



## Testimonials

**Name:** Deborah Mei  
**Position:** Managing Director  
**Company:** Morgan Stanley, Investment Banking Division, Asia  
**Programme:** Mont Blanc Traverse, 2006

### **Why did you do your challenge?**

I knew someone who had been on a “because it’s there” trip the year before and had really enjoyed his programme. This acquaintance had tried to get to the top of Mt Blanc twice and failed. So was delighted to finally make it with BIT. However, it wasn’t the performance track record that appealed to me. It was the fact that “because it’s there” took people like myself, with little to no experience, and enabled us to have an experience that we would otherwise not have done or even thought about.

### **What were your objectives?**

I saw this as a way of getting fit, spending time with friends, and doing something “out of the ordinary” with my summer. Frankly, I am not someone who is typically an ‘outdoorsy’ person, but I’ve always been up for trying new things and I like the idea of challenging myself in general. Ice axes, crampons, harnesses and nights in mountain huts could not have been further from what I am used to.

### **What did you achieve through the process?**

I had never been on a high mountain before, and certainly not hiking through snow or ice. As mentioned, I am not much of an outdoor person though I recognize the value in these sorts of challenges. I certainly surprised myself that I was able to achieve what we did - the second day in particular - all uphill, all on snow and ice (or rock!) - phew! At one point we stopped, and in whatever direction you looked, it was snow - that’s it, just snow and it seemed to go on forever... Exhausting just to think about it! Nonetheless, today when I’m faced with a challenge, I can say to myself: “If I can cross the Mt Blanc range, I can certainly do this”.

Prior to the trip, I did a six-week training program (it was supposed to be 12-weeks, but I did the typical double-up-in-half-the-time programme!). I took it seriously, frankly more out of fear than anything else - didn’t want to hold back the team - and so hired a private trainer at the gym, did pilates every weekend, and took early morning hikes up my hill every weekday, even in the rain! Again, all of this was a true novelty for me - yet it felt amazing. I even gave up smoking, just knowing I simply would not survive a hike without full lung capacity. Didn’t miss it a bit and still don’t!

Basically, the whole experience - from preparation through to the actual event - was inspiring. I demonstrated to myself that if I wanted to change things, improve things, or accomplish something - that I could!

### **Did your programme have a positive impact on your work?**

Yes, in an indirect way. Preparing for and achieving such a challenge just made me feel better about myself, physically and mentally. Indirectly, that has to have an impact, not only on your work, but on your life, and sense of well-being.

### **How has your programme had a lasting impact?**

The hike was an experience, and one that I will forever remember. It’s not just the pride of achievement, it was gorgeous, it was exhilarating, and it was truly a bonding time with good friends (literally bonding, we were tied together for half of the hike). I would almost characterize it as a spiritual experience. You simply cannot hike through the mountains and not believe that there is a higher being. The mountain ranges, the crevasses, the expanse of snow, and the relative insignificance of man in such an environment - it takes your breath away. The experience will stay with me for a long time, and I am truly appreciative of ‘because its there’ for giving me the opportunity to see beyond my normal range of vision and experience.