

VISTAGE

Member *Stories*

Jaime Gmach, President
Evolving Solutions
Minneapolis

At a glance

Role: President

Industry: IT services and solutions

Employees: 70

Vistage chair: Brian Davis

Jaime: “There's a reason that we are outperforming our peers and Vistage played a part in that.”

Company background

Established in 1996, [Evolving Solutions](#) is a leading IT infrastructure solution provider and business technology advocate for medium to large enterprises throughout North America. The company has deep expertise in designing, building and delivering business-driven technology solutions.

You could say that Jaime Gmach, president of Evolving Solutions and Minnesota Vistage member, spends part of his days with his head in the clouds. That's because his company is in the data business, selling IT infrastructure, cloud and software solutions to many midsize organizations all the way up to Fortune 50 companies. The company's offerings include significant data storage capabilities—including both on-premise and in the cloud—and services like backup and data recovery planning and data center planning.



He explains; “If you're familiar with technology, you know what's happening in this day and age. It's transformation, it's change, it's the cloud. It's all of the things that customers are trying to do to help differentiate their organizations.”

As a systems integrator or value-added reseller, Evolving Solutions partners with technology powerhouses such as IBM, HP, and Cisco. The company has scores of offerings, categorized by solutions, products, and services: a technologist's dream smorgasbord.

Clients have been coming to Evolving Solutions since Jaime opened the doors in 1996 to help them deploy the right mix of mission-critical software and hardware to become more efficient and competitive. “We're not just buying products from manufacturers and selling them to our customers. We are listening to what business problems a customer is trying to solve,” he explains. “We will then create the architecture and design the appropriate solution using products from one of the many companies that we represent and have on our line card.”

Jaime says Evolving Solutions has about 70 employees and \$100 million in annual revenue. His business is going through a transformation along with the rest of the industry, which includes moving from on-premise hardware to cloud and software based solutions. That's one of the reasons Vistage is playing a pivotal role in Evolving Solutions' evolution. "We are reinventing ourselves," he says. And the lessons he's taking away from his Vistage membership are preparing the company for what lies ahead.

Vistage Plays a Pivotal Role

Jaime's been in Vistage for four years now. He says the single biggest benefit has been the opportunity to receive valuable input from business owners and executives outside of his industry. "It's very refreshing," Jaime says. Previous group experience he says has been only with people in his industry. Jaime loves perspective from others outside his industry because "Everyone in our industry does things in a similar manner," he explains.

"I discovered it's more important to have companies of similar size and positioning as us for receiving feedback and analysis of our challenges," he says. "The value comes from ideas outside of our industry."

Over time, Jaime has developed "enduring relationships" with members of his group. Much of this monthly discourse has turned into a collaborative tool that's netted breakthrough ideas.

Ideas have also materialized from the monthly presenters that share business best practices around everything from operations, human resources, marketing, and strategy. He cites Jim Alampi of the consulting company Execution Maximizer as a speaker that left a long-remem-

bered message. "He spoke to us about the barriers to growth that all businesses go through and how to overcome these obstacles," Jaime shares.

Alampi discussed the characteristics of these barriers and stressed that every company goes through them regardless of industry and business structure.

"We're at a point in our growth as a \$100 million company and 70 employees where we must identify the decision-making processes to help us overcome that next barrier to our growth," explains Jaime.

Jaime also said the Insights Discovery presentation—where colors assist in determining communications and working styles—was another memorable message. In fact, Jaime liked it so much; he had others on his leadership go through the exercise.

Employee engagement has "been such a focus area for us," he says. And Insights Discovery will be an excellent tool he and the leadership team can use to understand better what motivates Evolving Solutions' employees. To be sure, every company is trying to master the employee engagement conundrum. "Brian and I talk about employee engagement a lot," says Jaime, referring to his Vistage chair, [Brian Davis](#).

Vistage Chair Brian Davis, Almost Like an Employee

In fact, Jaime says he likes to bounce a lot of ideas off of Brian. "It's almost like he's an employee of Evolving Solutions," he says, except "Brian knows all my strengths and weaknesses." Jaime credits Brian with keeping the size of his Vistage group consistent and staffed with the right mix of leaders and companies. "Brian is an exceptional chair."

Jaime says a key strength of Brian's is his listening skills. "That's just one reason why I get the value out of Vistage that I do," he says. "Brian listens to what the participants want."

Jaime cites an educational and fact-finding trip to Cuba as just one of many "field trips" Brian has organized for his group. The travel, the speakers, and one-on-ones with Brian have all contributed to self-improvement.

"Vistage has taught me to be decisive. I had a tendency to over analyze many decisions. I've learned to validate or take feedback from others on my leadership team, then make a decision and move forward." He says it's not always the perfect choice, but at least you're moving forward.

Apparently, Vistage is also making a difference on the bottom-line. "We are outperforming our peers in our industry," says Jaime. It's hard to put my finger on how much of that is attributable to Vistage. But there's value there. There's a reason that we are outperforming our peers and Vistage has played a part in that." **V**