

# KIMBERLY NGUYEN – CAREER JOURNEY PODCAST

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:00:00]** And it was not until I took AP statistics in senior year of high school that I realized how much I actually do enjoy math when you can apply math to real life.

**Joyce Kline [00:00:15]** Hello, everybody, I'm Joyce Kline. I'm a managing director within Accenture's Applied Intelligence Practice, and I'm going to be the host today for our AI Leaders podcast. And I'm excited to have join with me today, Kimberly Nguyen. Kimberly is a consultant within Accenture's Applied Intelligence Practice, and we're going to learn today about Kimberly's exciting journey that brought her here to Accenture. So, Kimberly, I'm so excited that you're spending time with me today to share your experiences.

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:00:47]** Thank you so much for having me.

**Joyce Kline [00:00:48]** Great. Well, in an effort, Kimberly, to just get started, let's take you back to when you were in school. Did you like math?

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:00:58]** I absolutely hated math. I remember specifically one test in seventh grade, and I remember sitting at the desk taking this test, it's pre-algebra where we had to solve for X. So, there is equations on each side, and we had to isolate X and solve for X. And for some reason, 12 year old me, my mind just went completely blank. And that was the first time I'd ever gotten an F on any exam. And I remember coming home with the paper and crying at the dinner table. And from then on, I hated math. And I find that most kids tend to say they don't like math or that they're not good at math. And then when you ask them

why they think, well, this is so hard and it's so useless, why am I learning this? And it was not until I took AP statistics in senior year of high school that I realized how much I actually do enjoy math when you can apply math to real life statistics was the first time, I found math to actually be useful. We were looking at a placebo project where half of the subjects got a new medication, and the other half did not get the medication. And I realized that you could use math to come to definitive conclusions about whether or not the medicine worked. So, if it worked on 50 percent of the people or 60 percent of the people, how can you say the medicine is working or not? Well, there's statistical theories that you can apply to come up with that conclusion. So, I thought that was really cool and really interesting, and that's why I decided to pursue statistics in college.

**Joyce Kline [00:02:21]** Perfect. Wow, what a journey, in terms of your experiences. What do you think that society in general can do to get kids more interested in math at a younger age?

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:02:34]** Yeah, I think it would be better to teach statistics before any other type of math. I don't know necessarily how you do that because obviously you need to know a little bit of basic math before you can really learn statistics. But there's probably games that you can play with cards or picking balls out of a bag or something, or marbles, to help them understand why statistics is a really good math to learn. And then they will know that, OK, you also need to learn basic math in order to be good at statistics and hopefully that would motivate them more to be interested in math.

**Joyce Kline [00:03:02]** Those are some great ideas. I think anything that we can do to



encourage students to be interested in STEM, we just really need to do it. And your ideas on, you know, elevating the role of statistics is really good. You graduated with a bachelors and a graduate degree in statistics. What was your experience after graduation in terms of finding a job?

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:03:27]** Yeah, my experience was very interesting. It was also very, very difficult. I didn't get a job until two years after I graduated from college. So, initially I thought that I would just become a data analyst and just do some basic descriptive statistics and build some visualizations and graphs. I never thought I'd be modeling and coding, but I was a first generation college student, which means that I was the first person in my family to graduate from college. And so everyone in my family worked blue collar jobs, I'm the first one to work any white collar type of job. My mom was very excited whenever she sees me with a new business card every time I get promoted. But because of that, I did not know really how to get a job. I was kind of taught, OK, you get good grades, and the more degrees you get the more eligible you are to get a job. And that as soon as you graduate, you get a job right away. I realized that that was not, in fact, the truth. And I did not realize that if you apply to jobs online, your resume basically goes into a black hole and no one ever sees it again. So, I realize that being a data analyst also was no longer a viable career because everyone was becoming a data scientist. So, I thought maybe I would pivot to becoming an actuary and that wasn't working out either. So, I realized that networking was a really important part of finding a job. So, for the two years where I didn't have, I say I'm unemployed, but for two years I was working minimum wage jobs and then during my lunch breaks I would go to all the career fairs at my college I had just graduated from. I would also, I made a LinkedIn and I reached out to completely random people on LinkedIn that had jobs and worked at companies I was interested in, and I would go get coffee with those people and ask them for career advice. I actually applied to Accenture the first year that I was looking for a job and got rejected. It wasn't until I came back for a career fair for the second year, I was applying jobs where I had learned about networking, all that

stuff and making an impression on the recruiter, that I was able to get my job at Accenture. So yeah, the career fairs really helped me get to where I am today.

Joyce Kline [00:05:34] That's pretty amazing how you navigated through everything and just, you know, thinking back to, you know, from graduation to how do you find your first job, to LinkedIn, to career fairs, and now you're finally at Accenture and you've been with us for a little bit. So maybe you could share a little bit about what it's been for you since joining Accenture and talk a little bit about your roles.

Kimberly Nguyen [00:05:58] Yep, so I joined initially in the consulting development program. I wasn't aligned to any specific industry or any specific department Accenture, but I knew that I wanted to be a part of applied intelligence because that's where all the cool data science stuff happens. So, while I was in the consulting development program, I really made sure that no matter what role I was on that I set my brand so that people knew that I was the data science girl. I was a data science person. I love data. I want to build models. I want to code. So, that was very important to me. And the thing I love about working at Accenture is that I've worked in so many different types of industries and I've done so many different, I've had so many different roles across data science. So, for my first role, I was a PMO lead for a retail client and that had nothing to do with data science at all. But I learned a lot of good organizational skills. I learned how to make decks. So it was a very good first project for me. Then I was on an internal role, which means I was doing work for Accenture, where I was just a data analyst and we were using just some descriptive statistics that I created in excel in order to help Accenture figure out where all the computers Accenture that had not yet been upgraded to Windows 10 were sitting, in what regions, on what projects, and how we can tackle them and drive the number of computers that had not yet been upgraded down to zero. So, that was just a data analyst project. Then I moved on to a government role where I was a data visualization developer where I had no idea about Power BI or Tableau. And just by learning on the job, I was able to become a Power BI sned. We were able to help build really



advanced dashboards in Power BI that pushed the limits of the tool. And then we were able to create really cool dashboards that the client can use to synthesize their data and then better serve their own clients. Then this is when I got to the really intense project where I did brand marketing effectiveness or marketing mix modeling for a finance client. And I had encoded within those like two years I had been Accenture. And again, once again, I just learned on the job and relearned and taught myself how to code with the help of my peers. And so that was very fun. That was very cool. And then the next project I was on was once again media mix marketing for a social media client. And then we did media or marketing mix modeling for that client. And then we are in the process of writing a white paper for that client. And now today is actually my first day of my newest project where I'm doing something completely different. I'm using a completely different coding language that I've never used before called Python. I'm going to be doing an optimization supply chain operations problem. This client is a utilities client. So, once again, a completely different industry, something completely new. But I think that's what I loved the most about Accenture people were willing to help you learn if you're willing to put in the hard work. And through all my projects, I've been able to really build my data science background.

**Joyce Kline [00:08:56]** Wow, Kimberly, that's a lot in your short time here with Accenture in terms of, you know, going from being on a PMO role, into more of a data science role, to media mix marketing, to different clients, different industries. And I think what's pretty amazing is, you know, the transferability, I guess I would say, of skills that you've had and how you've basically been able to apply and learn on the job with everything that you've done. So, with all of it you bring, what would you say to somebody who's about to start their career? What are some advice that you might pass on to somebody interested in the field of data science, things that they should consider?

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:09:38]** Yeah, I'm going to start all the way from childhood. So, like, if you're a young child, I would suggest that you learn how to code. Coding is very important and it's very applicable to every industry. And it's a

really valuable skill to have and will really help you get a job. And I also personally think it's a very fun thing to do. So, from a young age, I would suggest learning how to code. If you're a college student, I guess data science I can admit is very hard even for me, but I think it's very much worth the effort to learn it. And it's very interesting and very rewarding. And there's always so much to learn and things are constantly changing, so you're never going to get bored. So, I would suggest majoring in anything related to data, even minoring in statistics. I think that would be very useful. And also, just in general, if you're ever struggling, just always reach out to find people to help you learn. Explain to you things that you don't understand, mentor you. You'd be surprised how willing people are to pay it forward for the help that they've received in their lives and willing to help others. I'm the same way, I love when people reach out to me and ask me questions. I love to have working sessions and help people figure out how to work their Power BI dashboard. So, yeah, always reach out and ask for help and never be shy about that.

**Joyce Kline [00:10:52]** This has been some amazing advice and sharing that you've provided today. It's been my absolute pleasure to spend time with you and hear not only of the journey going back to high school and math and your college experiences and the degrees and statistics, coupled with how did you navigate yourself to start at Accenture and then the journey that you've had since being at Accenture. And I loved how you just wrapped it all up with the advice that you were giving to people at all ages in terms of how they can get involved in this exciting field that we're all part of. So, my sincere pleasure, Kimberly, of spending time with you. Always nice to spend time with the fellow Bostonian. So, thank you so much for giving me some of your time today. Thank you.

**Kimberly Nguyen [00:11:39]** Thanks for having me. I hope it inspires people to not give up.

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