

Testimonials:

Diana Gabriel, Professional Coach

STRENGTHS FINDER TESTIMONIALS

When Diana first introduced me to the StrengthsFinder assessment I thought, "oh great, another personality assessment that will tell me something about myself, that I won't remember the profile for or be able to use on an everyday basis." Wow...was I wrong. The moment I got my top 5 strengths back it was clear to me this was different. Having others reflect on my strengths and observing them in myself helped me grow very comfortable with the Strengths and knowing how to play to them. After they became part of me, the next step was to embed it within the culture of our organization. Strengths identification and utilization are a part of everyone's profile...we use it as a tool to help us be sure the right person is playing the role that optimizes their strength. We've even mapped out everyone's strengths as a way to engage a particular strength (regardless of role or title) if it isn't at the table. It not only helps us understand how we interact with one another but collectively allows us to produce a better result for our members and constituents.

Jonathan G. Zierdt
President & CEO
Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.

From the moment I first heard about the Strengthfinder's program, I was excited to learn more about my personal strength themes and bring that same sense of discovery to the leadership team in our organization. Fortunately we heard about Diana Gabriel, a certified professional coach and expert in the Strengthfinders program, who we brought in to help our team start building an organization based on gifts and talents. Diana did a fantastic job of defining our unique leadership gifts and providing us the tools to move our organization forward, not from a position of weakness, but a position of existing strength. We cannot thank Diana enough for helping us discover our own uniqueness and how our personal gifts can be make a difference at

Pathstone Living.
Jennifer Pfeffer
Director of Operations Pathstone Living

As Dean of Economic Development at South Central College, I am charged with leading a team of individuals who provide knowledge, skills and strategies to help area business, industry and public service entities improve profitability and productivity. As a new leader in the field, I had researched best practices and discovered that I needed some help to establish a clear vision and mission and to define our divisional goals and processes. Each team member completed the StrengthsFinder assessment exercise and Diana facilitated discussions about how our team member's strengths could be utilized to help achieve our vision, mission, and goals. As a result of our experience with Diana, we are able to select members of our team that are naturally suited to address the process and improvement issues we are undertaking. It makes it so easy to take on extra work when you are doing something that utilizes your strengths. We are making progress thanks to Diana's work with our team.

Marsha Danielson
Dean of Economic Development
South Central College

Diana has also worked with our organization on implementing the "Strengthsfinder" process. We have found it to be an incredibly helpful tool as we continue to work on culture change, process improvements and making sure we have the "right people on the bus and in the right seats," as Jim Collins would say!

Our first engagement with Diana was with a customized training and coaching program lasting several months that she and a couple of her colleagues offered to our executive staff. Without exception, my colleagues reported back to me that it was an enlightening and worthwhile experience.

Beth A Lewis, President & CEO
Augsburg Fortress
Minneapolis, MN

LEADERSHIP RETREATS TESTIMONIAL

I was blessed to be a part of a series of retreats on leadership and personal coaching with Diana Gabriel.

Our leadership classes were priceless. In the multiple gatherings we dove deep into conversations about the work of leading an organization. We learned much, developed deep treasured relationships and were equipped to serve our organizations more effectively. The lectures, reading and discussions gave us a chance to reflect deeply on our selves and our callings as leaders. The multiple gatherings gave us a chance to go deep together and deepen our understanding of ourselves. There are no silver bullets but one leader says there are "silver buck shot that make a difference." The time invested in the coaching and leadership classes did and continue to make a difference for me and the synod I serve.

In order to serve the mission of the synod, I developed greater clarity about what parts of this work, I need to delegate.

JA, Executive
Minnesota

FACILITATION TESTIMONIAL

Diana was a true catalyst for our process in developing the vision for our organization. She has a tremendous capacity to listen deeply, understand the interpersonal dynamics of a group, and engage everyone in a thoughtful way that moves you to the collective goal. Her ability to engage people at a professional and personal level is a tremendous resource for any organizational leader who seeks to encourage the best from a colleague, committee or team.

Gene Crume
President
Indiana State University Foundation

LEADERSHIP RETREATS AND EXECUTIVE COACHING TESTIMONIAL

Coaching was the last thing I was looking for. This was an "expectation" for my new position as bishop of the Alaska Synod. I came in resisting the material and felt the additional time away from family and work a burden. I had served as a consultant for six year working with corporate, non-governmental organizations and not-for profits, what was this "new thing" going to provide/

And I am a convert. Diana Gabriel was willing and able to walk with me through this first year experience as bishop. I participated in group retreats and regular individual coaching sessions. Gaining clarity about self and differentiating role from expectations helped provide new avenues to living into the position.

The challenges of this ministry were "legend": traveling 200 days that first year away from home, 70 hour work weeks, multiple crises due to long-term unmanaged problems, relational disconnection with pastors and congregations, and a financial picture with not many options. Setting goals that helped manage the variety of needs and expectations was exceptionally difficult. Living into the goals then set felt more like fantasy. I believe the coaching allowed me to see the challenges, set reasonable goals and move into accountability with myself. It was not some program or standard prescription, but one-to-one coaching and group retreats that proved valuable in gaining insights to find a more reasonable balance to the work.

I highly recommend Coach Diana Gabriel as resource to others who are seeking to move forward into new ventures and new ways of living and balancing life, work and relationships.

Pastor Michael Keys
Bishop, Alaska Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

EXECUTIVE COACHING TESTIMONIALS

To Whom It May Concern:

From age 8 to 18 I was blessed with a variety of sports coaches. All of my life I have been fortunate to be surrounded by mentors, guides, and leaders. I have sought to be a life-long learner. In 2006 I was elected as bishop of the Grand Canyon Synod (Arizona/Southern Nevada) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America after 23 years serving in two congregations as a parish pastor. Shortly after being elected I was informed that all of the newly elected bishops would be joining a group of executives from our church's publishing house for a series of Executive Coaching retreats. I was not an eager recipient of this additional commitment to an already over-extended schedule. God has a way of providing what you need even when you don't think you need it.

Prior to engaging in the executive coaching I was left to my usual resources of family, friends, and associates. These had served me well in the past. However, the coaching component began to help me truly reflect on my leadership style and the personal strengths or attributes I brought to all of my relationships. For most of my life I have been in accountable relationships, but the coaching process with its homework, reading and one-on-one sessions allowed me to decide what areas and what strengths I wanted to develop. Rather than dread the time required to my coaching sessions I grew to anticipate and look forward to applying the principles, receiving feedback, and addressing real-time issues. The main benefit of the coaching was simply the reworking of my priorities to bring some semblance of balance back into my life as it applied to my family relationships and personal well-being. Six months after completing my coaching retreats I underwent unexpected open-heart by-pass surgery. The lessons from my coaching sessions and rehab have radically changed how I view my professional responsibilities and manage my schedule.

My ten one-on-one sessions with Diana were always open for me to direct and address what I felt I needed at the time. Diana was non-judgmental, encouraging, affirming, and willing to share, but never push insights and strategies. She was excellent at touching upon and referring to previously discussed lessons. She is a strong proponent of finding balance among mind, body, and soul. I know, as I did following my rehabilitation from heart surgery, she is a willing resource. I would recommend her as an executive coach.

In Christ's Service,
Stephen S. Talmage
Bishop

"Working with Diana was great. She helped me identify my leadership strengths and find ways to use them to maximize my value to the organization as I transitioned into a new role with greater reasonability."

VP Non Profit

"I wasn't sure I knew what I was seeking. I was successful, but still feeling turmoil, or at least uncertainty, about how to make the most of my life. I was in a quandary about my options, and how to make strong, long-term decisions about my professional future.

I also wasn't sure about what the coaching process was like. I didn't understand the territory we would cover.

The results? Self understanding. Clarity.

I came to understand myself in a way that helps me make clear decisions. I'm more confident and able to build cultures of trust as a leader.

The biggest surprise is that the days when I was most overwhelmed and least ready to engage in a coaching session, tended to be the most fruitful conversations. The questions, and the altered way of seeing my circumstances and related feelings, stuck with me.

I don't fight myself, and I've examined faulty assumptions that previously caused internal struggles about my options. I have a clearer sense of who I am as a leader, and who people need me to be as a leader and colleague."

Michael A. Miller, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Diana has been my coach for nearly seven years. When I began coaching, I was interested in exploring whether or not I wanted to continue the work I was doing – and if not, then what? In exploring this question, and others since, Diana has helped me to make conscious choices and to look at the values and goals behind those choices. She's also helped me to uncover assumptions that I make—those automatic leaps—that are grounded in anger or hurt feelings. The results of my coaching experience are that I am happier and more productive. In coaching terms, I am "living in better alignment with my values." In my terms, it means that I don't practice arguments in my head, I don't tell myself that I can't accomplish something, I blame others a lot less, I blame myself a lot less, and I enjoy myself much more. I've gone on a dream vacation, redone my house, repaired my relationship with my mother, turned difficult professional relationships into neutral and even rewarding ones, and engaged in a sustainable and satisfying exercise program. Sometimes as I face an issue, I consider what question Diana might ask me. This reflection helps me to look at the situation more clearly, and to make a choice more consciously. It always helps. And that's why I continue to invest in coaching with Diana—the process of coaching and the professional relationship with Diana continue to help me live, be and choose on a daily basis.

HigherEd Administrator

The coaching process helped me reflect deeply on my goals for life and the way I was living in the blurrrr of every day. The process created space to look at my life and dream of how I might live and serve in a more fruitful way. I needed to make adjustments so that I might be a better steward of my gifts, my time and my energy. My goal continues to be living more of my life in the sweet spot of my gifts and passions. I continue to work on that while surrounding myself with people who carry gifts that I do not. The coaching process gave me tools that I continue to use, helped me focus my energy, slow down into a more sustainable pace and make adjustments in the swiftly changing context of my service.

JA
Minnesota

Seeking to gain clarity regarding my career path, I enlisted the support of Diana Gabriel. While I had not previously worked with a coach, I had heard from a friend of mine about her success in working with a life coach. Diana encouraged and challenged me to identify my dreams and goals as it related not only to my professional pursuits, but also my personal endeavors. Her gentle, supportive style empowered me to reflect on and put into motion what was truly important. I am grateful for her wisdom and insight and have recommended her to others who desire to grow and move in the direction of their dreams and goals.

Jill Stranton
Associate Dean of Students of Residential
Academic Programs
Washington University, St Louis

I have had the privilege of experiencing Diana Gabriel's many gifts since 2007. She not only provides helpful one-on-one executive coaching for me on a regular basis, but has also done so for other members of our executive team. She has been an excellent sounding-board as I have worked through some very challenging decisions related to our strategic planning process, board development/engagement and some difficult personnel decisions. I always find that she asks the hard questions, pushes me to make timely and rational decisions, and yet is always affirming and supportive.

Diana has also worked with our organization on implementing the "Strengthsfinder" process. We have found it to be an incredibly helpful tool as we continue to work on culture change, process improvements and making sure we have the "right people on the bus and in the right seats," as Jim Collins would say!

Our first engagement with Diana was with a customized training and coaching program lasting several months that she and a couple of her colleagues offered to our executive staff. Without exception, my colleagues reported back to me that it was an enlightening and worthwhile experience.

I have recommended Diana to several other executives who lead organizations in the not-for-profit sector and will continue to do so. Her intelligence, expertise and warmly engaging presence make her a superb executive coach.

Beth A Lewis, President & CEO
Augsburg Fortress
Minneapolis, MN

This experience is about the alignment and focus of your best attributes and values toward the goals of your present and future.

Working with Diana is not about fixing what's wrong with you. It's about remembering your strengths and returning to your core values. Diana's help allowed me to focus on my true values, align them with the goals and actions in my life, and move forward in achieving those future goals while appreciating the deep value of living in the present.

Diana helped me see the difference between saying I value something and truly living what I value.

I came to Diana to fix what wasn't working in my life. She refocused my energy into enhancing what is right in my life. It gave me the freedom to be comfortable with myself and develop consistency and confidence in living out what I really value in life.

Each one is a separate thought unit and stands on its own. Additionally, each one is true.

Thanks so much for your help, Diana. Every day I use what you helped me to discover and celebrate about the life I'm living. Be well.

Dan Jordet
Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

My coaching story...My interest in a professional coach came from a desire to "find my next gear." I felt as if I was doing fine serving the organization and community, however, I felt like I could be better, that I had more to give. Prior to engaging Diana I had only heard about the impact of professional coaches...so I was anxious to experience the results first hand. Diana engaged me in a process of self-assessment, value understanding, and dialogue that really did enable me to get more from myself. Diana introduced me to the Strengths Finder assessment and for me that has been wonderfully enlightening. I am so excited about the way that it has permitted me to understand how my natural gifts can show up, and how to recognize and incorporate the same in others. Professional coaching, like other coaching, is an important activity in helping anyone that craves the opportunity to improve to do so...I'm on a continual quest to be as helpful as I can in my work and interactions and Diana's coaching helped strengthen the base from which I act.

President of Non Profit
Minnesota

"Working with Diana was great. She helped me identify my leadership strengths and find ways to use them to maximize my value to the organization as I transitioned into a new role with greater reasonability."

VP Non Profit

Diana Gabriel was my Professional Coach for six months several years ago and now she is a confidante and friend. My coaching began as part of an inner calling to become more assertive and effective in my role as a CFO. I found Diana through the personal growth articles that she authored in the "Womeninc" magazine. After my initial meeting with Diana, I was intrigued and signed up for on-going sessions. During those sessions, we'd discuss my goals and values and how they lined up with my professional career goals and personal life. Diana gave me reading assignments and homework that kept me focused, motivated and challenged. Over the course of six months, I began to understand myself better, appreciate my gifts and acknowledge my strengths. Diana was inspirational and I found the coaching process to be uplifting and rewarding. The positive results were a new-found confidence in my abilities and a secure, positive self-image that helps me to be an effective leader. My goals now include developing and encouraging others to embrace their gifts and to believe in themselves the way that Diana inspired me.

Tami M., CFO
Mankato, MN

Working with Diana through the process called coaching has been an enlightening and enlivening experience. I went to her with a specific goal in mind, to ascertain whether or not I should consider becoming a coach and how best to pursue such a venture. Diana kept me focused, shared the world of coaching with all its pro's and con's and was an invaluable colleague on this journey. With her as my sounding board and guide, I delved headfirst into an extensive training process (CTI).

I have greatly profited from her feedback, encouragement and perspectives and have enjoyed our partnership immensely. I have now completed the formal training, have a number of clients in my chosen area (higher education) and am in the process of creating a coaching-mentoring model geared towards "up and comers" in higher education administration.

Diana stresses the "whole" individual and, in the process, lifts up values, accountability, possibilities, strengths and vision. I believe I am a more aware human being thanks to our time together. I definitely know and understand myself, more fully, through a different set of lenses.

Ralph H. Wagoner, PhD
President, Lutheran Educational
Conference of North America

Professional coaching has been valuable in ways workshops and seminars cannot be. With the coach's guidance, I have been able to examine assumptions and perceptions of my work, myself, and relationships with others. I've also set goals and established concrete actions to reach the goals in consistent and continuing behavior.

Kay Olson
Publishing
