

# THE DIALOGUE

Leadership for the Americas

## POLYANA FERREIRA DE OLIVEIRA

### Featured Alumna

*Current location: São Paulo, Brazil*

*Dialogue Role: Corporate Relations Intern, 2007*



#### **What is your occupation or most recent work experience?**

I own a travel company, Viare Travel. We have a strong focus on responsible travel, working with local communities and providers to welcome travelers from around the world and help support destinations throughout Brazil. With the onset of the pandemic, we paused our operations, and with the help of our local providers, I wrote a book! It is called *Travel to Brazil: The Cookbook*, and it takes the reader on a trip through the country, with stories of and recipes by local travel providers. The idea is to get readers to want to travel to Brazil at some point, by keeping our local providers top of mind, but also to give people an option to “visit Brazil,” from their own homes. It has been incredibly humbling to work on and has brought such great pride and a sort of restoration of self-esteem to myself and my partners on the ground.

#### **What has surprised you most about your career?**

I never really thought I’d be an entrepreneur so early on. Initially I’d planned on developing a solid career in corporate international relations, or CSR. After some time in marketing, I decided to build my own business at 25, and Viare is my third and most successful business to date. One thing that has been consistent, and which actually started at the Dialogue, is that everything I’ve done has involved a high level of intercultural communication and understanding – going beyond simple language skills.

#### **What advice would you give to a young professional?**

Learn to understand your own definition of professional success, and it’s okay if it’s not the same as your peers’. For me, I learned early on I needed flexibility to create, develop and manage my own products and time. I love the impact my work has on others’ lives and other small businesses. Although it would most certainly mean more stability if I had followed through with a career in marketing, I couldn’t see myself feeling as professionally fulfilled.

#### **What was your most impactful Dialogue moment/experience?**

Working at the Dialogue was the catalyst I needed to move to Brazil. At the time, I’d only shared this with a few of my colleagues there, but I was undocumented in the US, and a recent graduate. I didn’t have many career prospects. The opportunity to speak with high-level managers throughout Latin America, including in Brazil, and getting affirmation from them that I would be an asset in the country, was incredibly impactful in starting my career in meu Brasil. Also, working at the Dialogue was just so fun in that it was a very Latin-leaning culture. People actually stopped to take breaks for lunch, we’d go out salsa dancing as a team, and there was very easy access to the directors, which I really appreciated, and made for a most memorable summer in DC!