

**W**hen Bruce Robertson's business partner of 14 years, Gabriel Shweiri, left BGI Worldwide to become a full-time college professor, Robertson worried that his lack of leadership skills would inhibit his ability to fuel the company's growth.

"I needed to become a more approachable leader," says Robertson, Managing Partner of BGI Worldwide, a global shipping leader based in Long Beach, Calif. "I hung leader-

ship on Gabe for 13 years because he was a very approachable person and very easy to deal with.

"I wasn't."

Robertson didn't know where to turn. Then one day a friend suggested a business coach. He started looking and found Steve Smith, Founder and President of GrowthSource Coaching in Lake Forest, Calif.

"A perfect match," Robertson says.

*By Rick Weinberg, Editor,  
California Business Journal*



## *Catalyst For Change*

***Steve Smith of GrowthSource Coaching has emerged as a well-respected business coach through the utilization of sophisticated tools and his innate ability to see what's wrong inside of a company -- and how to fix it.***

Not only did Smith coach Robertson on how to become a more approachable and effective leader, he also guided Robertson through implementing a series of new processes across the company that enabled it to triple its margins.

By virtue of the remarkable success Smith's clients achieve, along with his innate ability to see what's going wrong inside a company and his utilization of some of the most sophisticated tools and processes, he has emerged as a leading and well-respected business coach.

"I'm a good problem-solver but if you're less approachable, or if people are afraid to come to you with information that's challenging, you're less likely to be able solve those problems," Robertson says. "Steve helped me recognize and overcome my lack of people skills."

What Smith did for Robertson is commonplace.

Just ask Kristin Topping, co-owner of MAC Flooring in Mission Viejo, Calif. Topping and her husband, Grant, launched their business in their garage. They struggled mightily, not just at work but in their home life.

Something had to change or the roof was going to blow off the house.

Enter Smith.

"He's a miracle worker," Topping says.

"Without Steve, we wouldn't be anywhere close to where we are today."

Which is a highly-efficient \$4 million company with more than 20 employees -- and *their own showroom* of more than 2,000 square feet. Moreover, their marriage is flourishing -- and they even have their first child.

What Smith did was help the Toppings identify their strengths so "we weren't stepping on each other's toes anymore," Kristin says. "We didn't have clear-cut roles so we were always nipping at each other."

They didn't have clear procedures or operating plans either. "We were just flying by the seat of our pants," she says.

When they reeled in Smith, darkness, doubt and worry became joy, satisfaction and confidence.

"Husband and wife business teams are very difficult," Smith says. "You're at work for 8-10 hours and then you come home and you're staring at the same person. Not an easy situation. There's no mental break."

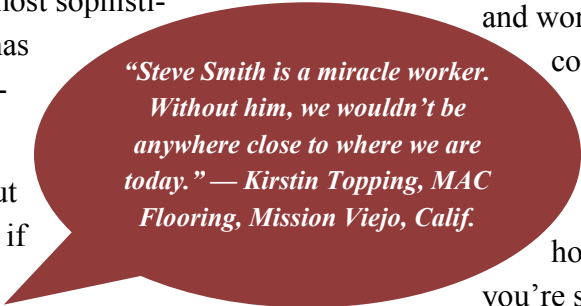
Thanks to Smith, the Toppings overcame it, quite easily in fact, and developed a rock-solid bond of respect and trust that is now unbreakable.

Smith, a Washington D.C. native, had a long and prosperous career in management, sales, marketing and operations for some of the world's most prestigious businesses. Then he hit a crossroad in 2008.

"I knew what I didn't want any more -- the heavy travel that came along with my work," he says. "I also wanted something more purposeful as opposed to chasing numbers all day."

He knew there was something out there that was perfectly designed for what he learned and demonstrated throughout his career -- something that people would pay for. But what?

Suddenly one day, a woman specializing in helping executives locate franchises to buy



*"Steve Smith is a miracle worker. Without him, we wouldn't be anywhere close to where we are today." — Kirstin Topping, MAC Flooring, Mission Viejo, Calif.*

and other franchise-related opportunities, contacted Smith -- unexpectedly. While exploring job opportunities a few months earlier, Smith forgot to uncheck a box at the bottom of a website that asks if you want to receive marketing materials.

"I usually always uncheck those boxes," he says. "This one time I missed it."

That one time changed Smith's life for good.

He listened intently to the franchise consultant Lori Sturm – "and I was intrigued with what she was saying," he says.

As Sturm got to know Smith through skill tests and detailed conversations, she paused one day and said, "From where I'm sitting and from what I'm hearing, there's one perfect match for you," she said. "Business coaching."

Bullseye.

"Considering my background, it was perfect for me," Smith says.

After working with a small coaching franchise for two years, Smith founded GrowthSource Coaching and has been helping business owners and executives improve their organizations ever since.

Smith's clients include everyone from commercial shipping and freight forwarding companies to home-improvement businesses and professional services firms such as doctors, lawyers and CPAs.

The work he conducted with Robertson and the Topping is indicative of the effectiveness of his practice.

"I'm a catalyst for change," he says. "I help clients tune themselves up. I'm a lot like Tiger Woods' putting coach. He doesn't grab the putter and make the putt. He helps Tiger see what's going on and what is causing him to not get the results he wants. That's what I do.

Every business owner or executive wants to improve. Some are just not sure how to get there. They also don't understand what is blocking them, what is preventing them from getting the success they should have. I help them overcome that."

One of Smith's most popular tools is a management dashboard that measures all the vital organs of a business – small, medium or large. For Robertson and BGI, this dashboard is the heartbeat of the organization.

"We call the dashboard Steve helped us create our 'Vital Factors Report,'" Robertson says. "We always thought we had a clear vision, but we never documented or measured it. We talked about it a lot, but didn't know how to implement it."

The dashboard identifies the top six areas a CEO needs to look at every day, including top-line revenue, sales performance, new accounts acquisitions, operating costs, cash flow and profit margins. If all the areas are in the specific range as determined by the client, the process is working. The moment one area goes 'red,' that's where all the attention is focused in order to identify and fix the problem.

"This system is our accountability factor," Robertson said. "We use it in everything we do, in every decision we make. It's been a wonderful process and tool for the company."

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