

# VISTAGE

## Member *Stories*

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Kristin Dennewill, President  
Denamico, Inc.  
Minneapolis

### *At a glance*

**Role:** President

**Industry:** Digital Marketing Agency

**Employees:** 1–25

**Vistage chair:** Brian Davis

**Kristin:** *“I look forward to every time we meet. Everybody challenges and pushes each other just to become better, and make better decisions.”*

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In the early 1900s, department store magnate and marketing savant John Wanamaker mused, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don’t know which half.” Well, fast forward a century into the age of big data and cutting-edge marketing practices, and you’ll find that business leaders no longer must guess at which advertising is wasted - they know.

One such company making a name for itself in this new age marketing universe is Minneapolis-based [Denamico](#), an inbound marketing agency that serves both business-to-business and business-to-consumer companies. What’s different about Denamico, and similar firms, compared to advertising in Wanamaker’s time, is smart companies leverage technology and terabytes of data to motivate and influence buyers as they travel a path that industry insiders refer to as the “buyer’s journey.”



In effect, Denamico builds measurable marketing programs that turn strangers into leads and customers. Those visitors visit the modern equivalent of Wanamaker’s store, a website. Denamico helps companies create marketing strategies, build websites and dynamic initiatives such as content marketing programs. The more people a company can attract to its website the more chances it has of converting visitors (leads) into a customer. In inbound marketing parlance, the goal is to increase website traffic and boost conversions.

The company name “Denamico,” in fact, is a play on the Spanish word “dinamico,” which means dynamic, says the company’s President, Kristin Dennewill. Kristin’s husband, Brendon—also Denamico’s president—founded the company in 2009. Kristin joined the firm in 2011 after she completed a longterm consulting engagement with McKinsey & Company in Madrid. “We started this business when we were living in Spain, and then we relocated to Minneapolis in 2012. I grew up here [Minneapolis], but I had been gone for almost 20 years,” she shares.

From the start, Kristin says, “Our goal was to be able to help small- and medium-sized businesses be more effective with their digital marketing, and get a better ROI for their marketing dollars.” Better ROI and more accountability have also become less complicated for marketers with technology advances and sophisticated marketing automation applications. One such application is the fast-growing inbound marketing app called Hubspot.

### **Certified Hubspot Partner**

Denamico is a certified Hubspot partner and will recommend the software to clients if they feel it can help achieve the client’s marketing, growth, and business goals. But before Denamico’s team ever suggests marketing solutions they first spend a lot of time listening to the customer’s business challenges. “We start where the need is greatest,” says Kristin. “Part of what we do is educate our clients on how marketing strategy and technology coalesce to create results. How much do you invest in marketing? How much is too much? How much is too little?” she explains. Denamico wants its clients to equate the dollars they are investing with their growth goals. The two are inextricably linked. “I think after our customers have worked with us they start to understand that,” Kristin observes.

One of Denamico’s core values is to be 100 percent transparent with its clients, which fosters extreme trust between the agency and customers. Trust is indeed important to Denamico. “Everybody has been burned by one marketing agency or another at some point in their company’s history,” says Kristin.

Denamico’s formula seems to be working: the firm started with three employees in 2012 and quickly grew to its current cadre of seven, which

includes a content strategist, video producer, project manager, inbound strategist, social media manager and a marketing automation expert. This year Denamico will add a full-time business development manager to help the firm meet its aggressive growth targets.

### **Vistage as an “Advisory Board”**

Kristin is also quick to credit her Vistage membership as a continuous source of ideas and inspiration that have conspired to help grow Denamico since she began working with chair Brian Davis in 2015. She says the monthly meetings give her a chance to have business-focused discussions with “bright people who have superb experience. Everyone is actively trying to grow their businesses and become better leaders,” she says. “These are the conversations you can’t have with your neighbors.”

She likes the honest feedback she receives from fellow leaders, likening the group to an advisory board. “It’s not always things you want to hear. It’s what people think you need to hear,” Kristin shares. The speakers also bring tremendous value to her Vistage membership. Dr. Gustavo Grodnitzky spoke to her group about millennials and what employers need to know about what motivates and interests this next generation of business leaders. “The speakers I think for me have been really helpful,” she says.

When it comes to leadership within her Vistage group, Kristin credits her chair Brian Davis for establishing a culture that’s positive and open to everyone’s ideas and input. It’s an environment that’s ideal for learning and the sharing of experiences that provide lessons for all the members. Also, “Brian’s a good leader; he always finds ways to ask questions that get to the heart of the issue in a non-confrontational way,” she says.

Every monthly Vistage meeting features at least one member who presents a business issue they are trying to solve. Kristin says, “Issue processing helps you understand all the different perspectives on any particular issue.” But, “Even if it's not me processing an issue, I always still learn something.”

That diversity comes from people in the roles of CEOs, senior marketing leaders, CFOs, and operations executives representing multiple industries.

### **Champions Group Membership Expands the Value of Vistage**

Kristin’s enthusiasm for Vistage and how the group “elevates everyone’s game” also motivated her to apply and be selected to join Minnesota’s Vistage Champions group of about 14 members. Champions are Vistage members who partner with Vistage Minnesota Chairs to promote the value of the Vistage peer advisory experience and expand Vistage membership throughout Minnesota. Together, champions and chairs create opportunities for over 300 Vistage members in the area.

Champions’ meetings happen less frequently than regular Vistage meetings and usually consist of an evening out with dinner and a member presentation, questions, and a lively discussion. “Champions is a real opportunity to meet more business leaders that we, in turn, could help by encouraging them to join Vistage,” Kristin says. Becoming part of the Champions program was also a way for Kristin to meet more chairs, meet more company leaders and help more people become aware of Vistage.

Moreover, getting involved in Vistage, and the organization’s Champions group has led to a marked return on investment for Kristin and Denamico. “I look forward to every time we meet. Everybody challenges and pushes each other just to become better, and make better decisions,” she concludes. **V**