



Client Testimonials

Full Length

Note: Although these clients have provided signed written testimonials, it is Stratex confidentiality policy to not make individual names and firms public online. When appropriate, contact information is shared for media interviews or prospective clients reference.

Testimonial #1

Testimonial in Support of Stefanie Smith 10/27/05

I met Stefanie less than a year ago at a Wharton-London Business School alumni event on European private equity activity. I attended the conference because I was pursuing a career shift from the legal to business side of M&A and restructuring advisory. At the time I was a practicing attorney at a large law firm in Boston and also attending the Executive MBA Global program of the Columbia & London Business Schools. Ten months and numerous networking events since, I have joined a top tier investment bank where I am confident that I will gain the skills necessary to complete my transition. Much of this would not have been possible without Stefanie's direct counsel and support.

Stefanie organized the conference, which hosted a very distinguished panel hailing from two top buyout firms investing in Europe. I was very impressed with both the content of the material presented and the caliber of attendees, both of which are directly attributable to Stefanie's foresight, diligence and organization. From the moment Stefanie took the stage to introduce the panel, I knew that it would be in my best interests to meet her and seek her counsel. A few weeks later I emailed Stefanie to introduce myself and explain my career shift. She was quick to respond and has generously acted as my career coach ever since.

Stefanie has had an immeasurable impact on my career transition. She is keenly aware that professional success is predicated upon an accurate matching of personality and temperamentality to choice of profession. Stefanie, through probing and insightful questions, artfully gauged my personality to help me understand how my specific goals, desires, dreams, talents, and constraints will impact my future career. In so doing, she has guided me towards a transition strategy that has accentuated my strengths and minimized my weaknesses.

Specifically, Stefanie helped me fine-tune my resume, cover letters and two-minute pitch. Stefanie's work on my resume has been truly impressive. For example, she helped me reformulate the "legalese" in my resume to actionable accomplishments that resonate with business impact. Indeed, she returned my first draft with more comments than the printed ink on the paper. She diligently examined every word, line by line to truly understand, assess and enhance the message I was trying to deliver. Afterwards, she refused to let me settle on "good enough" descriptions and instead demanded that we work tirelessly until we perfected each item. She helped me present myself in the strongest possible light to my target audience. Potential



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employers were very responsive to my resume – a result impossible without Stefanie’s knowledge and commitment to excellence.

Through diligent networking and follow up, I received a number of investment banking interviews between May-August 2005. Stefanie was instrumental in helping me prepare for my meetings. She made herself available to me at all times. She helped me to reflect critically on each interview experience to find the subtle clues and take always I could use the next time around. We poured over my answers and fine tuned my responses. We created a database of each experience so we could learn from my mistakes and repeat my better responses. We discovered that I was accentuating certain weaknesses and minimizing certain strengths. In no time, we turned this interviewing flaw around, which resulted in an on the spot offer at a marquee, bulge bracket firm. Finally, Stefanie helped me negotiate a very handsome compensation package to jumpstart my new career.

Job transition is extraordinarily time demanding and Stefanie has never failed to timely respond when I most needed her help. Stefanie’s extensive knowledge of navigating murky career issues coupled with willingness to forsake her personal time has been extraordinary. Finally, her willingness to step back and let me go with my gut instinct was equally important. I wholeheartedly and enthusiastically recommend her.

Investment Banking Associate, Top Five U.S. Financial Services Firm, 2005

Testimonial #2

10-9-2004

Re: Experience of executive coaching work with Stefanie Smith

After many years as a corporate manager and then as an investment banker, I decided to continue my career in a corporate environment and accepted a position leading global business development for Victrex Plc. At Victrex, a UK-based publicly-traded speciality chemicals producer with worldwide sales and operations of GBP 80 mil, I focus on international M&A transactions and strategic alliances.

While my investment banking experience provided the financial and strategic perspectives for assessing potential M&A opportunities, I appreciated the major differences between the deal-oriented investment banking environment and the corporate environment at Victrex. Therefore I sought out an executive coach through the London Business School alumni network, and contacted Stefanie Smith.

At Stefanie's recommendation, we first spent time discussing how to make our work most valuable to me. Our initial analysis of the job and how it related to my career path, was an extremely valuable process. Together we defined and prioritised realistic goals in the following aspects: leadership and decision making; immediate operational decisions such as M&A due diligence; communication with various teams and functions; and relationship management within the organisation.

She then tailored a plan to enhance my transition to and performance in my new job. It was important to me that her approach was customized based on my background, workstyle, strengths, and objectives. I also understood that in addition to leadership coaching, she could assist me in executing priority tasks.

One of Stefanie's most impressive qualities is that she proactively established how our progress towards goals could and should be measured in real terms such as financial impact and performance feedback. She maintained ongoing records of our achievements against each objective, and provided me with notes, valuable input and tools along the way. Stefanie's careful progress tracking was absolutely indispensable, as amongst all the immediate issues, I knew I was getting closer towards my goals. This also reinforced my awareness of and confidence in my new skills.

Our work was indeed broader than my original remit: strategic valuation as well as the all-important post-merger integration. Her experience with M&A transactions and dealing with many different functions, from the most senior CEO to all operating levels was to me, was one of the most valuable assets she brought to her coaching, since it enabled her to provide not only objective alternative solutions for immediate issues, but also a high level perspective on the deal.



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As the complexity and quantity of deals increased, I requested an additional resource to provide financial modelling and valuation resource expertise. She brought in an associate, but assumed a managing role coordinating all input and data analysis while providing a strategic-level reality check making sure the details served the purpose.

When we worked on specific deliverables, e.g. presentations for the Board and Joint Venture partners and a strategic framework for target assessments, she maintained our schedule despite the urgent and unexpected events common in M&A. While ensuring concrete results, she continually emphasized knowledge transfer which strengthened my overall leadership abilities.

Given the amount of time I travelled in Asia, often in places where communication was patchy at best, our plans would have been very difficult to implement if not for Stefanie's patience and flexibility. She always found a way for us to execute our meetings and meet deadlines. Sometimes we had back-to-back calls on consecutive days. Sometimes, when in incompatible time zones, we worked effectively through email and document exchanges. If not for her assistance and guidance during those months, I am sure many of my projects would not have finished on time, and to such high standards, which were recognised by both the Board and my boss.

A tangible result of working with Stefanie was that Victrex's Board recognised my contribution to the company and as a result, appointed a mentor, a non-Executive member of the Board, to work with me directly, with the aim of preparing me for more senior roles within the company in the near future.

What impressed me most about working with Stefanie was her overriding attitude that she worked as one team with her client. I had total confidence in her during our coaching and discussed with her the many different aspects of my job, when I needed a sounding board to try out ideas. She was very involved in every project, and always pushed me to achieve the best results I could.

I was very pleased with having worked with Stefanie and certainly respect her very highly as an executive coach, who is great fun to work with (and who likes British tea!). I strongly recommend her executive coaching and consulting services and am available to talk to potential clients.

Global Business Development Manager, UK Public Manufacturer, 2004



Testimonial #3

Re: Service Summary – Stefanie Smith Management Consulting

Date: March 18, 2003

As the Division Manager of Personal Trust Services I faced a daunting task in trying to raise the professional standards of a neglected department. This was especially challenging because having worked with the new Executive Director at a prior institution, I knew his high expectations and was determined to meet them. It seemed impossible given the experience and service level of the existing administration staff and operations support.

Stefanie Smith helped me prioritize actions necessary to achieve the goals outlined below. However, the most valuable service she provided was ongoing executive coaching. Together we set forth leadership objectives linked to real situations, with measurable benefits. Through our work, I changed work behaviors to manage more effectively, both “up” and “down”. During this time, I was promoted from Senior Associate to Vice President and Director.

Executive Coaching: Stefanie noted that both the Executive Director and corporate leaders judged the satisfaction of Financial Advisors as a strong measure of my department’s success, even though it was not delineated in our strategic or performance goals. As a result, I increased our focus on meriting, obtaining, and measuring positive feedback, and “one client at a time” created a more responsive and proactive unit. She also worked with me to build more productive working relationships with male managers by adjusting the tone and content of my communications and conveying the bottom-line impact of positive results. I am more effective and confident in communications with senior executives.

Improved sales program:

Stefanie worked with me and the National Sales Director to integrate trust administration expertise with the sales team’s experience in the field. We achieved three goals which increased revenue, morale, and internal reputation.

First, we redefined our national sales strategy and training objectives. We also created integrated client teams to improve service quality.

Second, we enhanced sales tools supporting best practices. Stefanie solicited ideas from sales managers across the country and revised our Financial Advisor survey to capture valuable input and establish benchmarks. She worked with us to develop more targeted, effective product presentations reflecting audience interests and product cycles. She also introduced an Intranet resource for easy access to customizable information packages and current sales data. The feedback was immediate and positive across regions.

Third, she coordinated sales, legal, administrative, and product expertise to plan and execute a new product rollout across regions. This product attracted \$80 million of assets in the first twelve months after launch.

Enhanced Branch Office Performance: I had hired some high-powered trust officers in my field offices. They were getting very little support from the home office and morale and motivation had suffered. Stefanie provided a sympathetic ear and quickly addressed valid concerns, while



encouraging them to stop complaining and get on task. Demonstrating by working through specific examples, she achieved the general success – more effective problem solving methods. She successfully convinced branch officers to visit headquarters regularly to strengthen contacts and better understand procedures and culture. She also worked with us to define a Branch Liaison role at headquarters, which improved customer service and expedited responsiveness.

Positioned administration to support High Net Worth (HNW) model: Stefanie observed that I had hired the right people, but they were not being utilized to best meet the department strategy of moving to a HNW model. She initiated a program to move higher profile accounts and Financial Advisors to the most experienced Trust Officers to better align resources with revenue streams. Two thousand accounts were moved during 2002, which enhanced our reputation and enabled us to provide higher quality HNW service in 2003.

Training programs: I had access to professional resources for training, but lacked the time to organize a comprehensive program. Stefanie helped put together a first-class training week as well as months of follow-up classroom and walk-through programs. Better technical training and market updates increased the Trust Officers' confidence, knowledge, and self-reliance. Applied training made them more productive and increased the level and value of interaction with senior managers and the service quality delivered to Financial Advisors and clients.

Operational reporting and profitability: Stefanie recognized that to improve quantifiable profit and production goals, Trust Officers required more accurate and timely investment management information. She led sessions to develop reports based on system capabilities and our experience. Data which previously arrived monthly in printed format is now updated daily and available online. Our team can now maintain tighter financial oversight by reviewing accounts daily, rather than monthly. We can now take action promptly and proactively. This decreased potential liability and increased account management revenues and profitability.

Job Descriptions: Stefanie met with my staff and after determining my needs, created critical job descriptions to keep staff on-track and clarify roles and expectations. This allowed us to evaluate our real staffing and development needs and increased productivity by articulating revenue and operational priorities within job responsibilities.

Technology Improvement: Stefanie quickly determined that we could only move ahead if we enhanced our technology. Her suggestion of hiring a technology consultant was at first disregarded by senior management but later adopted. Her associate is now an integral part of major strategic initiatives within the company.

The combined effects of organizational, operational and IT improvements has been powerful and recognized. As Stefanie would say, we have created “positive momentum” for the future.

Vice President, Top Global Investment Bank, 2003