



## MICHAEL R. SMITH

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### PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Michael R. Smith is an industry leader and proven business, marketing, and risk management consultant with 26 years of experience designing and developing award-winning aerial adventure parks and 30 years of experience delivering adventure-based tours, adventure programs, and team and leadership development programming. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Wilderness Leadership from Prescott College (1998) and a Master of Training and Development from Oakland University (2004). He has worked with numerous Fortune 500 companies as a business consultant, authored and published climbing guides, worked as a Field Instructor for the Outward Bound School, and is regularly retained as a zip line and adventure park expert witness.

Smith is the principal and founder of AdventureSmith, Inc., a niche consultancy focused on marketing, business consulting, risk management, and staff development systems for the aerial adventure market. Ranging from the publication of climbing guides to the development and maintenance of an online directory designed to track the growth of the zip line market, AdventureSmith, Inc. has been active in business development and marketing strategies and has provided support to many commercial and non-commercial challenge courses, zip lines, and aerial adventure parks in the U.S.A. and Canada. Through AdventureSmith, Inc., Smith offers risk management planning through technical inspections, operation reviews/audits, staff training, accident investigations, expert witness reporting, and the development of custom operating manuals, safety handbooks, and emergency action plans.

From 2009 to 2023, Smith served as founder and President of ArborTrek Canopy Adventures, LLC, an aerial adventure park operator headquartered in Jeffersonville, Vermont. During his tenure, ArborTrek was recognized with the following accolades:

- 2021 10Best "10 great things to do outdoors in New England this fall," *USA Today*
- 2020 & 2019 10Best Readers' Choice Award for "Best Aerial Adventure Park," *USA Today*
- 2017, 2016, & 2014 - Listed as One of the "10 Best Zipline Courses in the USA," *USA Today*
- One of the "World's Coolest Zip Lines," *Travel + Leisure*
- 2012 Editor's Choice for Best of New England, *Yankee Magazine*
- "One of the Coolest Places to Go Zip Lining in the World," FoxNews.com
- "One of the Best Wilderness Zip Line Tours in the U.S.," *Outside Magazine's Adventure Advisor Blog*
- "10 Thrilling Zip Lines Around the World," *The Weather Channel*
- Five-star user rating for ten consecutive years, *TripAdvisor*
- 2016 Excellence in Tourism Promotion, *Upper Cumberland Business Journal*

Smith oversaw all business functions at ArborTrek Canopy Adventures which included but was not limited to the design, development, and operation of zip line canopy tours, aerial adventure parks, climbing adventures, and traditional challenge courses, including high and low ropes challenge courses, group initiatives, and adventure-based team building programs.

Before founding ArborTrek Canopy Adventures, LLC, Smith was employed by S.T.E.P.S., Inc. (1994 – 2009) in various positions ranging from challenge course facilitator to organizational development consultant to Director of Special Projects. Founded by a group of professionals in education, treatment, and organizational development who shared a common interest in the benefits of adventure education, S.T.E.P.S., Inc. grew to be the largest provider of adventure education services in Southeastern Michigan. In 2005, S.T.E.P.S., Inc. became an early leader in the U.S. and Canada's emerging zip line canopy tour market. During his 15 years at S.T.E.P.S., Smith trained hundreds of facilitators and guides, designed and developed more than 14 commercial adventure parks and dozens of traditional courses in the U.S.A. and Canada, consulted on numerous commercial and traditional projects, and oversaw the delivery of programming to more than 200,000 participants. Projects he helped bring to market have served an estimated 2.5+ million participants.

Other relevant experience includes four extended summers as a mountaineering and field instructor for the Outward Bound School, swift-water and high-angle rescue training, emergency response, technical rock guiding, mountaineering, tree climbing, and experience designing, leading, and evaluating organizational development interventions and change processes. Smith currently serves as Board Secretary for the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) and previously served in the following roles: ACCT Board Member (2014 to 2017), and the ACCT Accreditation and Certification Committee (2019 to 2023). Smith is a participating member of ASTM F24.61 sub-committee, which oversees the development and maintenance of ASTM F2959 Standard Practice for Aerial Adventure Courses. Additional areas of expertise include expert witness consulting; technical inspections of zip lines, aerial adventure parks, and traditional challenge courses; program audits; staff training; and the production of custom operation manuals and documents. He is adept at publication design and layout, graphic design, illustration, and web development.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AdventureSmith, Inc. – Rochester Hills, MI – <https://adventuresmithinc.com> 2000 – present  
**President/Owner**

- Control all business operations, including supervision of employees and subcontractors
- Provide business-to-business services to established and prospective aerial adventure park and canopy tour operators, including business planning, site feasibility, market research, operations management, course design and layout, curriculum and program design, operation audits/reviews, course inspections, and staff training
- Create custom operation manuals and safety handbooks
- Engage in expert witness and loss control consulting projects
- Founded and developed ArborTrek Canopy Adventures into one of the top-rated aerial adventure courses and zip line canopy tours in the United States from 2009 to 2023

- Created and moderated Zipline Nirvana, a community resource for zip line canopy tour and aerial adventure park enthusiasts, that tracked the growth of the market from 2008 to 2018
- Researched, authored, and published "A Climber's Guide to Prescott, AZ," a 114-page route guide providing technical information and photo topographs of adventure climbing routes in the local area

ArborTrek Canopy Adventures, LLC – Jeffersonville, VT – <https://arbortrek.com> 2010 – March 2023

**President/Owner**

- Controlled all business operations, including supervision of 30-50 seasonal employees and 6 to 9 full-time, year-round employees
- Developed award-winning marketing campaigns ranging from traditional print design to interactive displays to pay-per-click advertising
- Responsible for strategic planning and brand growth through product systemization, research and development, standardization, and partner relations
- Coordinated risk management and compliance activities, including staff development, emergency action planning and response, and policy development
- Delivered zip line canopy tour and aerial adventure experiences to the general public and organized groups

S.T.E.P.S., Inc. – Ann Arbor, MI

**Director of Projects, Marketing, and Installation Standards & Compliance**

2000 – August 2009

- Commercialized and marketed internal management and training systems to create an external consulting business focused on the needs of challenge courses and zip line canopy tours
- Initiated and directed the transformation of the company from a local, single-site challenge course management company of limited services to a nationally recognized provider of challenge course services ranging from adventure programming to challenge course design and installation, staff training, and business development consulting
- Developed operating practices, documentation, and training systems for zip line canopy tours, aerial adventure courses, challenge courses, and climbing programs
- Co-authored "A Facilitator's Guide to Adventure Challenge Programming", a customizable ropes course facilitation manual, and "A Guide's Guide to Canopy Tour Programming", the first comprehensive manual aimed at managing canopy tour operations in the United States
- Developed the Joe Dumars' Team and Leadership Center and consulted on the development of numerous other experiential education programs and zip line canopy tours throughout the United States and Mexico, providing business consulting, program design, operational systems, and staff development services
- Conducted external review of operations for dozens of experiential training and canopy tour operations, assessing risk management strategies, training systems, and program effectiveness
- Designed and implemented a web marketing strategy on a limited budget that was responsible for increasing challenge course construction sales by more than 1200% in the first year

**Director of Corporate Training**

1998 – September 2006

- Provided project management and program coordination for the delivery of one-day and multi-day experiential education programs that consistently achieved repeat business and high ratings

- Negotiated long-term and short-term training contracts with local and national corporations, including General Motors, DaimlerChrysler, KPMG, Ernst & Young, and Kmart

#### **Challenge Course Facilitator/Trainer**

1994 – May 2008

- Instructed adventure-based team workshops for more than eight hundred professional groups, school groups, and community organizations
- Designed and delivered custom teacher education workshops focused on incorporating adventure education and experiential education into school curriculums
- Led multi-day challenge course and zip line canopy tour training programs focused on risk management, technical skill development, group dynamics, industry standards, and accepted practices

Outward Bound – Redmond, OR – <https://nwobs.org>

Summer 1999 – 2004

#### **Field Instructor/Chief Instructor**

- Responsible for designing and delivering 14- to 30-day whitewater rafting, mountaineering, and backpacking trips in Oregon and Washington aimed at fostering an appreciation for the natural world, leadership, and character development. Student demographics ranged from age 14 to adult professionals
- Managed course progress and instructor development through ongoing mentoring and in-field coaching sessions
- Provided site and risk management for high-impact adventure activities, including Class IV paddling in whitewater rafts, oar rigs, and paddle cats, rapid swims, rock jumps, alpine and rock climbing (fixed-line, top rope and lead techniques on rock, snow, and ice), rappelling, peak ascents, cave descents, student solos, and night navigation exercises.

## **EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS**

- **Master of Training and Development (MTD), Oakland University, Rochester Hills, Michigan, 2004**  
Intense focus on human resource development and organization change initiatives using instructor-led and web-based delivery platforms, instructional design techniques, and evaluation practices; concentration in the use of experiential-based training and development in teaching lean manufacturing practices.
- **Bachelor of Arts, Wilderness Leadership, Prescott College, Prescott, Arizona, 1998**  
Emphasis on risk management in multiple high-adventure environments including but not limited to alpine and rock mountaineering, challenge courses, vertical rope rescue, whitewater and flatwater paddling, and remote wilderness environments, breadth in socio-cultural studies.
- **Graduate, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), Lander, Wyoming, 1997**  
Leadership development, small group dynamics, and expeditionary travel in alpine mountain, vertical rock, and desert canyon environments.
- **Undergraduate Coursework, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1993-1994**
- Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Level II Professional Inspector Certification – #5173920 exp. 03/30/2025



- National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO) Level II (advance) Certification – #CN-4890 exp. 03/31/2026
- Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Qualified Operation Reviewer – #2123201 exp. 03/31/2025

## TRADE ASSOCIATIONS & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- The Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT), Business-to-Client Member (since 2004)
  - ACCT Board Secretary (02/2023 to present)
  - ACCT Accreditation Procedures Task Force (04/2023 to present)
  - ACCT Accreditation and Certification Committee Member (10/2019 to 02/2023)
  - ACCT Board Member (02/2014 to 02/2017)
- National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)
- ASTM International, Member
  - ASTM F24.61(Adventure Attractions) Subcommittee Participant
- Professional Ropes Course Association (PRCA), Individual Member

## SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- Smith, Michael R. (2016). Challenge Courses, Zip Lines, and Aerial Adventure Parks: A historical primer and examination of current trends and statistics. Self-Published.
- Smith, Michael R. (2016). How Sound is Your Operation? Adventure Park Insider, 2 (2), pp. 28-34.
- Smith, Michael R. (2015). Preparing for Program Accreditation. Association for Challenge Course Technology: Parallel Lines, 15 (4), pp. 8-9.
- Smith, Michael R. (2015). Why I Don't Have a Zip Line in My Backyard. <http://www.zip-lines.com>, October 26, 2015.
- Smith, Michael R. (2015). Three Steps Operators Should Take Now to Improve Program Quality and Reduce Risk. Association for Challenge Course Technology: Parallel Lines, 15 (3), pp. 8,15.
- Petrozzi, Mark St. J. & Smith, Michael R. (2015, February). Managing Risk. Adventure Park Insider, February 2015.
- Smith, Michael R. (2004). A Facilitator's Guide to Adventure Challenge Programming. Detroit. Self-Published.
- Smith, Michael R. (2000). A Climber's Guide to Prescott, AZ. Detroit: Self-Published.

## SELECT PRESENTATIONS

- Smith, Michael R. & Haras, Kathy. "Emergency Brakes! Emergency Brakes! Emergency Brakes!" Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Oklahoma City, OK. 2024.
- Smith, Michael R. "ACCT Operation and Training Standards" Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Oklahoma City, OK. 2024.

- Smith, Michael R. & Stover, Lori. "Training Requirements for Accredited Operations." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Portland, OR. 2023.
- Smith, Michael R. "Guide Training Models for Commercial Operations." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Cleveland, OH. 2022.
- Smith, Michael R. "Training Competency Models for Commercial Operations." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Denver, CO. 2019.
- Smith, Michael R. "Preparing for Program Accreditation." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Lost Pines, TX. 2016.
- Smith, Michael R., Azram, Bahman, & Jacobs, Keith. "Panel Discussion on Aerial Adventure Parks and Zip Lines." Ski Area Management Summer Ops Conference. Camelback Mountain Resort, PA. 2015.
- Smith, Michael R. "Consolidate This." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Orlando, FL. 2014.
- Smith, Michael R. & Stock, Donald. "Riding the Wave of Adventure." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Las Vegas, NV. 2013.
- Smith, Michael R. & Holmes, Gene. "Physics of Zip Lines." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Boston, MA. 2012.
- Smith, Michael R. "Current Trends and Statistics: Zip Line Canopy Tour and Aerial Adventure Parks." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Boston, MA. 2012.
- Smith, Michael R. "Trends and Statistics: Zip Line Canopy Tour and Aerial Adventure Parks." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Minneapolis, MN. 2011.
- Smith, Michael R. "Staff-based Competency Models for Challenge Course Operators." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Portland, OR. 2008.
- Smith, Michael R. & task force group. "Canopy Tour Task Force." Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) Conference. Portland, OR. 2008.
- Jacobs, Keith & Smith, Michael R. "Marketing 101 for Adventure Educators." Association for Experiential Education (AEE) Heartland Regional Conference. Illinois. 2005.
- Smith, Michael R. "Low Prop / No Prop Group Initiatives and Adventure Games." Association for Experiential Education (AEE) Heartland Regional Conference. Illinois. 2005.
- Smith, Michael R. "Low Prop / No Prop Group Initiatives and Adventure Games." Association for Experiential Education (AEE) Heartland Regional Conference. Missouri. 2004.
- Smith, Michael R. "Adventure-based Consulting – An Approach to Developing Personnel during a Shift to a Lean Manufacturing Environment." Oakland University School of Business/Pauley Institute. Rochester Hills, MI April 2004.
- Smith, Michael R. "Games Trainers Play." Training and Development, Oakland University. Rochester Hills, MI 2004.
- Smith, Michael R. "Low Prop and No Prop Adventure Games for Socials Workers." Michigan Social Workers Conference (MASSW). Grand Rapids, MI. October 17, 2003

## EXPERT WITNESS AND COURT/DEPOSITION TESTIMONY

- DIANNA McLEAR, Plaintiff, v. GO APE BEMIS WOODS, LLC and GO APE USA, INC dba GO APE ZIPLINE AND ADVENTURE PARK, and JACQUELINE OTTO, Defendants – Illinois 2024 – *Retained by counsel for the defense.*
- ZAIDEN A. BELTRAN, a minor, by and through his Guardian ad Litem DAVID BELTRAN, and MARIO BELTRAN, Individually, Plaintiffs, v. U.S. NATIONAL WHITEWATER CENTER, INC., U.S. NATIONAL WHITEWATER CENTER LP, MECKLENBURG COUNTY, and MECKLENBURG COUNTY PUBLIC FACILITIES CORPORATION, Defendants– North Carolina 2023 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- ANNA SCHOOLCRAFT AND WILLIAM SCHOOLCRAFT, individually and the marital community, Plaintiffs, vs. CANOPY TOURS NORTHWEST, LLC, KRISOFFERSON FARM, L.L.C., Defendants – Washington, 2020 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- ANTHONY BRADLEY, Individually and as the Administrator of the Estate of MITZI WESTOVER, Plaintiff, v. LOUISVILLE MEGA CAVERN, LLC, et al., Defendants – Kentucky, 2021 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant.*
- MOBLEY, Plaintiff, v. STONEY CREEK, LLC, Defendant – Alaska, 2019 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant.*
- APRIL DODGE, Plaintiff, v. GRAFTON ZIPLINE ADVENTURES, LLC and MICHAEL QUINN, Defendant – Illinois, 2016 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant, Grafton Zipline Adventures, LLC*
- JOSEPH P. LITTLEJOHN, Plaintiff, v. TIMBERQUEST PARK AT MAGIC, LLC AND CORPORATE CHALLENGE, INC. D/B/A ADVENTURE MAS, Defendants – Vermont, 2015 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant, TimberQuest Park at Magic, LLC*

## EXPERT CONSULTANT, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION & REPORTING

- PAMELA CLARK, Plaintiff, v. ACTION ZIPLINE, INC., et al, Defendants – California 2024 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- ERICK RUVALCABA, Plaintiff, v. ACTION ZIPLINE, INC., et al, Defendants – California 2024 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- CONNOR WISE, Plaintiff, v. David Stoneking, Defendant – Texas 2024 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- MICHAEL GREGORY and DEANNA GREGORY, individual and on behalf of ZAIDEN GREGORY, Plaintiffs, v. PHILADELPHIA INSURANCE COMPANIES, d/b/a PHILADELPHIA INDEMNITY INSURANCE COMPANY; TEUFELBERGER FIBER ROPE CORPORATION, d/b/a TEUFELBERGER; JOHN DOES I-X, Defendants – Arkansas 2024 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant.*
- DIANE CALHOUN, Plaintiff, v. RED RIVER GORGE ZIPLINES, LLC and NATIONAL CASUALTY INSURANCE COMPANY, Defendants – Kentucky 2024 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- HOLLY POVISH and BRYAN POVISH, Plaintiffs, v. AERIALAD LG, LLC and WEST BEND MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY, Defendants, ACCO BRANDS CORPORATION CONSOLIDATED HEALTH AND WELFARE PLAN, Subrogated Defendant – Wisconsin 2023 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff.*
- JACQUELINE MONDRAGON, Plaintiff, v. TROSER AIERAL PARK, LLC d/b/a BRISTOL MOUNTAIN AERIAL ADVENTURES, TROSER MANAGEMENT, INC., COLORADO MOUNTAIN INDUSTRIES CORP., CANOPY

CONSULTING, INC., and UNO PARKS UAB d/b/a UNO PARKS, Defendants– New York 2023 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*, Colorado Mountain Industries Corp.

- NEHA MAHAJAN, Plaintiff, v. JIMINY PEAK MOUNTAIN RESORT, LLC, Defendant – Massachusetts 2023 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- MONICA RINCHE, Plaintiff, v. BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, ALAMO AREA COUNCIL, INC.; and BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA, Defendants – Texas 2023 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- THOMAS LUKKEN, Plaintiff, v. KORBY L. FLEISCHER, individually and d/b/a/ MT. CRESCENT SKI AREA; SAMANTHA FLEISCHER, individually and d/b/a MT. CRESCENT SKI AREA, DOUBLE DIAMOND, INC., d/b/a MT. CRESCENT SKI AREA, Defendants – Iowa 2023 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- AMBER WENZEL, Plaintiff, v. PHILLIP AND KRISTA TREMONTI, Defendants – Michigan 2022 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- O.M., a Minor, by and through DAVID and KAREN MADWAR, her Parents and Natural Guardians, Plaintiff, v. CAMP FRONTIER, INC., A Florida Not For Profit Corporation, Defendant – Florida 2022 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- THOMPSON, LASHANDA, Plaintiff, v. GALAXI FUN ZONE, Defendant – Illinois 2022 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- LAVERNE GRAJALES, as natural parent and legal guardian of M.G., a minor, Plaintiff, vs. EAST COAST ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF FLORIDA, INC., d/b/a TREETOP TREK AERIAL ADVENTURES, and ADVENTURES UNLIMITED, INC., Defendants – Florida, 2021 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- MARK ZMUDY, Plaintiff, vs. NORTHWOODS ZIP LINE, LLC, ET AL, Defendants – Oneida County, Wisconsin, 2021 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- ELIZABETH MARSAW and WILLIAM MARSAW, Plaintiffs, v. EDWARD PLATA, JULIE PLATA, and JULIE PLATA REVOCABLE TRUST, Defendants – New York, 2020 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- ANALYN LEASURE, et al., Plaintiff, v. ADVENTURE FOREST, LLC, et al, Defendants – Delaware, 2019 – Incident Review – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- TRUDGEON, Plaintiff, v. MARGARITA ADVENTURES, LLC, Defendant – California, 2019 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- PAULEY CURRY, PLLC – West Virginia, 2018 – Incident Review – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- KAID, ATIYYAH, Plaintiff, v. NY Party Works, Defendant – New Jersey, 2018 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- JENKINS, LILAH by PNG JENKINS, DAVID, Plaintiff, v. STALVEY, et al., Defendants – New York, 2018 – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- ALEX POSTHAUER, Plaintiff, v. Hawaiian Falls, Defendant – Texas – *Retained by counsel for the plaintiff*.
- MARY FUNT, Plaintiff, v. CLP OKEMO MOUNTAIN, LLC, Defendant. – Vermont, 2017 – Accident Investigation and Case Review – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- WHITNEY REARICK and DAVID REARICK, Plaintiffs, v. LEGACY MOUNTAIN ZIP LINE, LLC, Defendant – Tennessee, 2016 – *Retained by counsel for the defendant*.
- LOUIS RIZZO, Esq. of Reger, Rizzo, Darnall, LLP – Delaware, 2016 – Accident Investigation and Report – *Retained by the counsel for the adventure activity operator*.