

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Breaking the CEO Ceiling: How Vistage Florida Helped Edward San Juan Get Out of His Own Way.



Edward San Juan was the first one in the office and the last one to leave. Six days a week, every week.

It still wasn't enough.

His family woodworking and manufacturing company, E.F. San Juan, in Panama City, Florida was stuck. Not for lack of effort, Edward was giving everything he had. The problem was that everything had to go through him. Every customer call, every decision.

He wasn't running the company. He was the bottleneck.

"You could have 80 people, 100 people working for you. But if everything's going through this one person, how much can really get done?"

It took a hurricane, a business reinvention, and seven years in a Vistage Florida peer advisory group to change that. Today his company has doubled its workforce, blown through a revenue ceiling where it had been stuck, and Edward finally became the leader his company needed.



Who is
Edward San Juan
President of E.F. San Juan.

Edward is President of E.F. San Juan, a family woodworking and manufacturing company founded in 1976 that has grown from \$18M to nearly \$40M in revenue, expanding from lumber and moldings to windows, doors, and cabinetry, with over 120 employees.

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THE DISASTER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Hurricane Michael hit Panama City in 2018 and destroyed Edward's company. In the aftermath, with 58 employees and a business that needed to be completely rebuilt, Edward made what he describes as the two best decisions he ever made for the company.

The first was adopting EOS—the Entrepreneurial Operating System—which gave his company the operational framework it had been missing. The second was finally saying yes to Vistage Florida, after years of being invited and turning it down.

"I was too busy to turn off the water faucet because I was mopping so much."

Vistage Florida showed him a better way.

FROM BOSS TO LEADER

What Edward found in his Vistage Florida peer advisory group wasn't just advice. It was a mirror. He watched other successful CEOs describe the same patterns he recognized in himself. He heard what happened to companies when the leader stayed too long in the weeds. He started to understand that being indispensable was a ceiling.

"I think what most people would say is that I'm a leader now, where before I was a boss. I just told people what to do."

The results from stepping back eventually became measurable.

The company that had been stuck at an \$18 million revenue for years began to move. Edward's role shifted from operator to visionary. Today, E.F. San Juan is approaching \$40 million and the workforce has grown to 120 employees.

THE BEST INVESTMENT HE NEVER MADE

Growth wasn't the only thing Vistage Florida influenced. It also saved Edward from a costly mistake.

For nearly a decade, he had been quietly working through a succession plan. He had done the research and felt confident in the direction.

Then he brought it to his Vistage Florida group.

"People naturally look for things that support their decisions. Vistage Florida is not there to reinforce your thinking. They are there to help you make the best decision."

The group asked questions he hadn't considered. When Edward went back to the people he'd been working with and asked those same questions, he didn't like the answers. The plan changed and the mistake was avoided.

He's now working with an advisor he met through Vistage Florida to build a succession plan that actually works.

BUILDING A COMPANY THAT RUNS WITHOUT HIM

Today Edward describes his role the way a consultant might describe their relationship with a client. He listens, asks questions, and trusts his team to handle the things they're better equipped to handle.

For anyone still too busy to consider Vistage Florida, Edward keeps it simple:

"Your competitor probably isn't waiting. Don't be the last one in the room."

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WORKS FOR LEADERS LIKE YOU



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