

May 22, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my colleague, mentor, and friend, Ali Vassigh. Please consider the following a general recommendation that speaks to Ali's abilities as a designer, manager, thought leader, and valued contributor toward a productive, effective, and enjoyable work environment. Should you desire additional details regarding his specific skills or abilities, I will be only too happy to oblige.

I first met Ali in the summer of 2003. A few months later, I accepted his offer to join the User Experience Group at Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor, MI where I worked with him for 16 months. My decision was in no small part due to the initial impression that Ali made on me. He was clearly experienced in the area of human-computer interaction, usability evaluation methods, and product design. His education at San Diego's well-respected cognitive science program, followed by his work experience both at NCR and with his own consulting company granted him a solid foundation for investigating complex problem spaces, recognizing the variables at work, and crafting innovative solutions.

In addition to his analytical skills, Ali exhibited a talent for management and leadership that earned the respect of everyone who worked with him. As a manager, Ali genuinely values the people in his group and understands that the role of an effective and respected manager is to support the people who make up his team. He communicates clearly and often with both team members and upper management, recognizing that expectations, goals, and concerns must be mutually understood. When he encounters inefficiencies, confusion, or inadequacies, Ali seizes the opportunity to clarify, educate, or adapt, as the situation requires. He continually looks outside the organization for opportunities and ideas that hold relevance for his context. In short, he strives to break new ground and pull others along with him.

As a thought leader and visionary, Ali demonstrates a passion and excitement for whatever he is charged with taking on. I have seen him do this equally well for projects and areas of work that he found personally interesting, as well for tasks and activities that were outside his area of expertise or interest. He challenges directives and activities when they are issued without explanation, and by doing so, he ensures that his resources and those of his team are utilized in the most optimal manner.

In addition to his numerous business and design abilities, Ali values having fun and enjoying the time he spends at work. His sense of humor and his efforts at building and maintaining strong social connections with those around him are greatly appreciated by those who work with him. Of course, the downside is that it makes that much harder to see him leave when it's time for him to move on and experience new challenges.

In closing, I would like to endorse Ali's bid for any position he may be applying for in the future. I trust that this letter provides some additional insights into his character and abilities, as experienced by one who has worked both alongside him and for him. I am confident that his success at Whirlpool is only the beginning of a successful leadership career for Ali Vassigh.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Zazelenchuk". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

Todd Zazelenchuk, Ph.D.