Victor “Alex” Villanueva
Risk Advisory IT Consultant
EY

“Without INROADS, I would never have discovered my passion for representing underrepresented minorities in the corporate workplace and in life.”

Victor “Alex” Villanueva lived in Chicago for 10 years of his life and never had a lot of opportunity there. When he moved from Chicago to Atlanta, times were not always easy. In high school, he faced a near death experience of a hereditary blood clot, which changed his view on life altogether. “I was not supposed to make it out of that situation, but for that I am ever grateful for my Lord and Savior for giving me the opportunity to make a difference in this world,” said Alex.

During college, he understood what it was like to work with a chip on his shoulder and seize every opportunity. “INROADS helped me develop a leadership presence within my everyday life,” he said. The organization gave him the confidence to go outside of his normal comfort level and achieve the unimaginable. Alex obtained a job upon graduation and was the first honors graduate from his family with a BBA in Information Systems and a minor in Information Security and Assurance from Kennesaw State University (KSU).

For years, some people would downplay how much weight a degree from KSU was actually worth and what Alex could contribute to a future employer because of his background. “I used it as a motivating factor to show people that you don’t have to come from a ‘Big School’ (for however people define big) to represent a Fortune 500 company.” At EY, he has been given an opportunity to achieve something bigger than himself.

For the past couple of years, the firm has put on a program called EY Unplugged with a goal to bring together ethnically diverse staff from around the U.S. to network, connect and be mentored by minority executives within their first four months with EY. From this event, Alex was able to network with directors in the firm who ironically had an INROADS background. As Vice President of Corporate Affairs of the INROADS Atlanta Alumni Association, he was deemed with the task of finding a sponsor for the annual Leadership Panel. The Leadership Panel is a signature Professional Development event organized by the INROADS Atlanta Alumni Association, which facilitates access to the valued perspectives of senior leaders on a selected topic of interest and relevance to the community. Alex was able to pitch his idea of bridging the gap between INROADS and EY to be both an experience hiring opportunity for EY and a history-making event for the INROADS Atlanta Chapter, thus obtaining full sponsorship of the event from EY. This opportunity has provided a lot of exposure for him at such an early stage of his career.

Because Alex chose to focus on the skills and abilities he developed through INROADS, he sees his career on a new and motivating path of success. “I am hoping that my story inspires people that no matter your background or what circumstances life throws your way, there is always a greater inspiration that can get you to where you want to be in life.”