



“Vistage chairing is currently my only work life from which I derive immense pleasure and from which I learn how to achieve my work life balance.”

**Ooi Toon Kit**

Master Chair  
Chair since 2001  
VCE-610 & KEY-8

# SERVICE ABOVE SELF

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**Master Chair Ooi Toon Kit enjoys chairing because it gives him great pleasure to steer his members in the right direction for growth and sustainability. His journey from Kuala Lumpur to Penang to see his Vistage members every month is long and challenging but worthwhile.**

Ooi Toon Kit is exceptional for several reasons. He currently stands out as the longest serving Vistage Master Chair after founder Richard Wong. At 74, he still travels to Penang from Kuala Lumpur twice every month to chair two groups, spending close to two weeks in the Pearl of the Orient. His inner drive and passion to serve is obviously strong.

“I wish I had discovered Vistage during my years as CEO of a group of companies. I would have been more effective and achieved much more in my role as a CEO then,” Ooi explains. He now has the opportunity to impart his CEO experiences to two very different types of Vistage groups.

In the VCE group, he shares knowledge and helps the CEOs resolve business issues. For the KEY group, made up of support staff and department heads, he guides them on formal learning and practices as well as management lessons relating to technology, marketing, manufacturing, financing, human resources and other functional areas.

Ooi does not mind the shuttling as he sees this as interesting work which enriches his life. “Vistage chairing is currently my only work life from which I derive immense pleasure and from which I learn how to achieve my work life balance,” is how he puts it.

Recalling the early years, he says it was difficult to recruit members in Penang because the majority of business leaders were from or related to multinationals (MNCs). The MNCs conducted their own training programmes and many foreign bosses had short tenures. Added to these hurdles, Vistage was relatively unknown then. For the same reasons, getting Chairs was also difficult. But there was strong affinity. “Everybody had to work harder. There was a certain closeness among Chairs and we all knew each other quite well and had good rapport,” he reflects.

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Ooi believes that Chairs have benefited from Vistage Malaysia's generosity and trust. "We benefited from incentives and subsidies to hone our skills, deepen our knowledge on chairing, gain exposure and networking with our international colleagues in local and overseas conferences," he explains. Chairs are generally free to manage their own groups. Over time, he thinks this contributed to the longevity of Chair tenures and the diversity among groups.

He links the robust growth of Vistage Malaysia to better support staff, more qualified Chairs and the introduction of Vistage-in-Mandarin (VIM). Ooi is of the view that the setting up of VIM contributed greatly to membership numbers and a bigger Chair community. He proudly points out that Malaysia is the only franchise worldwide to offer twin language programmes concurrently.

Engaging with members from two Vistage groups, Ooi notes that he has certainly changed and transformed, especially in discarding the CEO mentality. "I have learnt to listen more, engage more and not behave as a CEO," he reveals. "If you listen, you understand the "Why" of what they (Vistage members) are doing. A lot of them are already successful; you just guide and give feedback to them with a view to improve their efficiency and effectiveness."

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In the process of chairing, he has become more tolerant of others' mistakes, questioning more rather than always jumping to quick conclusions. How has his business coaching helped Vistage members? Ooi says there have been many significant and memorable moments. He cannot highlight the specifics but he believes that Vistage has contributed in many ways to his group members' milestones and accolades.

For instance, several group members have won CEO and Performance Awards organised by industry associations. Others have had their products voted the "Best" in their category in international competitions. Some have achieved and announced remarkable financial results year after year while a couple of others have successfully navigated through their difficult times.

Besides the tangible outcomes, Ooi also looks at the intangibles in close relationships and cohesiveness. “I am fortunate to chair a well bonded, long tenure and dedicated group, although far from my place of residence,” he notes. Notwithstanding, Ooi’s achievement speaks for itself as he has won the Vistage Chair Excellence Award several times.

Ooi plans to carry on updating his business coaching skills to remain relevant and effective. His passion to serve remains unwavering as he stresses that “We (Chairs) must equip ourselves with the latest business philosophy, technology, coaching and advisory techniques and business data. Any less will leave us behind and unable to fulfil the expectations and trust of our members. Our service to members will not then be at its best”.

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*Ooi Toon Kit & his KEY-8 members at a Group Retreat in Bangkok*

Ooi Toon Kit is a Chartered Accountant, a member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants, a qualified but non practising Company Secretary who holds a Master of Commerce degree from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He has worked with large multinationals, namely Fletcher Challenge Group in New Zealand, British Petroleum, and Inchcape Malaysia Group. His last posting was with Unico Holdings Berhad as Group General Manager. His portfolio, at various times, includes accounting, project feasibility studies, mergers and acquisitions, investment and divestment, corporate advisory, personnel training and general management at CEO level.