

VISTAGE

Member *Stories*

Jim Ginther, Managing Director
U.S. Compliance
Minneapolis

At a glance

Role: Managing Director, Co-owner
Industry: Environmental, Health, and
Safety Consulting
Employees: 26–75
Vistage chair: Brian Davis

Jim: “Being a part of Vistage has been instrumental in the success of our company. We grew 12 percent in 2015 and 22 percent this year, and I attribute much of that growth to what I have learned through Vistage.”

Thousands of distribution and manufacturing companies in the U.S. and Canada must be able to navigate sometimes indecipherable environmental and safety regulations governing the industry. These are the weighty issues that keep manufacturing executives up at night. These are also the issues that Jim Ginther and his firm, [U.S. Compliance Corporation](#), deal with every day on behalf of his clients.

Think of U.S. Compliance as an accounting and auditing firm for environmental, health, and safety. Every company in the country must comply with tax laws, and Jim’s clients all must meet thousands of rules and regulations governing environmental and safety.



For companies located in Minnesota, it’s the MPCA, says Jim. “MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control) is Minnesota’s EPA. Minnesota also has its own OSHA for regulating workplace safety laws,” he shares.

U.S. Compliance partners with clients, offering its services using a retainer or subscription model. For a fraction of the cost of a full-time employee, clients get support from a team of experienced specialists, many with masters’ degrees in environmental, occupational safety or related fields.

“We have roughly 60 professionals at the company,” Jim says. While U.S. Compliance headquarters are in Minnesota, he disperses his consultants across 15 states. “We have almost 1,000 manufacturers (most are small to midsize companies) across North America that are clients.”

The company groups its offerings into three categories:

1. Health and Safety Compliance

Fundamentals (OSHA)

2. Environmental Compliance Fundamentals (EPA)

3. Health, Safety & Environmental Compliance Fundamentals (OSHA & EPA)

One Minnesota-based client is Foldcraft, a manufacturing company that produces all the bench seats for Subway stores as well as commercial fixtures for numerous other corporations. U.S. Compliance has worked with Foldcraft's internal health and safety department for 20 years.

Jim says the stakes are getting higher for all manufacturing companies. "There's much more transparency today through big data," he explains. The fines are getting larger for running unsafe work environments. Helping its clients manage risk is a big part of what U.S. Compliance does. "There are more regulations and more severe fines than ever," he says.

Checking Out Vistage

Jim is one of four partners of the company, three are active in managing the firm. His role is similar to a chief executive officer, with the title of managing partner. About two years ago (2014) Jim was encouraged to join Vistage by a childhood friend who was also the CEO of a family business and long-time Vistage member himself. Jim "jumped in the pool" and hasn't regretted a minute of the experience.

In the first few months of joining Vistage, management consultant and professional speaker Jim Alampi made an impression on him. Alampi is widely-known for his Execution Roadmap and the significance of a strategy as fuel for propelling the business.

On the recommendation of his Vistage chair Brian Davis, Jim also began reading Gino Wickman's seminal book, *Traction*, and the Entrepreneurial Operating System™ (EOS), a framework for running a company. Jim says his leadership team decided to self-implement, EOS-speak for integrating the framework into the enterprise. Jim and his leadership team have adopted some of the tenets of EOS and will incorporate others when the time is right.

Another lesson Jim has drawn from Vistage speaker Michael Allosso is how to deliver helpful feedback to employees. He calls it the TSP technique, for truthful, specific, and positive., and the key idea is to build relationships with your people and earn the right to provide constructive feedback by providing frequent "TSP" doses of feedback.

Like many Vistage members, Jim often returns to the office with a deluge of ideas he would like to try at U.S. Compliance. "They call it the Vistage hangover," he says. "You come back from these monthly meetings with great ideas, but you have to be focused. My goal is always to come away with one or two ideas a month."

Jim says that accountability comes from his one-on-one meetings with his Vistage chair, Brian Davis. Following the group's monthly meetings "Brian and I always talk about what did I gain from the meeting and have I done anything with what I learned? He brings a level of accountability for me." As an owner in the business, Jim's responsibility is to the company and the leadership team.

One would say that Jim has extracted a lot of value from his Vistage membership. So much, in fact, that he has joined an offshoot of his Vistage group called the Champions group. The

Champions group is made up of Vistage members from many Twin Cities' Vistage groups who have considered the organization a great investment in time and money and would be willing to become an ambassador for the brand, of sorts. As a Champion, Jim, has become a valued resource to other Minnesota Chairs and their members in need of his services.

Jim has also turned to more than one of his fellow Champions to help him manage the growth of U.S. Compliance. A senior leader at Pivotal Advisors—a sales consulting company—is providing Jim with business development and sales advice. Through the HR and finance consultancy Salo, Jim is “leasing” a part-time CFO. It's also been a lucrative arrangement for U.S. Compliance: several manufacturing firms are looking to his business for environmental and safety consulting services.

Vistage Membership and Company Growth; Is There a Connection?

When Jim thinks about the flood of information, ideas, connections and new friends he has made in the past few years with his Vistage membership, he's unequivocal in his response. “Being a part of Vistage has been instrumental in the success of our company. We grew 12 percent in 2015 and 22 percent this year, and I attribute much of the growth to what I learned through Vistage.” **V**