for the company — marking a new beginning.

“My first introduction to Toyota was at the grand opening event in 2017,” says Solis. “I was working with an experiential marketing agency Toyota hired to help with the event, and I fell in love with the people that I met. After further research into Toyota and its core values, my initial feelings were increasingly reassured, and this is when I actively began pursuing a role with Toyota.”



After applying for an official position at Toyota, Solis landed a job as an incoming representative at the Brand Engagement Center (BEC). In this role she handled live, escalated calls. While she enjoyed her job, after a few months her supervisor noticed her knack and skill set for communication and transitioned her into the digital communications team.

“My transition into my new role was seamless, and I’d credit that to the support I received from my supervisors, managers and even my peers,” Solis says. “We’re a big family in the BEC and we make sure to take care of each other.”

Her current role in digital communications in Plano focuses on evaluating cases that the BEC receives and finding solutions for guests’ issues while ensuring they have the most favorable and positive interactions possible.

While Solis wasn’t always aware about various career opportunities at Toyota, she encourages fellow employees and people outside the company to be open to change.

“Keep an open mind, stay curious, and advocate for yourself,” she says. “Seize opportunities and put yourself out there. Toyota also offers a mentorship program to anyone who is interested in learning about different departments or for general career mentorship.”



### **An Internship That Fueled Success**

After speaking with a recruiter at his college's spring career fair, Joshua Faison learned that one of Toyota's driving principles was Respect for People. This philosophy, as well as the opportunity to tackle obstacles, sparked his interest in the company and eventually led to him landing a co-op opportunity at Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana (TMMI).

"It was just the beginning of a series of captivating internships with Toyota that I pursued before completing my studies," Faison says. "My first full-time role was in Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) Paint

Shop as a topcoat application and paint mixing room process engineer.”

In this position, he implemented solutions to reduce and prevent waste in these processes, improve the painting process, and support the launch of new colors for Camry and Avalon. Essentially, he learned and employed the principles foundational to Toyota’s manufacturing process.

Although this was Faison’s first job with Toyota, it wasn’t his last. Having a relationship with Toyota while still in school opened his eyes to an array of career possibilities.

“During my time as a student, I was fortunate enough to participate in various internships throughout the company,” he says. “Despite my background in electrical engineering, I was ultimately hired for a role that typically targets mechanical or chemical engineers. However, this experience taught me that career paths are not always straightforward and that it’s important to take ownership of my career. Toyota recognizes this and has provided me with opportunities to expand my skills through preparation and communication in my current role, as well as on-the-job training in my future endeavors.”

Today, Faison is employed in the Connected Z (CNZ) group under Connected Technologies in Plano, where the team’s responsibility is to ensure quality, cost, and delivery for Toyota’s in-vehicle infotainment system. Additionally, he’s involved in the cost planning for enhancements to the current multimedia generation throughout its life cycle.

While Faison is excelling in his role as a product management engineer, the changes haven’t come without challenges.

“Process makes perfect. Moving from a technical engineering role to a product management role came with a learning curve. However, adopting a process-oriented mindset helped me think in a structured way and work more efficiently in the new environment.”

Faison said those challenges have paid off.

“It is beneficial for employees to switch between roles and disciplines to eliminate knowledge gaps and increase experience within the company,” Faison says. “Toyota, as a mobility company, requires a diversity of perspectives and skill sets to tackle its complex challenges. Although every discipline has its own strengths and weaknesses, encouraging employees to take on roles that challenge their abilities can help improve their weaknesses and round out their capabilities.”



### **A ‘Foot in the Door’ Philosophy**

Mikayla Doyle got an early start at Toyota. In fact, she was only a sophomore in college when she started working full-time at the company. Pursuing a degree in marketing, she knew that she wanted to work in the digital media/marketing field but wasn't sure what her career path would be.

“Although the first position I accepted was not related to my field of study, I knew it was an opportunity I could not pass up,” Doyle says. “I was so excited to start my career early and start building a path for myself at Toyota.”

Doyle started with Toyota Financial Services (TFS) as a contract specialist in May of 2020, shortly after Toyota launched its first private-label business, Mazda Financial Services.

“I was there to support our Mazda Dealer partners by processing their finance and lease contracts, answering questions, resolving funding delays and promoting positive business relationships with Dealers,” she says.

While this position didn’t exactly align with her career goals, she remained steadfast and excelled in her role. In the meantime, she focused on building her professional network and finding ways to immerse herself in the company culture. She later joined the TFS credit department as a credit analyst.

Today, she uses the skills she learned in those jobs for her current position as a TFS marketing communications analyst.

“Each of those roles and responsibilities gave me an opportunity to develop skills which have helped me excel in my current role in marketing.”

A good tip for those looking to switch things up and meet different people? Doyle suggests tapping into company-based activities that promote community and a sense of belonging.

“The Business Partnering Groups (BPGs) have been an integral part of my success at Toyota, and I would encourage everyone to join one,” she says. “The BPGs provide wonderful opportunities to contribute to the community and make a difference. They also serve as platforms for networking with professionals from all areas of the organization. The BPG chapters prioritize diversity and inclusion, ensuring there is something for everyone to engage in.”

Doyle adds, “Toyota encourages employees to embrace their authentic selves and actively seek out opportunities that challenge them. Our company is filled with incredible people who want to help you succeed and find your passion.”