



August 16, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the owner of Playa Viva, a small eco-luxury boutique hotel on the beach near Zihuatanejo, Mexico. I had the pleasure of working with and getting to know Cassandra (Cassie) DePecol from January through May of 2011.

Cassie worked with us as an intern and served as our Community Development Intern. This position required a variety of skills with principal responsibilities focused on guest relations and communications. Specifically her role was to engage guests in activities in the local community and then connect them to our "virtual community" through social media and internet communications. She did an excellent job with both these key functions.

In relation to guest relations, her role was specifically to identify opportunities for community engagement and work with guests to move outside the bounds of the Playa Viva property. From the moment she arrived, she worked diligently to identify activities across a broad spectrum including action and adventure, community service, local tour operators, etc. She then broadened our list of activities, built strong relationships with the local providers and members of the community, and perfectly accomplished her role of engaging guests with this expanded community. In this role, she showed initiative, creativity, poise and expertise beyond her years.

In relation to her role in community communications, Cassie also excelled. She was a prolific writer and contributed greatly to our blog. She did an excellent job engaging guests in Facebook, which as a result of Cassie's efforts, became one of our top 5 sources of internet traffic to our website. Since I run Playa Viva remotely, I must admit that while Cassie was on site, I had greater visibility into guest relations than usual.

Cassie is very enthusiastic about sustainable eco-tourism. Once she identified Playa Viva as a candidate for an internship, she reached out to us with a wealth of ideas. She arrived eager to work and added her charm and personality to the role to develop a great report with our staff and with guests. She also has lots of hands on experience working in a variety of boutique hotel environments giving her a breadth of experience beyond her years. She is eager to learn with excellent interpersonal skills. She has a strong work ethic and was very reliable.

Cassie also took the initiative to lead many of our social enterprise activities. She managed our "Pack for a Purpose" program, whereby guests bring school supplies for the local elementary school. Through her personal initiative, she organized guest "voluntarism" opportunities to engage guests with the local school, one of the more successful such events was a "painting party" to repaint the elementary school.

Overall, Cassie is very creative, hard working and passionate about eco-tourism. She has shown much maturity and poise in pursuing real work experience. By transitioning from the business environment to the educational environment, she brings a wealth of experience that will be of benefit to her classmates, provide interesting insights to class discussion and be an asset to any academic program, especially in hospitality.

Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions or need additional information about Cassie's internship with Playa Viva. I had the pleasure of working directly with Cassie and we would be happy to have her back any time.

Sincerely,

David Leventhal

Principal, Playa Viva LLC

A Sustainable Boutique Hotel

"Where Your Values Meet Your Vacation"