

Vistage Member and  
President of Linx Multimedia

## Travis Deatherage

*Interviewed by Neil Anderson, Fractional CMO at Chief Outsiders*

### ***Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?***

I grew up in Fairfax, Virginia and went to college at Virginia Tech. After school, I moved back to the DC area and I worked for Bell Atlantic, which was the phone company at the time. Now it all rolls up into Verizon.

### ***How did you end up in Colorado?***

I always wanted to live in Colorado. I had come out here skiing many times as a kid. It had pretty much always been my passion and goal to get to Colorado. The first job I had out of college was not the career I wanted so the move was set in motion. I moved out with three other friends from back east. The debate was – do we move to the mountains and become ski bums or do we move to Denver and get real jobs? Fortunately, the job market was good so we decided to settle in Denver and have fun on the weekends. I now live in Denver with my wife and two kids.

### ***What was your path to success?***

I worked in telecommunications and IT services from 1997 until 2002. In 2002, after the Dotcom bubble burst, I decided to start my own business and Solstice Multimedia was born. I tried to take what I had learned from the Dotcom world where there was very heavy venture capital investment presence and apply it to my new business. I wanted to do something simpler that required no venture capital money to start up.

I started out by doing automation systems for custom homes, which leveraged my IT services background and my passion for audio visual systems. We were doing home theaters and whole house automation and trying to bring our commercial experience to the residential market from 2002 - 2011. Then in 2008, when the housing market turned, we really flipped our business model to focus on commercial businesses instead of residential projects.

In 2011, I met the founders of Linx, which is the company I am a part of now. We merged our company into Linx and I took over running the AV division within the company. Since 2011, Linx has grown the business from 30 to over 100 employees in the AV division. We have had 20% YOY growth over the last six years as well.

### ***Could you describe your business?***

Linx has three lines of business: structured cabling, multimedia systems and security solutions. The part of the business that I run is called Linx Multimedia and we focus on providing solutions that help businesses present, collaborate and communicate internally and externally. We provide everything from microphones, TVs, projectors, to video conferencing systems and other collaboration tools to allow them to locally communicate but also communicate across the world.

We serve mostly Colorado businesses but 10 to 15 percent of our work is national. This area of our business is growing rapidly. A lot of it originates as a customer out of Denver and we end up going national with them to other offices. Currently we have about 1,500 projects per year. They can range from \$1,000 per project to a couple million dollars.

## *Vistage Experience*

### *How did you find Vistage...or how did they find you?*

I was familiar with other smaller CEO peer groups but they weren't as formalized as Vistage. When I got to Linx, I was talking to our CEO who was already a Vistage member and he suggested that I take a look at the organization. I was impressed because I thought that it was a much stronger organization with more structure and a lot more value than some of the other groups that I had explored previously.

### *How long have you been a member?*

I have been a member for five and a half years. I started attending meetings pretty quickly after joining Linx.

### *Can you tell me a little but about Member Guest Days?*

These happen two or three times a year and we bring folks from our company to the speakers when the topic is relevant.

### *What are the two greatest values Vistage offers you?*

The top value that I get out of Vistage is about better decision making for me and my business. Since joining, I think that I make better decisions that have higher impact on the business. I am now able to make them with higher confidence and at a faster pace.

I think that a lot of these smart decision-making skills were acquired in my Vistage small group. This includes the group helping me process the issue and the support, questions, understanding, and idea challenging that the group provides. In doing so, it makes you find more depth to an issue. You also might uncover false barriers that you might be creating for yourself and learn how to work through those. I think this has a massive impact on my business in terms of staffing, supporting our customers and growing sales.

The value of the speakers is also tremendous. You are exposed to high-quality presenters, trainers, and business philosophers. There is the opportunity not only for the value of that first meeting, but also to bring the speakers back to our company for extended trainings, workshops and events. In these meetings, we have been able to go deeper with the content that the speaker might bring.

### *It sounds like you spend a lot of time talking through issues and opportunities as a group. Have you benefitted specifically from any peer relationships?*

Certainly. One of the biggest challenges for our business is that we do custom integration. I have a number of manufacturers in our Vistage group and I naively thought, what do I have in common with these manufacturers?

Two years ago, after listening to their business practices, we decided to try a manufacturers approach to custom integration development. We spent a lot of time with the manufacturing members gaining insights from them on how to manage and execute a manufacture style process. In doing so, we have probably reduced our time on a client sight by 30-40%. We are seeing a cost savings of 20-30% in how we execute our projects. I think this really sets the groundwork for future scalability.

## ***How do you see the ROI?***

I think it is 10x return every year. It is not inexpensive to join Vistage but I can easily say I return 10x the value in our bottom line profit above what it costs me to be a Vistage member.

## ***Who is your current chair and what are the one-to-one meetings like?***

Sam Allen has been my chair since the beginning. When I joined Vistage, I was under the impression that Sam was there to give advice so I would often ask him what I should do. I have learned over time that he is actually there to ask the right questions and get me to think. He acts as a coach, not an advisor, and is really there to facilitate the conversation and my thinking and to help hold me accountable instead of telling me what I should do.

## ***What speakers have you seen that really resonated with you?***

There are two speakers that come to mind that had a great impact on our business.

The first is Brad Remillard from IMPACT Hiring Solutions. He has a workshop on how to hire, interview, set expectations and write cohesive job postings. He also touches on how to develop a plan for someone to be successful in a job. His workshop completely changed how we interview and recruit. We have done a much better job finding people who will be successful in our environment.

The second speaker that had a great impact on our company was Agnes Mura, who did a workshop called “Leadership as a Coach”. This program changed how we interact with our employees and give them the tools to grow.

## ***What advice might you offer to someone considering joining Vistage?***

You are going to get out of it what you put into it. Every business owner that is interested in bettering their business, being more sustainable or growing their business should consider joining. You must be willing to be open and humble and then you will benefit tremendously from the Vistage experience.



**About Travis Deatherage**  
*President Linx Multimedia*



Travis Deatherage founded Solstice Multimedia in June of 2002 and merged his company with LINX in 2011, forming LINX Multimedia. His experience includes technology design including audio visual systems, telecommunications and software development. Travis is an expert in audio visual integration systems including digital media systems for conference rooms, integration of audio video conferencing systems, implementation of digital signage and design of focus group rooms. Travis holds a bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems from Virginia Tech. He is an owner/partner with LINX.



**About Neil Anderson**  
*CMO, Chief Outsiders*

In a career which includes executive management roles with early stage startups, mid-sized, privately held companies, and large, publicly-traded corporations, Anderson has spent the last quarter century infusing the interrelated, seminal elements of business strategy and marketing. Before joining Chief Outsiders, Anderson served as Vice President, Global Services at Spirent Communications PLC, a test equipment manufacturer publicly traded on the London Stock Exchange. Anderson has shepherded companies into the digital age; transforming insightsoftware.com's Hubble® marketing function from traditional outbound to a modern, digital marketing inbound marketing machine. There, he also established the company's "content factory" and the "Hubbleology" thought leadership content platform.