



Goldsmith poses before a portrait of a favorite Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, whom he studied under in France.

Man with a Mission

AT HOME WITH
EXECUTIVE COACH
MARSHALL GOLDSMITH

My first meeting with an executive coach was nothing like I had expected. On my drive up that Tuesday morning, I had imagined a stiff suit and tie. A gentleman's office lined with mahogany built-ins and leather chairs. A bar with crystal decanters and an antique globe. Maybe even a putting green in the corner.



CLOCKWISE from top left: Marshall Goldsmith, wife Lyda and Beau get some exercise in a neighborhood park near their home in Rancho Santa Fe. SOME of the 22 books Goldsmith has written or co-written are displayed in his den. WIDE STEPS descend to the swimming pool.

THE GOLDSMITH STANDARD

"Everything I try to teach is positive, simple, focused and fast," says Marshall Goldsmith of the approach he takes with every executive. "If it's not positive, simple, focused and fast, they simply won't do it." His principles aren't difficult, and, in fact, can be applied to everyday life for even the most average Joe. Goldsmith's new book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* (co-written by Mark Reiter) is due out in bookstores in January. If you can't wait, visit www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com where you'll find a wealth of free materials, such as:

- Articles, including "To Help Others Develop, Start with Yourself" and "Helping Successful People Get Even Better"
- Links to articles in *Workforce Performance Solutions* magazine
- Videos of Goldsmith applying key concepts
- A sample of his newsletter

Instead, inside a cozy Tudor-style house in Rancho Santa Fe, one of the world's most recognized coaches and I spend part of the morning gazing through a magnifying glass at an embroidered portrait. Like appraisers, we analyze the fine threads that make up the porcelain-like face of a beautiful Chinese woman.

"Isn't it ridiculously nice," says Marshall Goldsmith, author of 22 books, coach to 70 executives and presidents of companies such as American Express and Boeing, and, most recently, the man behind the name of the new school of management at Alliant International University. "Just look at her eyes, her eyebrows, the skin on her

is the former CEO of the Girl Scouts, and has done a lot of books with me. The lamp was \$25,000 back then, and she said, 'Buy it, buy it.' I thought, 'Gee, \$25,000?' But I did it, and have bought many since then so now my house is filled with old lamps."

As we pass a shelf filled with books he has written, been quoted in or co-authored with other industry greats, I expect Goldsmith to abruptly end the tour and turn our attention to his coaching career and leadership philosophy. Instead, I have only a moment's pause to jot down titles like *Global Leadership: The Next Generation* and *The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching: 50 Top Executive Coaches Reveal Their Secrets*, before he whisks me off to another room to look at a more modern piece of art: the Tribal Council stick given to his daughter Kelly when she was voted out of the CBS reality show, *Survivor Africa*.

"The tribe has spoken!" Goldsmith announces with a laugh. "That was so neat to watch her on the show. And now she has a full scholarship to get her PhD in behavioral marketing at Yale. So, yep, Daddy's very proud of her."

The tribal stick is just one of numerous artifacts in Goldsmith's home that symbolize friendships, elicit memories of experiences in faraway places, or pay tribute to his practice of Buddhism. In almost every room a Buddha stands, sits or contemplates.

One is made of dense ironwood, others are of stone, and all have varying poses and gazes. Each pose represents a different phase in Buddha's life. Similarly, each token displayed in the house represents a particular stop in Goldsmith's walk through life — including a new leather-bound Koran received from clients in Saudi Arabia, a plaque from U.S. General Ken Shinseki in appreciation for Goldsmith's volunteer work with the military, or, one of his favorite Buddhist icons, a ritual bone trumpet made from the thigh bone of a 16th-century monk.

"It is the most bizarre and interesting thing we have in the house," he says. The rest, he explains, he added to the collection based on the simple premise of buying things he likes: old paintings and other items with history. In the kitchen is an Italian painting he bought in Poland; in the upstairs guest rooms are paintings from Prague and France; and in the living room is an old handwritten Koran in a case made by hand from camel bone. He picked it up in Morocco, along with an urn.

While Goldsmith has his pieces appraised regularly, he approaches his collection with the same easy manner he applies to life. "A friend analyzed the paintings in this place and came up with a theme: There's a good ol' guy usually drinking, a religious figure, or a guy trying to pick up women. I guess other than the different landscapes in each one, there certainly is a pattern," he says, his self-effacing laughter as contagious as his optimism.

One piece of work not on display is an enlarged black-and-white photograph of him and Lyda. Unlike the "good ol' guy" theme carried through the oil paintings, this portrait depicts a very different man: a dark mass of hair covers what now is mostly a bald head and thick sideburns run down a younger face. "This, of course, is a very distinguished photo that cost only 25 cents," Goldsmith says upon finding the photo in a storage room. "Who are those fine people anyway? When Lyda brought me home, do you think her mom could tell I would be an executive coach someday? 'Oh my god!' she must have thought, 'it's Charles Manson's son!'"

It's an image of Goldsmith most wouldn't conjure today, but he doesn't hesitate to share stories of his adventures as a hitchhiker. In fact, in the early '60s, Goldsmith hitchhiked a lot. That's how he journeyed approximately 10,000 miles over two months, with only \$60 in his pocket and a \$6 sleeping bag. It's a far cry from the way

face. Every color gradation is a different thread. It's absolutely amazing."

I suppose he could be administering some sort of behavioral analysis test — gauging my depth perception and ability to reason based on my reaction to an ancient work of art. Or maybe my take on the portrait will influence his decision to let me into his inner circle. Goldsmith is known, after all, to work only with CEOs that pass his criteria, not the other way around. But it takes only minutes to realize that the man recognized as one of the nation's top 10 executive educators by *The Wall Street Journal*, and one of the 50 great thinkers and business leaders by the American Management Association, is merely an easygoing guy who happens to really, really like art.

"This is the most valuable thing in the house," Goldsmith says, stopping at an original Tiffany Studios lamp as we continue touring the two-story home he shares with wife Lyda and dog Beau. "I bought it in New York when I was with my friend Frances Hesselbein. She



he travels today. His coaching career has earned him 8.8 million miles on American Airlines, dinners at six of the top 10 restaurants in Paris, and trips to 60 countries.

"I'm lucky," Goldsmith says when asked about his success. "I've met people who have helped make me successful, and I simply love what I do. I think it's fun. When you love what you do, you don't mind working. People like me, we work until we die."

It doesn't hurt that he gets paid well for it. There is a six-month waiting list for his services. He works only with executives who truly want to change. And he has a money-back guarantee — offering to return his fees if his client doesn't feel that he or she has changed for the better. One of his clients, Mark Tercek, managing director of Goldman Sachs & Co., had this to say in response to his work: "My wife and kids stand up and applaud Marshall for helping me become a better husband and dad." With feedback like that, Goldsmith doesn't have to worry about not getting paid.

Coaching, however, is only his second love. The first is teaching, which he does approximately 185 days a year. "Teaching is what I enjoy the most because it's fun, it's entertaining," he says. "Coaching is where I learn the most, and writing is what I enjoy least but has the broadest impact." Today, he does a bit of all three on the Marshall Goldsmith Library Web site (see "The Goldsmith Standard"), where, to date, visitors from 139 countries have viewed, listened to, or downloaded 344,580 articles, columns, interviews, webinars, audios, videos and resource pages. It's another accomplishment Goldsmith is quite proud of; the other is the school named after him: The Marshall Goldsmith School of Management at Alliant International University. Alliant is a California-based school with campuses in San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Fresno.

Its Alliant Mexico is the only university in Mexico authorized to offer all of its programs in English. It also runs a program to train psychologists in Japan.

"How many people have colleges named after them who didn't pay \$20 million?" he says. "I'm very excited about the school, and am lucky that the leaders I work with are the nicest people in the world. I asked 30 of them to sign up to help with the school, and 30 said yes."

Goldsmith's focus is to build the pride and reputation of the school. He is not on the board of trustees, nor does he attend faculty meetings. Instead, when he's not engaged with clients or speaking in another country, he spends time with students either at his home or strolling around a nearby lake — with Beau leading the way, of course. Oftentimes, he and Lyda host dinners for students and friends, creating opportunities for students to meet and learn from the nation's leading chief executives and other thought leaders.

"Although our house is big, it doesn't seem like a museum," Goldsmith says. "It feels like a home should. It's a warm, friendly place for people to meet."

During his down time, Goldsmith spends time visiting his grown son and daughter, reading and traveling "anywhere in the world for free." And if you're wondering what the coach of top executives does to keep himself in top form? He checks in with his own coach every night.

"Want to know what he asks me?" Goldsmith urges. "Every night he asks, 'How many push-ups did you do today?'" As if he hasn't celebrated enough milestones, Goldsmith's next goal is to do 400 sit-ups and 40 push-ups every day. Of course, today, he already has done 370 sit-ups and 37 push-ups, meaning he'll have to come up with another mountain to climb really soon. ■