

# Making An Impact From Day One: Intern/Co-op to Full-Time Toyota Employee

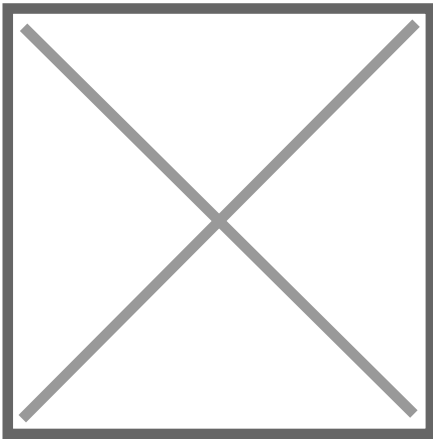
November 27, 2024

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The purpose of Toyota's intern and co-op programs is to create a pipeline for future full-time employment opportunities for new college graduates. Interns/co-ops are encouraged to hit the ground running and make an impact from day one to help contribute to Toyota's commitment to deliver world-class products and services that provide joy through mobility. They're empowered to take ownership of real-world projects, collaborate to solve complex challenges and share innovative ideas at the company's North American headquarters, R&D facilities, manufacturing plants, sales and field offices, and beyond.

Read on as five Toyota employees share stories about their journeys from co-op students to joining the company full time



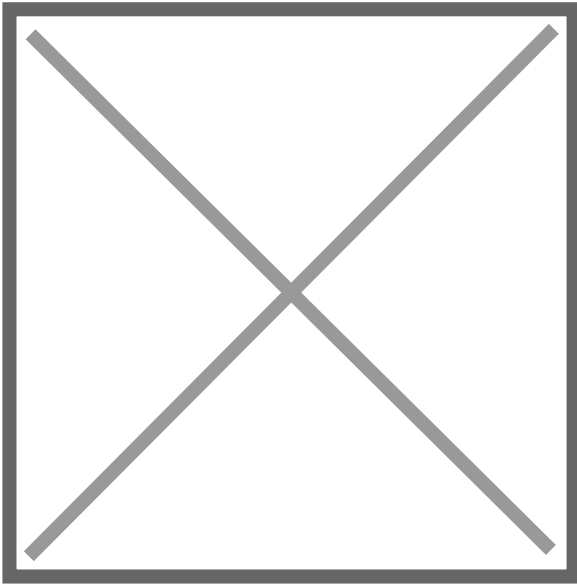
### **Confidence Booster**

When Brad McMahon first started as a full-time Toyota Motor North America (TMNA) employee, he felt a bit out of sorts. Even though the 2021 Michigan State University graduate had completed four co-ops with the company between spring 2019 and summer 2021 in Chassis Design, Cost Planning, Body Kino and Crash Safety, he still didn't feel fully confident in his newfound role.

"I faced a big challenge when I transitioned from co-op to full-time work," he says. "I was hired as a body design engineer, but I hadn't worked in body design during my four co-op rotations. At first, it was intimidating. I gained a lot of experience during my co-op years, but this was a whole new ballgame."

Once he became more confident in his new position, his outlook changed.

"I expanded my knowledge of how to find the who, what, when, where, why and how. I became much more confident," says McMahon. "One of the most important things I learned the first year I worked at Toyota is the process of solving problems. You will never be an expert on every part, but if you have an engineering mindset and the tools to research problems, then you're capable of solving them."



### **Use Your Voice**

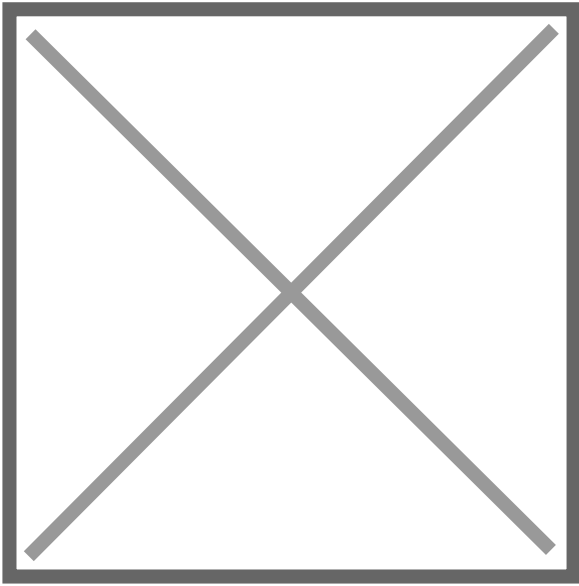
Another key to solving problems in the workplace? Speaking up and letting your voice be heard. Lesly Salazar, an analyst with Toyota's Project Planning and Management (PPM) department, started as a Toyota co-op during the pandemic and knows this firsthand.

A graduate of the University of Texas in Arlington, she joined TMNA full time in 2023. Salazar recalls what it was like in those early days.

"Being new, it can be intimidating to speak up and ask questions to individuals who have over 20 years of experience in their role, but questions are so important because they help us evaluate information, synthesize data and make better decisions," she says.

One year later, she's the project lead for the Lexus NX vehicle at Toyota PPM. And though Salazar is still finding her footing, she believes she's overcoming some of her trepidations.

"I have worked on, and am still working on, speaking up and asking questions in a team setting," says Salazar. "I'm enjoying my experience in PPM and working at a company that emphasizes continuously getting better and better and never stop asking questions."



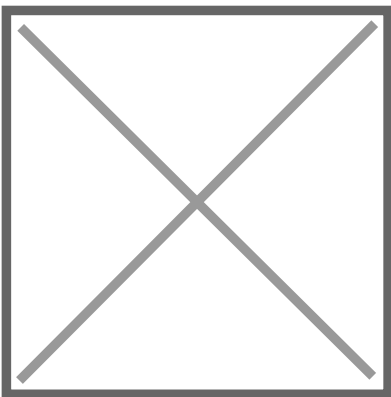
### **Taking the Initiative**

Being inquisitive is a surefire way to learn. Another way to build on that knowledge is by taking initiative. At least that's what Deborah Velazquez, a customer services field manager with Lexus Southern Area, did when she began her career over a decade ago as a TMNA management trainee.

“During the management trainee experience, we were given the opportunity to practice our skills on the phones, taking calls from guests regarding their experiences with [our] product,” she says. “I learned valuable problem-solving skills, the ability to navigate conflict and how to utilize resources to provide answers and assistance. I've continued to use these skills throughout my career.”

Her journey has been enlightening with myriad opportunities for growth and professional development.

“My career has allowed me to learn directly from our dealers and guests in the field. It has even taken me down south to work with the Toyota Mexico team to help launch the Lexus brand for an international assignment role.”



## **Embrace Your Network**

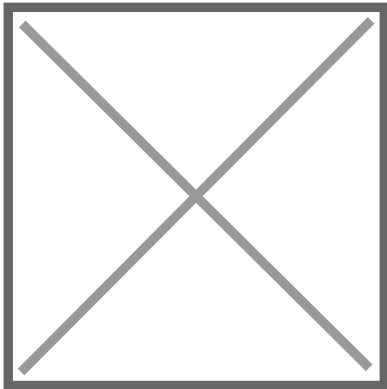
Being ready to take on what comes your way is a positive quality to have in the workplace. It's also important to turn to your colleagues for guidance and reassurance.

For Ethan Taylor, an engineer at Toyota Mississippi with the Internal Logistics Engineering department, tapping into his pool of peers and colleagues helped steer him in the right direction. Prior to his transition from co-op to full-time employee, Taylor struggled with bringing his theoretical and engineering education to reality.

“Once I settled into my co-op role at Toyota, I realized that many issues could be solved faster by reaching out to stakeholders and experienced employees,” he says. “Learning to communicate and ask concise questions when needed during my co-op carried over into the day-to-day of my current role, increasing my ability to gain knowledge quickly and keep everyone on the same page.”

Through his experience, Taylor gained key insights to help him develop and progress in his career while also embracing the culture of continuous improvement.

“My advice to others is to constantly look to learn and become better at your craft daily,” he says. “There is unlimited knowledge in the Toyota community gained from decades of experience. I feel as though everyone should be constantly looking to tap into the experience gained by others to make themselves better. Never forget to build relationships with your coworkers and others throughout the facility.”



## **Soak Up All the Skills**

Working as a co-op provides a wealth of opportunities to cultivate personal and professional relationships. Additionally, it gives those who are just starting out a springboard to gain valuable experience that can help them down the road.

Iran Rodriguez, a digital auditor engineer at TMNA who served three co-op rotations with Toyota Production Engineering (PE) beginning in 2022, quickly realized that once he joined Toyota full time, he had acquired countless skills that have come in handy.

“Being a co-op – as co-ops do – you learn different things, which adds value to you,” says the recent University of Kentucky graduate. “Coming in as a co-op and now being full-time, the skills you learn as a co-op help you in your full-time role. I am now able to take the information I learned and can use all the experience I gained to apply to whatever project I’m working on.”