

Letter of Recommendation for Steve Smith

I have used Steve Smith as a consultant on an aerospace project for two years now. When I first funded him, I was looking for application specific knowledge that the rest of my project team lacked. I have used a number of consultants over the last 15 years, and like to choose those with a proven track record, and generally some sort of national recognition among their peers. Steve, through Smith & Co, had created and manufactured 29 proprietary adhesives, sealers, and paints over a period of 30 years. I had bought some of his products in the past and they were really superior. So, I expected a lot of capability from him. However, my expectations were substantially exceeded. My team was working on a problem that required the development of a new material with properties that had yet to be completely defined or understood. We initially thought Steve would just be the “material developer guy”, We quickly discovered that Steve was much more. With his impressive knowledge base for both physics and chemistry, he quickly became our principal investigator. Not only that, when we funded Steve we funded Smith & Co. So, we benefited from the speed and agility of a small manufacturing company for rapid prototyping to quickly try new ideas. Some of you reading this are probably thinking “Heck, I know places that fit that description”. Indeed, I do too. Even at my work site, we have over 6000 engineers and scientists, with a huge amount of graduate degrees and experience, and several hundred laboratories. However, Steve doesn’t fit the standard definition of just another smart guy. He is a most prolific thinker, and the rate and consistency with which his mind processes various issues for solving a problem is quite amazing. His mind seems to be on fast track all the time. He has been inventing, developing, and manufacturing products for more than 30 years, and he has a broad knowledge of all aspects of that game. He is also backed up by some real intellectual horsepower at Smith & Co. Combined with Steve’s very obvious insatiable love of science, he is not just multi-talented, he is incredibly talented. He is a very good team player, and is quite skilled at interacting with other technical professionals. He is a good person to have as a consultant, but Steve brings so much to the table that the term consultant seems to be rather inadequate.

The paragraph above dwells a bit on Steve’s talents, though if he had told me that himself before I knew him, I wouldn’t have believed. So, what kind of person heaps praise on Steve? I’m a 62 year old engineer who has spent his whole life working in the aerospace industry, with the exception of the 10 years in college and grad school to pursue electrical engineering, geophysics, and management science. Steve Smith is one of the most uniquely talented individuals I have ever met. That’s not praise; that’s a fact.

Bill Rollins, 11/19/07