

VISTAGE

Member *Stories*

Mark Peterson, Lead Designer and Owner
MA Peterson Designbuild, Inc.
Edina

At a glance

Role: *Lead Designer and Owner*
Industry: *Residential Design, Build, Remodeling Small–Large*
Employees: *40*
Vistage chair: *Clayton Schwerin*

Mark: *“I know I’m a better leader today because of Vistage.”*

As a 19-year-old college student, Mark Peterson began his second summer working for a small remodeling contractor to earn money for his college tuition. The first day back on the crew was not like the summer before, stuffing insulation, cleaning up junk, etc. His conversation with his boss on day two confirmed his suspension: “Sorry Mark, you’re low man,” replied the foreman. His response: “Well then ... I quit,” Mark said, adding, “I’m going to start my own company.”

That inauspicious launch of MA Peterson Designbuild was in 1979 which grew to 75 employees in 2008 with three divisions. Today, the highly-awarded firm is a preeminent home design, and build remodeler that primarily serves the Twin Cities metro area, but also serves out-state and out-of-state client’s homes. Mark says his company brings a “creative focus” to the marketplace. Their projects are “high quality, and



high value,” in his words. Although MA Peterson designs and builds homes—the largest, a multi-million dollar masterpiece—most of the work the company does is interior remodeling work (kitchens, bathrooms, owner suites, etc.) from small to large, and additions to existing homes.

Mark calls the small remodeling work “RefreshRepair projects.” RefreshRepair by MA Peterson updates outdated homes that need “refreshing” and “updating” such as new cabinets, countertops, floor finishes, paint, windows, doors, exterior work, etc. from small to large projects.

He loves to design and build, a fact disclosed through his job title—lead designer and owner—where he eschews the traditional titles of office, like CEO. To scroll through the company’s website galleries featuring redesigned great rooms and other projects is like leafing through *Architectural Digest*. The examples feature stunning, elegant designs crafted from the finest materials. “We’ve won dozens and dozens of design awards, both locally and nationally. And we’ve been featured in many national and some international magazines,” he shares, but most of

the work they do is well designed functional changes to homes that work well for their homeowner's needs.

Besides himself, Mark has a creative experienced design and build team. Customers like working with MA Peterson because of the company's unique, collaborative approach. "We draw and design with my clients," he says. "We engage our clients in the creative process as we sketch and design together, helping our homeowner's create designs with our team versus going back and forth with numerous meetings" explains Mark. "It makes for an extremely user friendly process and superior end-product."

He explains that homeowners contact their team with a problem they'd like to have solved. Ironically, he says, everyone has design ideas hidden inside just waiting to be drawn out. "It's our job to help our homeowners discover designs that speak to their needs and their hearts," Mark says.

MA Peterson is a fully integrated design and build team which employs design professionals, project managers and carpenters. Fifteen years ago Mark took the unprecedented step to create an in-house cabinet shop because the company was challenged finding high-quality cabinets built on time and within budget, as well as creating a landscape team to put the finishing touches on the homes they remodel.

Vistage as a Learning Tool

Mark's circuitous path to Vistage came about when he met Clayton Schwerin, a customer who hired MA Peterson to remodel his home. As it turned out, Clayton was also a Vistage chair who formerly owned a construction company. Mark had been thinking about joining a peer group and

liked the fact that Clayton had similar industry experience to his own. "I believed that Vistage would be a great complement and learning tool for our company," he says.

In recalling his first experiences with Vistage after joining the peer group nearly four years ago, Mark says his most profound realization was how much the people care about one another. "The individuals in the group brought a lot of wisdom, experience and caring," he says. "These people, myself included, all wanted to help each other improve."

Mark realized over time that he was honing his decision-making skills. "When we would have an issue to process, or a speaker, I was learning how different people make decisions." He's also broadened his knowledge in numerous new areas, such as marketing. "I wasn't aware of some of the things you can accomplish with social media," he shares. Now he sees how social media and other new marketing tactics can work in his business.

Champions and Vistage: "Life's About Relationships."

Because of his positive experience with Vistage, Mark accepted an invitation to join Minnesota's first Vistage Champions group, an offshoot that partners Vistage members with chairs to promote the value of the Vistage peer advisory experience and expand Vistage membership throughout Minnesota.

Champions meetings are quarterly and are designed to connect members with a broader range of over 350 Vistage members and 15 chairs in the state. "I thought Champions would be a good connection point for me to get to know new people. Obviously, as you meet new people, you're going to create new relationships, and you

never know where those relationships are going to go,” he shares.

Mark believes the new Champions group is a brand extension of the ideals that make his Vistage experience so transformative. For Mark, the core idea behind Vistage and Champions is about enriching relationships. Indeed, “Life's about relationships and enjoying people; doing your best, learning and making a difference,” adding, “I've made some great friends through Vistage in the last three and a half years, and they've enriched my life.” And along the way, Mark's been polishing his leadership skills and bolstering his business acumen. “I know I'm a better leader today because of Vistage.” **V**