

# VISTA: OPENING OUR EYES TO A CLEARER WORLD

HOW ONE MAN'S VISION LED TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF AN INDUSTRY AND THE LIVES OF MANY



By SANDY CLARKE  
editor@leaderonomics.com

It's not every day you come across a CEO whose literal clarity of vision has helped inspire a business vision that's helping to make a huge difference to the lives of people at home and abroad.

But VISTA CEO Lim Boon Siong is continuing to build upon his vision following corrective eye surgery he received in Melbourne in 1998. As friends stood amazed at the results of "laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis" (Lasik) surgery, they sought his help to introduce them to the transformative procedure in Melbourne and, from that point, Lim's business had already begun to blossom.

As many great entrepreneurs before him, the VISTA CEO took a leap of faith after establishing connections in Melbourne and seeking the advice of seasoned entrepreneurs, leaving his position as a merchant banker in the 1990s to embark on a journey to bring Lasik technology to Malaysia.

Two key factors drove him to take on this new venture. First was the results of his own corrective surgery, which he vividly describes as like "being crippled and then being able to walk again". Second, the VISTA boss wondered why Malaysians had to go to Singapore, Australia, or even fur-

ther afield to receive top-quality corrective surgery when they could have a high standard of service with state-of-the-art procedures carried out at home. In the end, he answered his own question by making it happen.

## DEVELOPING TALENT

It's easy to see why team members at VISTA remain at the company for long periods of time. Lim puts a premium on developing his team, and counts his employees as the key to VISTA's success. It's little wonder, then, that when employees take a break from their career, they're only too keen to return to a company described as being a "family-friendly place" and a "fun place to work, where there's lots of opportunities to grow".

Lim not only talks about being a transformational leader, he makes sure to let his staff grow and develop free from the constraints of micromanagement. "Being a leader is not about cultivating followers, it's about encouraging others to become leaders themselves," he says. His refreshing approach to collaborative leadership is exemplified by one occasion where he treated staff members to a couple of nights at the Ritz-Carlton hotel to observe premium customer service. He then invited his team to think of ways in which they could offer a similar customer experience within their own industry.

## CUSTOMER CARE

Since its inception in 1999, VISTA has completed tens of thousands of successful eye surgeries. Perhaps the only thing to come close to developing team members is the customer care that Lim strives to ensure is provided to anyone who walks through the doors. Regardless of who they are, every customer is treated with the highest quality of service and professional care, which explains why more than 70% of people to come through VISTA's doors have been referred by satisfied customers. Such is the reputation of VISTA that over 25% of the company's clients come from abroad from countries, such as Australia and China.

In fact, such was the strength of desire to provide the best standard of service to customers that Lim and his team travelled the world in order to see what the best eye doctors were practising and what equipment they were using. It may have been the case years ago that people would travel to Singapore, Australia and Europe to get the best in corrective eye surgery. Now, doctors from these countries come to Malaysia to learn from VISTA. High praise, indeed – and testament to the fact that VISTA is leading by example in quality of service and customer care.

## Q&A WITH VISTA CEO, LIM BOON SIONG

**WHAT is the one trait you believe every leader should possess and why?**

Critical thinking and decision making. In moving from the industrial age to the information age, we have moved from scarce information (trade secrets) to information overload.

A great leader needs the ability to compile all such readily available information, thoroughly analyse it in many different ways, and use their experience to make a decision that could potentially make or break the company.

**What do you do to ensure that you continue to develop and grow as a leader?**

I'm always learning not only from our own industry, but also other similar services industry such as hospitality, where you can learn a lot about customer service.

I always make sure to engage and align with the senior leaders and staff during this continuous learning process, so that the team and company can grow together and move in one direction.

It's important for me that I have a happy staff, because that means happy patients. My team is the key to my success, and I make sure to invest in them as they invest in me.

**What advice would you give to someone who finds themselves taking on a leadership role for the first time?**

Be humble and learn from great leaders. Find a mentor or coach with whom you can discuss success and challenges. New leaders should actively listen to, engage with, and solicit advice from all stakeholders including suppliers, staff, and bankers.

**How can leaders sustain motivation within their team?**

Be a role model your team can look up to. Roll up your sleeves and take part in the same work you ask of your staff.

Empower your team, be a facilitator rather than a boss. If your staff are valued and respected, that they are contributing to the success of your business, they will take ownership of their responsibilities and be invested in all that they do.

Leaders should also provide a platform on which their staff can grow. Develop your team, instill a winning mindset – everyone wants to be a winner, to know that they're achievers. Give that opportunity to your team.

**What is the most important consideration when starting up or growing a business?**

The most important thing is having the right people – they're the ones who'll help you build your company. If you have the right people behind you, anything is possible.

**JITSON LAU**  
Optician, Operation theatre technician (team leader)



After a seven-month career break, I was keen to return to VISTA. It's difficult to describe the team spirit and how it helps to motivate you every day – it's a great place in which to develop your career and build your future.

We are provided with a lot of opportunities at VISTA, such as being able to attend training courses and spending time within other industries to develop and improve our own practices such as customer service.

**JANE TAN**  
Call centre consultant



I began my career at VISTA in 2000 at a contact centre. I left in 2010 as a manager, in order to take care of my baby. In 2014, I chose to return to VISTA, the main reason being that the CEO is generous, humble, and is an inspiring role model. I'm in no doubt that I've made the best decision to rejoin the company, and it's great to see so many old faces from when I first joined.

