

Lumen joins forces with Latino Leadership Institute to prime Latinx professionals for success



December 22, 2022

When Lumen partnered with the [Latino Leadership Institute](#) (LLI) earlier this year to offer a new program called [Ignite](#), Lumen employee Matt Villarreal saw this as an opportunity to deepen the understanding of his Latino identity and strengthen his executive presence. *Ignite* is a unique-to-the-industry professional development program focusing on the neuroscience of leadership, and as the company's Manager for Social Strategy and Support, Matt was eager to join. "After completing the *Ignite* program, I not only better identified myself, but also learned about the rich history behind the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that make up the Latinx communities," Villarreal said. His parents ensured their son never strayed from his Mexican roots. "In my upbringing, culture and heritage were something that were always discussed at a high level," Villarreal said.

Matt was one of 25 professionals to complete the inaugural *Ignite* program, wherein participants work together to develop agile leadership skills to lead more effectively during times of uncertainty. The participants directly apply key learning objectives from sessions and group discussions in both independent and partner work.



"I recently transferred into a people manager role, so guidance on how to successfully lead a team couldn't have come at a better time. I now know I can always reach out to members of this cohort for support, guidance, and advice."

The Latino Leadership Institute launched its *Ignite* program at a time when most new workers entering the workforce this decade are predicted to be Hispanics and Latinos. While these groups have higher employment rates than non-Hispanic counterparts, they also face disproportional gender and ethnic wage gaps, according to [American Progress](#).

"This is an incredibly personal experience for me as a Latino professional. I didn't have Latino mentors or role models in the corporate space, but I was fortunate enough that some amazing people took the time to help me find my way into a corporate world that was completely foreign to me," said Sibito Morley, Lumen Chief Data Officer and Senior Vice President who serves as the President of the Latino Leadership Institute's Board. "I have no doubt that our *Ignite* graduates will pay this forward for many years to come."

Ignite encourages participants to embrace their Latino identity, external influences, uniqueness, and belonging. The program also helps participants overcome adversities in business by confronting microaggressions, lack of representation, and negative stereotypes that influence outsider perceptions and feelings.

"LLI is proud to partner with Lumen to support Latino professionals from coast to coast. Only 0.5% of Latino professionals have access to culturally relevant leadership development, but this partnership is changing that," said Joelle Martinez, LLI President and CEO.

Mark A. Delgado, the chair of Lumen's Somos employee resource group, also completed the inaugural program this past summer. Delgado is also a Lead Relationship Manager of National Accounts and says, out of all the leadership sessions he's ever participated in, none were as rewarding as the *Ignite* program. "This was the first time my cultural identity was the primary factor. *Ignite* delves into concepts of self-identity and how our culture and experiences as Latinos play a role in our leadership style," he said.

"Too often I have felt invisible as a Latino professional but now I feel included, respected, and valued. I learned that my Latinidad is a strength versus a weakness. I highly recommend *Ignite* to anyone seeking to take their leadership to the next level and see the strength in their Latinidad."

Learn more about Lumen's employee resource groups and our commitment to Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging [here](#).

https://news.lumen.com/lumen-joins-forces-with-latino-leadership-institute-to-prime-latinx-professionals-for-success?utm_medium=banner&utm_source=newsroom&utm_campaign=2022_hr_cfot_lli_ignite