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Yoda and Luke: A shining example of mentorship

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Mentorship is not only about sharing knowledge and experiences, it's about building a professional relationship you can count on. Meet Chuck (mentor) and Michele (mentee) – like Yoda and Luke, they formed a unique relationship by teaching and inspiring each other. Our Mentoring Matters program enabled them to connect, and it has made a difference in both their lives.

Lissandra Lopez joined Nuance in 2019 and works as the Senior Manager of Talent and Organizational Development. She is passionate about learning, organizational development, diversity and inclusion, and empowering individuals to reach their full potential. She has a BA in Economics from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and an MBA in Organizational Leadership from Simmons College. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her familia, reading, traveling and volunteering in her community.

Through mentorship, our employees amplify their ability to help others and truly own their career. Employees match themselves up with a mentor or mentee in our [Mentoring Matters](#) program based on their interests and experiences. And so their relationship begins – the connection has been made (sometimes across the globe!), their network has gained a new meaningful connection, and then valuable knowledge starts to be shared in regular meetings. Participants strengthen their skills, increase their confidence, learn about new parts of the business, and explore a potential new role. And Mentoring Matters provides the support, resources, and guidance to help them be successful along the way.

To truly understand Mentoring Matters, let's hear about it firsthand from a mentee and mentor. I sat down with Chuck, VP of Software Development and Michele, Community & Technology Transformation Lead, both on our Global Research & Development team, to hear about their mentoring partnership.

Chuck (mentor)



This is your second year participating in Mentoring Matters – why are you passionate about mentoring, and what do you enjoy the most about it?

Problem-solving, teamwork, and coaching (receiving and giving) are foundational for me, like when I play sports or worked in my family's restaurants as a kid. I love to collaborate to collectively achieve a goal while continuing to learn and grow myself as an engineer and leader. Mentoring gives me the opportunity to share my past experiences and how I approach challenges so they can learn from it. And I learn from my mentee as well, by hearing their thoughts and ideas, and the engaging conversations we have. This mutually beneficial experience in addition to seeing my mentee succeed makes this partnership so rewarding for me, and why I really enjoy being a part of this program.

When you think back on your mentoring journey, what lessons have you learned that have impacted your career at Nuance?

Through both sessions of the Mentoring Matters program, I have had the opportunity and pleasure to partner with five mentees from different parts of Nuance. When I first started as a mentor, I was still new to Nuance. Working with them has given me great insights into how other parts of Nuance function, existing solutions to common challenges that could be leveraged in both directions, and a wealth of new recommendations and approaches to challenges solved by my mentees. It has really helped me integrate well to Nuance and tackle challenges with my own team.

Participating in Mentoring Matters is a commitment. How do you make mentoring a priority?

It is really simple for me: if a mentee is willing to invest the time, I will as well. This commitment shows me that we both have a mutual interest in continuing to learn and grow.

There is a misconception that mentoring only benefits the mentee, but that's not true – mentoring benefits both parties. What have you learned from working with Michele?

I truly believe that learning should never stop and that we all have professional gaps where we need help. If you are the "mentor," it does not mean you can't be the "mentee" and trade places from time to time. Michele has been just as much of a mentor to me, providing me with insights, recommendations, and approaches to solving challenges.

Describe your approach to mentorship. What are your tips for mentors and mentees starting out?

My approach to mentorship is to act like a sports team coach, guiding from the sideline, but not stepping on the playing field. I provide a mentee with the strategy, insights, and tools needed, and point out potential outcomes to consider for attacking any challenge.

For mentors...

1. Create a working agreement with your mentee to ensure openness, trust, and consistency
2. Listen
3. Ask questions to help you understand the challenge at hand
4. Remember, you cannot solve the challenge for your mentee – you are teaching them how to tackle future challenges
5. Ask questions to help your mentee formulate an approach to solving their challenge
6. Push your mentee out of their comfort zone when you can
7. Rinse and repeat!

For mentees...

1. Building trust with your mentor can take time – it's worth it
2. Speak freely and frankly once you have that trust
3. Accept feedback without defensiveness
4. Be open to trying different approaches and tasks outside your comfort zone

5. Take initiative and own your mentee / mentor relationship
6. Hold yourself accountable

Michele (mentee)



You've had roles on different teams at Nuance over the years. Tell me about your career journey and how you ended up on the Global Research & Development team.

I have a background in digital marketing and communications, specifically as a content strategist. Out of necessity, I picked up in-depth knowledge on different digital platforms along with some HTML and CSS skills. In the process of launching websites, my work quickly expanded into project management, to get these websites up and running.

It's been nearly six years since I joined Nuance. I started as part of the Brand + Creative team, where I enhanced my program management skillset. I moved from supporting divisions on their marketing campaigns into transformation initiatives for Nuance's digital marketing tech stack. My work on transformation initiatives is how I made the leap on the GR&D team in the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) office.

What was your deciding factor in joining the Mentoring Matters program?

I have always been proactive about my career. For a Latina working in the tech industry, there aren't many role models. I've felt that the paths to progressing my career have not always been clear. Plus, it's easy to get lost in the day-to-day of your role. Mentoring Matters has given me the opportunity to dedicate time to focus on my career and give me more direction.

It's not always easy to make a conscious effort and deliberate decisions to grow your career. It requires self-reflection on your choices, your goals, and taking some risks. This Teddy Roosevelt quote hits the nail on the head when it comes to my career path and life in general: "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty." I can certainly relate!

Working with a mentor has provided me with an outside perspective and the chance to see things through a different lens. It has also provided me with great insights by hearing about Chuck's unfiltered, direct experiences in his own successes and lessons learned during his career journey.

This is your first time being a mentee in Mentoring Matters. What has your experience been like? What have you learned and how have you applied it to your work and professional life?

I have had a really positive experience being a mentee. I attribute it to how structured the program is in guiding conversations and helping mentees set their goals and expectations. My positive experience is also directly related to having Chuck as a mentor! He is approachable and knowledgeable and offers clear feedback and thoughtful suggestions. It's been helpful learning about his different approaches to breaking down silos and building alignment with stakeholders.

Joining the Mentoring Matters program, as a mentee, you can feel intimidated to reach out to folks at levels higher up in the organization and essentially say "pick me as a mentee." One of the big lessons that impacts the outcome of your mentorship, and your career is your willingness to take a chance. As a mentee, you're taking an active role in your career development. You are also getting invaluable access to someone, outside of your manager, who can give you insights and guidance (picture Luke Skywalker training with Yoda).

What has been your most memorable moment?

Working with Chuck has helped me build my confidence to succeed on stretch goals and initiatives. I'm not a technologist by trade and being a part of the GR&D team in a technology company, I sometimes feel like a fish out of water. That's okay, because I like to push myself out of my comfort zone and I have a growth mindset, and Chuck has helped me step outside of myself to better understand what I can bring to the table.

Tags: [Corporate mentoring](#), [Company mentorship program](#)

More Information

All Nuance employees can join the Mentoring Matters program.

Search our open roles and consider joining Team Nuance – learn from your fellow colleagues by being a mentor or mentee!

[Learn more](#)