



Michele Powers and Allison Deal

On-The-Job Experience

by Mary Carpenter

Michele Powers, Director of the Adirondack Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau, had never worked with an intern. "Initially I was hesitant," she explained. "I thought I would have to watch over the student and it would be twice as much work."

When Michele was matched with a senior from the SUNY Plattsburgh School of Business & Economics during the spring semester, she was "pleasantly surprised."

Allison Deal, a marketing major, worked with Michele to earn academic credit and gain valuable on-the-job experience. "I made sure I gave her things to do

that would not only help us, but help her too," Michele emphasized. "I carved out projects that I needed done and that she would find interesting."

Recognizing how important on-line skills are in tourism promotion, Michele put Allison to work generating content for the VCB's new web site. Allison also created designs to tighten up the site's home page and optimize it for search engines.

In addition she did an on-line survey which helped to change the web site and how it functions. The survey contacted all of the area's lodging and restaurant properties to determine what amenities they offer. When the data base Allison designed

is integrated into the site, a tourist who is looking for a hotel on the waterfront that rents canoes, will be able to search and find a match. "Allison's work will help to make the site more content-rich and user-friendly," Michele observed enthusiastically.

Allison's most exciting project was her work on the development of an E-FAM Tour. "From what we've learned, nothing like this has ever been done before," Michele said. "Familiarization Tours (FAM Tours) are an industry standard in tourism. To acquaint tour operators and bus companies with what their area has to offer, Chambers of Commerce and VCBs will pay to bring interested parties for a visit.

The effort is expensive," Michele continued. "You have to pay to put them up and pay for their meals and their visits to attractions."

The goal of a FAM Tour is to convince these people to go back home and sell tours. "Successful FAM tours can be worth the investment, but the industry is changing," Michele explained. "Tour operators are very busy and what we've seen happen in recent years is that they send family members or office staff members in their place."

To make it easier for tour operators to get the information they need to make an informed decision, the local VCB decided to put together an on-line FAM Tour that would showcase the area. "Now, a tour operator can go on-line and in half hour take a tour narrated by local Step-On Tour Guide Carolyn Harding. With this format we can cover a lot of ground in a short period of time. They get to see what we have to offer from the comfort of their desk."

The E-FAM Tour, introduced in April of this year, has been so successful the VCB has already heard from tour operators who have said, "We're coming!!"

In addition to her role in the development of the content and design of the E-FAM Tour, Alison also developed an on-line marketing plan to alert tour operators to the exciting new offering.

Michele Powers is generous in her praise of Alison and all she accomplished for the VCB. "I graduated from a very good college," she said "but did not have any on-the-job experience to teach me about what the real business world is all about. Bringing students into a work environment and letting them experience difference corporate cultures, is invaluable. The internship program that the SUNY Plattsburgh School of Business & Economics has put together is so important. I am very impressed!" ■



Mary Carpenter
Contributing Writer

Loiremans

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