

Interview with Featured Boston Mentor: Michelle Wu



Michelle Wu

<https://www.michellewuconsulting.com/>

1. As listed on your website, you offer independent consulting for Medical Device Development. What motivated you to start independent consulting?

I have a couple reasons why I started independent consulting. Overall, the main draw was flexibility, the ability to control my work and life arrangements. I have 3 kids that are around elementary school age and my work provides me the ability to give them my attention. I also have flexibility in pursuing some volunteer activities. I'm the president of Community Music Works, a local organization in Providence that promotes social justice and gives youth a voice through string education and classical music performance. My work allows me to make time for that and for other professional volunteer activities, including mentoring entrepreneurs through [RIHub VMS](#) and serving on the board of [RI Bio](#). During the little over a year since I decided to do consulting, I've become interested in entrepreneurship, the earlier stage startup ecosystem and learning how to support those within it. I also felt that consulting offered me a way to assist multiple startups, while also expanding my horizons and interests.

2. What do you want to help your clients achieve when utilizing your consultancy services?

At a high level, Wu Consulting is designed to assess medtech startups and bring their medical devices and technology innovations to life. The way I work is to bring clarity, alignment, and calm to the chaotic and unknown. What that translates to practically is preparing startups that are first timers in the regulated space of medical technology. From a regulations perspective, that includes requirements from design and development, design controls compliance, and getting them the resources they need for regulatory strategy. Also, I help them with general startup assistance like getting guidance on funding, pitch decks, managing their partners and resources,

and perhaps other things they're considering like "how do I prioritize my time?" and "what should I do next?"

3. What's an example of recent work you've done as a consultant?

I've worked with a class 2 device for migraine treatment by helping them secure funding opportunities, solidifying design and development, and supporting them to choose a partner for it. I've also been working with a couple of class 1 devices. These are a little bit farther along in their design and development, so we're mainly working on their commercialization. I'm helping one of them with their quality system and helping the other ensure that their relationship with their suppliers are sound. We're establishing their standards from a quality control side of things.

4. Are you originally from the Boston area? What is your impression of Boston as a city to be an entrepreneur?

I did my masters, I'm a chemical engineer by education, so I earned my masters from MIT, so I do have some familiarity with the Cambridge/Boston Area. Boston's reputation precedes itself. It's such a vibrant area with all of the universities and the startups coming out of them, and programs like CIC and JETRO.

Currently though, I'm set up in Providence, RI. Providence itself is a burgeoning area that is really coming into its own in terms of support for startups/entrepreneurs that call it home.

It's interesting to see Providence transition from a commuter town to Boston into a place of its own.

Yes. I'm involved with the RIHub of innovation, which offers mentoring services that are actually based off of the MIT model. I'm a volunteer mentor through there to support area entrepreneurs and there's a whole ecosystem of organizations that are working together to support various types of startups and entrepreneurs.

That's all great to hear! For me, I always think of MA as a small state, but RI is extraordinarily tiny

Yes and there's a CIC in Providence as well

Right, there is. Have you had the opportunity to work out of CIC Providence?

For sure. The RIHub has their home in CIC Providence and I've gone to a number of events at CIC and Venture Cafe.

5. How has your experience been mentoring Japanese startups through CIC's partnership with JETRO?

First, I do want to highlight how easy it was working with CIC/JETRO in terms of the logistical standpoint. Jessy and the team made it easy to pair up and explained everything, so I wanted to give an appreciation to the team from that perspective.

Overall, from the mentoring side of things, it's been very positive for me. It reminds me that American business culture is a culture in and of itself and when I talk to Japanese startups, they have additional areas of expertise that we can bring to the global table. Aside from that, I've been happy offering an understanding of the US regulatory landscape's nuances. Hopefully the startups I've mentored have found it rewarding.

6. What do you think are the challenges facing a Japanese startup that is trying to expand its business in the Boston area?

I think it's the same as any startup. One piece of it is the networking; finding the right people that can help and assist. LinkedIn is a nice and powerful tool these days, but there's a challenge in finding people with particular expertise within a specific frame of time. Finding people they can trust to help them, guide them or give them additional insight. For example, healthcare payment and reimbursement is a complicated system and understanding how that might affect them is another particular challenge. It's not straightforward enough that it can be solved with just a web search.

7. What advice do you have for Japanese startups that are exploring business opportunities in the Boston area?

Being involved in a program like JETRO is phenomenal because of the resources they provide. Taking full advantage of programs like these to immerse themselves and take in as much as they can. Also, follow-on programs are helpful for sure. Boston, as well as Providence, is a great entryway into the US just for its proximity to fellow entrepreneurs, the wealth of resources, etc, and investor opportunities. I say join JETRO and just go for it!