

Zoé Tudela Alcazar

Front Office Manager – One&Only Palmilla, Los Cabos.

Les Roches International School of Hospitality Management – Class of 2016

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

The question every child and young adult is asked by parents, friends, and later, professionals during job interviews. I have always envisioned the path leading to my career goal being made of infinite possibilities to develop ideas and concepts to shape guests’ and employees’ journeys in the ultra-luxury segment. So, when the VP of Operations of Kerzner International asked me the same question again a few weeks ago, my answer was still the same: “I want your job.”

Motivating people around enhancing the guest experience has always been calling me. From my first internship until now, I became a true asset for my company implementing their vision at a resort level. Enhancing the guest journey and the image of the brand I work for is a strength of mine. Today, I know, my success so far would not have been possible without the incredible teams I came across who believed in each project and fought their natural instinct against change.

I am most grateful for the diverse activities and hobbies which shaped me as a child and the curiosity it awakened. I started gymnastics at a competitive level from the age of five. After achieving a national level, I decided to become a judge and later coach to develop physically and mentally a team of young gymnasts. I played guitar and piano, learned how to ride horses, sail, ski, and play any racquet sport. Meanwhile, my 10 years of drama helped improve my social skills and turned me into a great public speaker.

After I finished high school in a suburb of Paris, France, I drove to the campus of Les Roches in Switzerland and never looked back. My first work experience, as breakfast commis at the Meridien Etoile the summer before, reinforced my passion for hospitality. Despite the hours and the physical intensity, my impact on the team spirit and the overall guest satisfaction every morning lit a fire in me.

During my first Bachelor internship at the Hotel Arts Barcelona, and after a great performance as a Guest Relations Agent, I was quickly transferred to the Guest Services department to create strategies to motivate the Bell staff to provide unique and unforgettable memories for the guests.

The amount of storytelling for that department tripled and the effort provided by the team gave me the opportunity to win the Trainee Award in the Rooms Division department. At just 18 years old, I had discovered my impact on a team's overall performance and attitude and my ability to create strategies rallying people around a common goal, increasing business performance and guest satisfaction.

After gaining operational experience in my internships, I joined One&Only Palmilla as an MIT for the Rooms Division department. This was an incredible opportunity to meet people from

different backgrounds and still be able to bring a fresh eye focused on the team efficiency and guest experience.

My practical eye to implement ideas and concepts within a team made me an asset in a flourishing company like One&Only. After graduating it was essential for me to find a company that would allow me to create an impact through the creation of new departments, structure, concepts and experiences linked to their brand vision.

Over the past four years in the company, I programmed and implemented various systems, played an active role in obtaining the Forbes 5th-Star, created a new department called the Connectivity Center (as a center of coordination for the entire hotel) and combined certain positions within the Front Office team to increase efficiency and communication across the board, as well as develop versatile employees better prepared for their next position.

I fell in love with the philosophy of "We Create Joy" based on behavioral pillars dear to my heart, such as warmth, empathy, precision and creativity. Today, I am a true brand ambassador of a brand placed 6th in the best luxury hotel chains in the world by Travel&Leisure 2021. I found my place as an intermediate between the corporate office and an operational team to achieve the brand vision while maintaining a healthy operation.

As Front Office Manager, I coach and develop Junior Managers to focus equally on the guest experience and colleague engagement. As a major in Finance, I also strategize the team around upsell revenue. We've achieved, so far, close to \$500K USD, a 143% increased profit from past years (2018 and 2019).

Thanks to hard work and determination, I have been invited to a hospitality podcast and a radio station in Los Cabos to talk about my experience so far and humbly give advice to future generations passionate about our industry.

Empowerment, Empathy and Growth, are the pillars I live by, including in my personal life. During the pandemic of 2020, I created a community of Women of Hospitality and Travel in Los Cabos (WHTC) to provide a safe platform for young and more established professionals to connect and share resources. This empowered community aims to develop more women to achieve executive positions within our industry through the help of mentorships and workshops.

In the future I would like to become a General Manager in the short term, giving me the platform to influence communities and provide opportunities for employees and their families, while keeping implementing key projects and focusing on business growth.

In the long term, I would like to focus on the decision making of these projects instead of the execution. At the same time, I aim to create a mentorship program for young women hoteliers who wish to make an impact in our industry at all levels.