



# PINAYS TALK TECH EPISODE 4

## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

**Rene**

Hey everyone. This is Renee from Accenture Philippines, and welcome to the fourth episode of Pinay's talk tech podcast, the podcast for future-forward Filipinas. Join us as we have inspiring conversations with Pinays in Tech, from young innovators to industry leaders, this podcast will show you how Pinays in tech are leading through change. This is Pinay's talk tech podcast.

A global leader is an agent of change who manages enterprises across borders, operating in multiple environments, inspiring people to reach their goals. But what do you do to earn such a title? What influence and impact should you have? Luckily, our guest has the answers. With more than 30 years in the tech industry, she leads the Accenture technology centers in Asia and Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, an instrumental figure in driving the Accenture's delivery, innovation, and industrialization program. Let's welcome. Accenture's Senior Managing Director. Ambe Tierro.

**Rene**

Good morning, Ambe!

**Ambe**

Hello. Good morning, Renee

**Rene**

Thank you for joining us in the Pinays talk tech podcast. I'm so excited to have you with us. The first question I always ask people in the era of this time when we're not seeing each other, is a simple question. Like, how are you? Malalim,

how are you?

**Ambe**

So hard to answer? I'm good. I'm good. I am looking forward to the weekend and I'm actually grateful that things are looking up in terms of, uh, COVID cases are down. So that gives me something positive to look forward to. But of course, with everything else going on around the world, um, just trying to stay positive and thankful that we are safe here.

**Rene**

Yeah. Agreed. Always a silver lining every morning. Right. It's a good way to start the day. Um, for everyone who's listening to us. How do you describe your role? How would you introduce yourself?

**Ambe**

I am Ambe. I'm a senior managing director at Accenture. I'm responsible for all our technology centers in Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa.

**Rene**

Wow. That is what, how many continents, three?

**Ambe**

Yes.

**Rene**

So what does, um, a technology leader, Asia Pacific, Africa, and Middle East do in a day? What does your day look like?

**Ambe**

Um, every day is different, which makes it



exciting. But, uh, the, day is, uh, full of connect sessions with different colleagues, uh, around the region. And of course, uh, I still have my role in the Philippines, which I spend a lot of time on, uh, because by large, the Philippines is the largest center, in the network that I lead. And then of course, um, connect with clients, and of course sessions like this no which makes it a little bit different and also, exciting for me to do. So no two days are the same.

**Rene**

I think that's, that's kind of fun too. Right? You have something to look forward to everyday. It's not like the regular weekly daily meetings, so that's very cool. And your personal life. Um, I know you're a mom to three boys. How is that like? Which is crazier? Your three continents. Or your three boys?

**Ambe**

I don't know which is crazier. I think the work is easier to manage because, um, at work people listen to me. No. So my boys are grown, in case they catch this, episode. No, they they're very good boys. Uh, the eldest is already 22. The youngest is 16, so I do not have a hard time managing them. They're quite independent. Um, especially when, uh, COVID hit no, everybody was studying from home. I personally did not have a hard time managing that because they're grown. It's nice to be able to spend this time with them. Cause they're mostly at home now they're starting to go out no, given, uh, things are relaxing, which, uh, I'm very happy for them that they're able to see their friends do, uh, young stuff again.

But yeah, but my home life, is stable and my husband also has a full-time job and, uh, he also works from home, uh, for the most part. And so we're trying to manage, um, uh, our schedules, but it's been really a blessing to be able to spend a lot of time together. I think that's the silver lining of the pandemic.

**Rene**

Any of them following your footsteps? Do you get the sense any would follow you in technology?

**Ambe**

Um, they can try no, um, the eldest, uh, is taking computer science. Well my husband and I took up computer science in LaSalle and he's done the same. It's funny because we were trying to discourage him. No. Are you sure?

In the beginning when he was, um, selecting his course, uh, but he finished and in fact he is finishing Magna cum laude. So very proud mother.

**Rene**

Wow.

**Ambe**

I was nowhere near, I was nowhere near. Cum laude.

**Rene**

There was a saying in UP it's either your matalino or maabilidad , I'm in ,maabilidad eh, I'm not in the first one.

**Ambe**

I could have been Magna also if not for my grades

**Renee**

Me too. Um, so how did you get started though? Because back in the day, if I talk to kids, especially when we do Hour of Code, I would always ask them, what did you want to be when you grow up? And everybody says lawyer nurse doctor. So no one thinks of that. But how did you get into tech?

**Ambe:**

Well, um, I wouldn't say I also said I wanted to be a programmer, but, uh, my love for computers started early on. Um, I was 13, in my school there was a computer lab, the only computer lab



in school. It was air conditioned, and it was the only air-conditioned room. So, I liked spending time there, you have to sign up to, to get a slot. Um, but seriously, you know, the computers at the time they were green and black screens, they were magical for me. I, I thought, oh, it would be nice to be able to know how to operate these magical boxes. And so that's how I started to code and, um, and so I didn't realize at the time that I was going to do this, uh, as a career.

So, uh, after high school, I ended up taking computer science. Um, and I think one of the defining moments was when we were doing a project. Uh, for school. it was for systems analysis and design, and we had to do a project for a company or government agency to improve their system. And we went to the Manila post office. Um, and when I, I went there, we interviewed people and I found out how routinary and how manual their work was. And, um, my idea was to automate, um, the way they sorted mails so that it would be more accurate. And so, we, uh, we created the proposal to use OCR, which is, uh, an old version - I mean, it's the beginning of AI, um, and so that sparked the beginning of really getting into tech. I would say where, I thought it's not only fun. It's also going to change lives. I mean, make people's lives better. Uh, if we do this well, so that, that is how I got started and the rest is history.

**Rene**

And so right after college, was Accenture, your first job?

**Ambe**

Yes, my first and only job. I attended the career fair in LaSalle, so we would do job fairs no and I remember this, um, manager at that time he became partner, eventually he's now retired. He was a manager at the time. He was talking about Accenture, and I got attracted to the, um, career model where he said, oh, in Accenture, you can get promoted based on your performance and as long as the company's growing, we promote people. It's not

hierarchical.

It's not based on people, you know, it's not a family business. So I loved that. And it's true.

And

I feel strongly, now that I'm in the position where I am, I feel strongly that, uh, we continue to, uh, espouse that meritocracy in our organization. So that was what attracted me.

**Rene**

I think it does attract people who are go getters, that kind of mindset attracts go getters. I totally agree with that. So how long has this been since you were in Accenture? Are you willing to share that?

**Ambe**

Of course, 31 years. Uh, this is my 32nd year. I know, I started when I was 10 years old. Um, as you know Renee, I'm a gifted child.

**Rene**

Yeah. Very, very gifted. The irritating part of this is you look younger than I do. And I've only been here for, I think, um, collectively 17 years. So how does it start when you are in this job fair. and now you're the technology delivery lead of three continents.

What's that journey? Um, did you hold different positions? Were you always a programmer? How do you jump from happily programming in your table? And then now leading three continents.

**Ambe**

Very interesting question. Well, I started at the entry-level, uh, so a programmer at the time we were called technical staff, um, uh, technical staff one, uh, cause there's a technical staff two, the, the joke was, the technical staff is T S so in Filipino, "tiis". So modesty aside I think I'm good at what I do. Because I like programming, so I exceled at it and you know what helped me throughout these years are always having mentors. So there was always someone who believed in me sometimes more than I believed in myself.

So it would push me. Oh, you can do this. So I



went on from programming, to um, technical design. Oh, okay. I like this. And then managing people, leading teams, et cetera, et cetera. So, so there's always a mentor. They would tap you on the shoulder and, ask you to do more. And so that's always been, um, my experience in Accenture and that's why I also feel strongly about mentoring. Making sure people have mentors, um, so that you can realize your full potential. I rose up through the ranks as you would say, I made manager in five years, which at the time was a record and I'm sure other people have broken that record. And then I made managing director, um, in 12 years. Uh, so I have been a managing director longer than I was not a managing director in Accenture. So and I thought being a managing director was, uh, you know, the milestone that's it. But I realized, um, it was only the beginning. There were so many more opportunities and more things to do.

So, uh, I took on the lead role in the Philippines in, uh, about eight, eight years ago. And then since then I've been doing regional and global roles. Um, and the common theme is really having this mentor and sponsor who would open opportunities for me and offer me the role. And, you know, Renee, I've never been a hundred percent ready for a role, um, but I always say yes because I feel like you should say yes and then, and then you learn, uh, in the process and, and make sure your, your mentor also knows that you need help and support.

**Renee**

Is that innate in you to say yes to things that are scary and new?

**Ambe**

I had to learn for sure, because, and maybe this is a common thing for women it's not the gender gap. It's a confidence gap where we're not as confident. Um, and in, um, Sheryl Sandberg's book. She talked about this. When women feel, they have to be a hundred percent ready, whereas men, even though they're not as ready, they would be very confident to take on roles.

Yeah. So, so I had to learn and, um, like I said, mentors have helped me gain that confidence and to talk it out, no, to talk it out. And I think, um, I've, I've learned to be courageous about, uh about taking risks about my career. Uh, and, and so far it has paid off. Actually, it's four because Australia is also in the map.

**Renee**

Oh my God. So you have three kids and four continents to look after. Wow, that's incredible. No, you're right. It's four continents. It's incredible. So like in your career path, You said earlier, there's a difference between a mentor and a sponsor. And I think this is a very interesting concept because not everyone understands the difference.

**Ambe**

A mentor is someone who will coach you, give you feedback. Um, and talk things out with you. And so it's a relationship that you sometimes have for many, many years where as a sponsor is someone who is senior enough in the organization who can really uh, have the influence to promote you and give you bigger opportunities.

Sometimes it's the same person, but, um, your mentor may, maybe just your immediate supervisor and is not able to sponsor you further. Right. So, I think it's important as you said, to realize the distinction on whether your mentor can really sponsor your career. It's a good thing you mentioned that. Renee, you know, because, um, for women. We have to, educate our women. In Accenture we do this, that you have to find a sponsor who has a seat at the table and can really talk about you and, um, and promote you and also give you the right opportunities to advance your career.

**Renee**

Yeah, because I think I am, I'm a typical Filipina. I'm a typical woman who thinks as long as I do my job. I'm going to be okay. They'll promote me



because they'll see the work that I do.

**Ambe**

And I do not think that's Filipina only Rene. It's uh, I think it's very, it's very common globally. As I worked with other women from different countries, you know, that Tiara syndrome. Oh, if I, if I do well, I will be given a crown, they will discover me. They have to discover me. Um, and yeah, in some ways and as, you, you also lead people. We try to do that, but not all leaders will do that. So you have to self-promote. Um, and that's another thing I've learned to, uh, build your brand, It's like looking at the perspective of how others perceive you. Um, so, so we need, uh, we all need - men and women, a little bit of self -promotion.

**Rene**

Yeah. I, I know, cause I think in the Philippines, people would always say, wag mag angat ng bangko, and you grow up thinking that, talking about yourself is a negative thing, but actually it's not. And it's curious to me when you said that actually this happens everywhere.

**Ambe**

Yeah, yeah. Well, I've learned a technique for, um, magbuhat ng bangko in a nice way, like, um, and you may have taken this course also The Power of Self course uh, when I learned, you should say. Um, this happens all the time, when someone praises your work, a woman typically would say, ah, it's not me. It's my team. And as soon as you say that you give your power away because you eliminate the, what you've done so the technique that I learned is to say. Yes, I am very proud of the leadership that I have shown in completing this project.

So, you, you don't take away the credit yourself, but you also include your team because you said you led a team in completing it. So do I think there are some, some I guess little things we can change with our language so that we don't give our power away and still give credit where credit is due

**Rene**

Yeah. And, and I think that's a very important concept that I had to train myself to think that way, because I am always effusive and say, no, it's not me. It's everybody else.

**Ambe**

Very common nga. Ah yeah, the team. It's not really me. Um and it's not bad, but, uh, you also need to elevate yourself, right. And, and, and do not undermine what you, what you have contributed.

**Rene**

And so, I remain grateful. I have a lot of things I'm grateful for, for being in Accenture, taking Power of Self was one of them. That was, I think still to me, the best training I've ever had in Accenture and shoutout to Marsha Clark, she also has a podcast it's called your Authentic Path to Powerful Leadership since it's very use for podcasts to collaborate, shout out to you Marsha.

Um, so I, I love that. So, I love the fact that you said it's culturally kind of the same, and I want to kind of dig a little bit deeper into that cultural diversity that you have experienced as a leader, of four continents for technology delivery. Is it difficult? Do you have to kind of adjust your mindset or being an Accenture individual with our common core values across the world makes it easier?

**Ambe**

I do think it's difficult. It's challenging. I would say. And, but in this role no, uh, where I, I deal with different cultures and it's not just me, I think we all do Renee in Accenture because we're a global organization. But when you're leading people, uh, you have to influence them. Right. Um, and it requires, uh, understanding, empathy and, and for me I find it challenging to be able to do that. And in fact, in fact, I, I really have fun just understanding different cultures and different, um, perspectives.



So, for example, I started this, uh, APAC role in the middle of the pandemic. During the many COVID surges, I shouldn't say I always monitor not just the Philippines but also what was going on in the different parts of the world, because before I talked to them, I kind of know because you cannot be insensitive, about these things. I mean, it's just an example. So maybe one, skill is to try to understand people's perspectives because that makes the conversations easier because you can relate. Let's say in the Philippines, we're not going through a surge, but they are, then, you can become more sensitive, you know?

So, so I think that's one way, um, just broadening your perspective, but, but the one thing I've learned we have more similarities than differences for sure. Everybody has a family, everybody values their family. And also people around the world, regardless of culture and country or belief, um, we like to express, we like to connect and we like to contribute. So those are the three things.

**Rene**  
Express, connect, contribute. I love that.

**Ambe**  
Yes. So as long as that's true in the work that we do, you can engage people, they would be willing to collaborate. Um, and so, um, I prefer in while doing these global regional roles to celebrate the similarities, rather than focus on, uh, the differences.

**Renee:**  
Um, do you feel that because you talk a lot about empathy and you talk about, I think increasing your network, right? Is there a benefit to be a woman leader? When you're dealing with empathy and dealing with different cultures, is there a difference, do you think?

**Ambe**  
I think I excel at this because I, I am nurturing. I value teamwork. I value diversity and I also value work-life balance. So, without generalizing,

I feel like most women do, um, value these things. And as a global leader, even as a leader, um, this makes you a little bit better because when you care enough to value these things, then people will want to work for you. And you're not just driven by results, outcomes, and those are important. But I think it's important to balance, driving performance and driving outcomes with caring, nurturing and making sure, um, people are living their best lives, not just, um, working in Accenture.

**Rene**  
You are one of the people that I always give us an example of real work-life balance. Cause I remember an anecdote about you that you share all the time, which is you always get promoted right after you get pregnant. Right.

**Ambe**  
My major promotions. Uh, I was always on maternity leave, so that's why I remember my promotions because of my sons. Um, so yes, I like, I like telling that story just to, just to demonstrate, that being a mother if you want it, shouldn't be an obstacle. Um, maybe for some people it would take a little bit more time, but who cares? It's not a competition, right? I mean, you, your, your career, um, our advancement is different.

Um, and so. I think for one of the things that I will tell women is, you know, um, just take your time and don't compare yourself with other women, other people in terms of how they're advancing in their careers, because you have a different life than those people.

**Rene**  
Yeah. And so you also said earlier, you've been, this is your 32nd year in this role. And from this programmer fresh from college coming to the office to now the global technology delivery lead for four continents, we jumped to four continents at the end of this podcast. Um, do you feel that we have made headway into the fight for equality? You have such insight and you





were for, those were not aware, she was actually our global inclusion diversity lead previously, right. That's one of the roles that you took on. What's your take Ambe? Have we made progress?

**Ambe**

Absolutely. We have made progress. Um, when I was, um, growing up in, in Accenture, this was not a thing. Um, uh, if you felt left out or intimidated, nobody can put a label on this. Um, and in the nineties, we started to talk about, um, diversity and inclusion and, you know, I'm so proud that this is the 18th year in the Philippines we are celebrating International Women's Day. I remember, uh, when we started, nobody else in the Philippines celebrated IWD and now everybody, every other company has an IWD celebration. And so these things work when you pioneer something and you, uh, you put a spotlight on something, um, then people will catch on and they would think this is important.

So, I mean, back to your question, we've made a lot of progress and more recently, um, prior to Julie Sweet being our CEO, Pierre Nanterme was very vocal about getting to equal by 2025. And I think that bold leadership also makes a lot of difference when our leaders are vocal about goals related to diversity and inclusion, everything else follows.

So the culture, the, the practices. So yes, I, I think, uh, as a woman, there are so many opportunities for us. Uh, it's really up to us to, uh, to take advantage of the opportunities presented.

**Rene**

Right. Get out there, take a stand boldly, make a statement, and then it'll happen.

So we're coming to the end of our conversation and part of our focus this year, as Accenture is showing our commitment to equality. What is your commitment and how do you kind of fuel that commitment through the years?

**Ambe**

Okay. So my personal commitment, um, is to talk about it because when our people hear, the leaders talk about it, then they would realize it's important. So, um, so that's the first commitment.

I will always advocate, not just for women, but, all other aspects of diversity. Like our PWD's our LGBTQ community. So any group that needs representation, I think we need to focus on them and make sure that they feel that they belong to the organization. So that's, um, that's one, second thing is, in the Better to Belong research that we are, that we did this year for IWD, it's really interesting how they've put, what does it mean to belong? Um, and there were a few elements there. One is people feel they belong when they're part of decisions, when they're comfortable to speak up. Um, and when their peers and uh, their leaders respect them. So I think they sound simple, but, uh, I, I commit to practicing these.

So in my team, in my leadership team, I, I make it a point that if someone's not talking um, in a meeting, I ask no, so, Renee, what do you think? Um, or at least if they've given me an opinion, and we're not quite going to do what they've suggested then I take time to explain why. So, I commit those three things. So, to promote belonging, um, make sure people feel part of the decision making that they're respected and that they can speak up, uh, without, feeling awkward.

**Rene**

I love that. Okay. So last pitch for women who are either, um, moving to college, women who are already working, but want to shift to tech. Can you make your pitch to those women and invite them to be a woman, a woman in technology?

**Ambe**

Well, okay. So, if you would like to be working in, in technology, um, maybe 2 things, Renee one is you have to love to learn. So, every day there's something to learn. So, if you're, if you're



that kind of a person where you love information, you like, um, innovation then this career is for you. And then the second, um, maybe is "Perfect is your enemy". So, nobody's perfect, nobody. Um, and, and I think a lot of women, feel that they're always falling short. They're not confident because they want to be perfect before they raise their hand for a role or, a job, so perfect is your enemy there's no such thing. You just have to be good. Talk it out, be brave, and be kind to yourself, forgive yourself many, many times. I have a lot of times. So those are 2 things, um, for young women to remember, uh, love to learn and, uh, perfect is your enemy.

**Rene**

That would be my mantra. I'm going to, um, uh, print a tarp as big as my house. Perfect. Is your enemy. And on that note, thank you so much Ambe for celebrating international women's month with us. We really, really loved having you over today, and it's always good to see you.

**Ambe**

All right thank you Renee. Enjoy women's month

**Rene**

Thank you. Ambe.