Yolanda Lassalle – President, La Salle Group



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Yolanda Lassalle, founder and CEO of LaSalle Group, shares how she built a global consulting firm rooted in operational excellence, people development, and innovation. Speaking from Puerto Rico, Lassalle reflects on her journey from chemical engineer to transformation leader, offering insights into workforce development, digital transformation, and the evolving role of AI in industry.

To start this interview, could you please introduce yourself to our global readers?

My name is Yolanda LaSalle, and I am the CEO and founder of LaSalle Group. For many years, I worked in the manufacturing sector in Puerto Rico. I am a chemical engineer by training and also a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt, specialising in improvement methodology. I spent many years working in companies like Wyeth, Pfizer, and Pepsi.

Fourteen years ago, I decided to make a pivot in my career and start my own business consulting firm. I began on my own, focusing on business transformation.

What inspired you to found LaSalle Group, and what gap in the market were you aiming to fill?

Fourteen years ago, I was working on a business transformation project at my former company. Initially, the site had not been delivering great performance. I accepted the challenge to lead a

turnaround, working with the entire leadership team and 1200 employees. We not only saved the site but turned it into one of the best-performing operations, earning two presidential awards. The experience showed me what was possible when you align people and processes with purpose. I wanted to replicate that success and help other organisations transform themselves in the same way. Since then, we have helped companies across Canada, the US, Puerto Rico, and Mexico to improve how they work by optimising processes, enhancing digital transformation, fostering innovation, and ensuring regulatory compliance.

Could you share with our readers the core services that you offer? Which would you say is your star offering, and which one would you like to improve?

We operate in six core verticals. These verticals are in the areas of management, operations, digital transformation, and compliance consulting. What I am most passionate about is transforming culture and organisations into high-performance leaders and organisations. Equipping leaders with the right skill sets, knowledge, and mindset to build high-performance organisations. We work at all levels within an organisation, simplifying processes and making operations more efficient.

Technically, we can support everything from simple manufacturing or service processes to optimising complex biotechnology processes. While we do not interfere with proprietary product formulas, we cover end-to-end operations. Since 2024, we have helped our clients save over 8 figures in cost savings, agility and open manufacturing capacity.

About 70% of our clients are in the pharmaceutical sector, primarily Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies. We build strong relationships with our clients and integrate with their teams to help them achieve their goals.

How do you integrate cultural change into a framework that also addresses compliance and performance?

That is our secret sauce. Our proprietary methodology allows us to assess an organisation’s current state and design tailored solutions. We combine regulatory compliance, quality culture, operational science, and most importantly, the human factor.

Human beings need recognition and a sense of purpose. We do not impose a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, we work with our clients, ensuring their teams are engaged and supported. Our biggest strength is how we embed ourselves within our clients' teams. We learn their operations. That allows us to step back, ask the hard questions, and help them see what they might be missing.

Your website highlights something called LaSalle Academia, which caught my attention. Can you tell us more about that?

Around 2011 or 2012, a university approached me to teach Lean Six Sigma. I accepted, and that experience changed everything. Teaching became a passion, and it is now a core part of our firm. Whenever we work with a client, we aim to leave a legacy by upskilling their people so they can sustain the transformation in the long run.

LaSalle Academia is transitioning to LaSalle Talent Development and Innovation Center and offers over 30 certification programmes, covering areas like supply chain, project management, Lean Six Sigma, and regulatory compliance. It is a workforce development initiative open to any organisation looking to enhance its talent.

Importantly, this is not just training. We focus on competency development, where the client ends up with the benefit of people able to execute with the knowledge acquired.

LaSalle has an office in North Carolina. How has that developed, and are you planning further expansion?

We opened our North Carolina office to better serve our clients in the US market. We have a dedicated team there, and the office supports our ongoing expansion across the United States. While we have done some work in Mexico, we do not yet have an office there, but our ambition is to grow from the US into global markets.

How do you see AI transforming your business, and what are the opportunities and challenges?

We have been using artificial intelligence for several years already in both our LaSalle Academia and our consulting services. We are also hosting an innovation forum soon focused on AI, digital transformation, and data integrity.

People often fear AI will take jobs, but I see it as a tool for creativity. It automates manual tasks and enhances data analysis, allowing us to deliver faster and better results. AI is integral to our future, and we actively explore how to help our clients embrace this technology.

One practical outcome of this vision is Murmurato, a software-as-a-service platform developed in partnership with my co-founder, David Pagan. The idea came from our consulting work, where we saw a lack of tools to capture employee insights and translate them into actionable business opportunities through the use of AI and Automation.

Murmurato allows organisations to collect employee insights, using Automation and AI, and implement the best ones. It helps organisations innovate from within while recognising individual contributions. We launched our MVP in 2022 and are now in 14 sites across five states, with over 1,000 users.

Talking about Puerto Rico, do you believe Puerto Rico is uniquely positioned for industrial and lifestyle transformation?

Puerto Rico has a rich 60-year history in pharmaceuticals. It has a deep understanding of regulatory frameworks—not just for the FDA, but globally. We export to more than 120 countries.

Puerto Ricans are resilient and committed to excellence. We have top-tier universities producing strong STEM talent and robust manufacturing infrastructure. Our unique capacity to overcome challenges makes Puerto Rico uniquely suited for industrial renewal.

How can Puerto Rican talent be better retained and empowered?

Job creation is key, and we are seeing real progress. Many of my clients are expanding operations and bringing new products to the island. I meet many professionals who left for the mainland but want to come back. This trend inspires me to support reshoring initiatives.

You are also part of the reshoring committee of the PR-USA Chamber. What challenges and opportunities does reshoring present for Puerto Rico?

Reshoring is a major opportunity to bring back high-value manufacturing jobs, particularly for underserved communities. Puerto Rican workmanship is of high quality and adheres to strict industry standards.

One of the challenges we see is in alignment. For Reshoring to become successful, everyone needs to work together, setting aside individual agendas in favour of a unified strategy. I admire leaders who are willing to set aside competition for the greater good. We need more of that collaborative spirit.

Looking ahead, what are your aspirations for LaSalle Group over the next five years?

We have a clear strategy, we help our clients build theirs, so we must lead by example. Innovation is a priority for us. It’s not just as a buzzword, but as a way of operating. That means innovating how we teach, how we develop people, and how we deliver digital solutions to our clients.

We are expanding our footprint in the United States, gaining fantastic clients, and we intend to grow globally from there. We have delivered projects across 14 countries, from South Africa to Singapore, often without even boarding a plane.

What continues to inspire you every day?

Two things: my team and my clients. People assume I work for myself, but really, I work for my team. They are the reason I get up every day – to work with them to grow, thrive, and contribute. We have built a culture where everyone feels valued and safe to express themselves, from junior staff to senior consultants.

My clients also inspire me. I do not just see them as business partners, I see people striving to do better. Helping them go from good to great is incredibly rewarding.

One story I will always cherish is about a union steward named Pepe (fictional name). Initially sceptical, he told me at the end of a project, “Now I come home and can talk to my family. I learned how to listen, express myself, and find solutions instead of blaming others.” That story still moves me. On tough days, I remember Pepe, and I know why I do what I do: to leave a legacy.

Was there a defining moment that validated your choice to become an entrepreneur?

I never planned to be an entrepreneur. My husband suggested it, and I said, “Let’s do it.” It happened around the time our eldest son was heading to university. It was a risk, but it was the right decision. We grew through word-of-mouth, and now we have a solid foundation to expand. I never imagined owning a company, but looking back, I would choose to study chemical engineering againand every lesson that brought me to where I am today.

Finally, what message would you like to share with our global readers?

Puerto Rico is a great place with great people, great food, and a mature industrial base. We can build on our legacy and innovate for the future. Globally, industry is evolving fast. We must leverage technology, nurture creativity, and above all, invest in people. It is not just about technical skills; it is about holistic development. Building the critical thinking and leadership we need to solve tomorrow’s challenges. Many companies, including small and mid-sized ones, are recognising this. That is why we created LaSalle Talent Development and Innovation Center. We noticed gaps, especially as younger generations step in. There is a real need for structured development, and we are committed to providing it.

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