VISTAGE

MemberStories

Lucinda DuToit, VP of HR
Digineer
Plymouth, Minn.

At a glance

Role: *Key executive*
Industry: *Business & tech. consulting*
Employees: *76-150*
Vistage chair: *Brian Davis*

Company background

Located in Plymouth, Minn., [Digineer](#) is an information technology company that specializes in business and technology consulting. Digineer provides management consulting, information management, and software development services to companies in a variety of industries, including health care, marketing services and specialty insurance. The company employs 145 professionals—dispersed at client sites and at locations in Minneapolis and New Jersey.

Digineer competes with the likes of IBM and Accenture, but because of its smaller size and unique business methodologies it drives business results that result in more impactful ROI for their clients.

Lucinda DuToit is the VP of HR for Digineer, and a two-year Vistage Minnesota member. She joined Vistage at the invitation from her boss, CEO Michael Lacey, and a long-time Vistage member himself. Lucinda is in the key executive advisory board chaired by [Brian Davis;](#) it's reserved for GMs, COOs and senior leaders running functions

of companies in the $25M – $200M range. Lucinda feels fortunate that she has VPs from sales, marketing, engineering, finance, IT and manufacturing, along with several COOs in her group to challenge and broaden her thinking and sharpen her decisions.

Lucinda has been managing Digineer's Human Resources function for eight years, joining the fast-growing (a Fast-50 company two years running) IT consulting firm not that many years after the company was launched.

Lucinda manages a staff of eight professionals in a mix of HR generalists who oversee culture, leadership pipeline management, hiring, benefits and training functions of the 145-person firm with offices in New Jersey and Minneapolis. "Our role [in HR] is giving our employees the tools to help them grow in their career paths and to better serve our clients—and that means constant training," said Lucinda.

Most Digineer employees are consultants with technology and business expertise in vertical markets like healthcare, financial services, marketing, specialty insurance and manufacturing.

Most companies have the same problems

"I wasn't sure what to expect," remarked Lucinda, when asked about her initial experiences with Vistage. "I joined to get a better understanding of how other leaders in different functions operate, and to give back, myself." She's the only HR executive in a group of approximately 15 leaders in finance, marketing, IT and operations functions. "We have a well-rounded team to bounce ideas off of," she said, adding, "I want a broader view of business, not just my functional view, and Vistage allows for that."

After two years working with her Vistage group members Lucinda has found that most companies "have the same problems." Each month, members can take turns vetting issues they share in confidence with the group. Members chime in with advice and suggestions, and many times, add a whole new twist on an issue. "It's nice to get an opinion from someone who is not mired in the details of your business so they can look at an issue objectively," shared Lucinda. "When I'm wrestling with a decision at work I can air it with my peer group, but not with people I work with," she observed.

Moreover, accountability to other members is the thread that holds Vistage groups together. "You make commitments to the group and you better follow up," Lucinda said. Emails are often exchanged between members, too, in a constant flow of communication outside of the regular meetings. But it's the monthly meetings, and the chance to process issues, that keeps members coming back. "If I miss a time, I'm disappointed," said Lucinda.

Renowned speakers

Her monthly meetings with group members always feature a renowned speaker, which Vistage chair Brian brings in. Following the comprehensive 60–90-minute presentation, group members share thoughts on how the topic will affect them and their businesses. Lucinda ticked off a string of presentation topics she referred to as "multiple gems," including emotional intelligence, Traction and macro-economic mega trends. "You get exposed to speakers you would have to pay thousands of dollars for on your own," said Lucinda, plus, "I hear someone condense information for me that I don't have to read 20 books to learn!"

Recently, a presentation that stood out focused on how to work with employees representing multiple generations (i.e. generation X, generation Y and baby boomers). "It taught us how each generation thinks differently about their work, their life and what they expect from each other," explained Lucinda. These insights into managing people in a multiple-generation culture were communicated to all managers and supervisors at Digineer. As an HR leader, Lucinda said it's important for her to understand what motivates people to perform at top levels.

Indeed, employee engagement is critical to the performance of any company, and thanks in part to what she is learning and implementing from Vistage, engagement is up and turnover is down at Digineer, Lucinda reported.

Even though she is out of the office for a full day each month with Vistage, it's a day she looks forward to with high anticipation. And part of what makes those days invigorating is her Vistage chair, Brian. "Brian's been a wonderful chair," said Lucinda. "He's a phenomenal facilitator—keeping us on track during our meetings. He

knows when to step into the discussion, and knows when to pull someone into the discussion as opposed to just letting them sit out.

Lucinda said she trusts him and admires Brian for what he's accomplished in his own career. And perhaps the best part: "We can contact him anytime—he never says no to anyone."

When Brian is leading our all day meetings she said, "It's a chance for us to reground, and most execs need this. It pushes you to do things differently and outside your comfort zone." And most of all, she said, "I love to learn." *V*