

Vistage Florida Member Saves Lives with Sterile Electronics.



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- Brad Whitchurch, Vistage Florida member

A USA Today story was a wake-up call to Brad Whitchurch, who was working as a manufacturer's rep for a company trying to get into the U.S. retail market with its washable computer keyboards.

"A clinical study had shown that the average keyboard had more than 400 times as much bacteria as a public toilet. My phone started ringing off the hook but then I realized that what I was selling wasn't engineered for hospitals — and that's where the market was."

Borrowing against retirement funds, credit cards, and loans from friends and family, Whitchurch started Seal Shield in 2006 to target the medical industry where 100,000 people die from hospital-acquired infections every year.

Seal Shield was an immediate success because the demand was there, but rapid growth caused major problems, he said. "We were increasing sales every year, but still losing money, until I met (Vistage chair) George Robbins. He made a casual comment that wasn't directed specifically at me but hit home: 'You need to fire underperforming employees, cut unprofitable customers, and raise prices every year.'"

That advice was so important to Seal Shield's turn-around that the company now has four employees who are

members of other Vistage groups. "We can absolutely see that joining Vistage pays for itself."

With revenues at the 10-year-old company approaching \$20 million, Vistage continues to help Whitchurch navigate the challenges of a rapidly growing company. "A lot of entrepreneurs feel like their experiences are unique but many Vistage members have seen those exact issues and have already overcome them. As a Vistage member, you learn about best practices that really work so you don't need to travel the 'trial and error' route."

Whitchurch's long-term goal is to be the one-stop shop for anti-infection products, beginning with a new "electroclave" mobility management system — think autoclave for tablets and cell phones -- as hospital workers move away from the traditional computers and keyboards.

Lessons learned from speakers at Vistage meetings are being incorporated into Seal Shield's corporate culture, including a program on Ownership Thinking where Whitchurch invited the speaker back to make a presentation at the company retreat. "I learn so much from the guest speakers," he said. "I almost always take away something that impacts my company or my team."

And Robbins is delighted to be part of a company that is saving lives. "What we do at Vistage is help CEOs do their jobs better so their customers and employees benefit," he says. "With Seal Shield, it's even more heart-warming because when they do better, they're saving more lives — and we're indirectly helping to save lives too."

About Vistage

Vistage offers professionally facilitated peer programs for Florida CEOs, Presidents and Business Owners of both larger organizations as well as emerging small businesses. Members meet monthly in small groups of 12-16 hand-selected members where they focus their collective brainpower on each other's opportunities and challenges, and hear expert speakers. Since 1957 Vistage has been dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and enhancing the lives of CEOs. There are 23,000+ members worldwide — with more than 800 in Florida.

To learn more call Vistage Florida at 800.733.4832 or visit florida.vistage.com

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