

Inc. Founder Friendly Investors	Founded 2000	Assets Under Management \$96 billion	Portfolio Companies 85+	Vista Portfolio Software Users 300 million	
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Focus, Expertise, and Shared Values Fuel This Founder-Friendly Firm

Vista Equity Partners is a growth specialist for enterprise software firms.

As a founder himself, Robert F. Smith appreciates when enterprise software entrepreneurs have a crystalized vision about what the market wants and how to provide it. These founders connect the dots between their products and market gaps when no one else sees it. What they may need, though, is help building the company. “We are growth specialists,” says Smith, founder, chairman, and CEO of Vista Equity Partners. “Part of what we do is understand the vision of where the founder and the management team are going.”

Companies come to Vista for several reasons. Vista helps organizations accelerate the journey of innovating products, building out an efficient and effective organizational team and structure, and implementing best practices. Vista also provides near certainty. “Founders view us as a highly reliable partner that can create returns if they sell their business or stake to someone else. The math works,” Smith says.

A SINGULAR FOCUS

Founded in 2000, Vista found its sweet spot investing in enterprise software companies, no matter the size or lifecycle stage. Aaron Skonnard was approached by Vista in 2020 when looking to take his public company, technology workforce development provider Pluralsight, private. “They already understood the landscape and how the category was evolving,” says Skonnard, Pluralsight’s co-founder and CEO. “Ultimately, what helped Vista win the

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Events like Vista's CEO Retreat provide founders and executives of Vista portfolio companies valuable opportunities to connect.

opportunity and close the deal in 2021 was that they know enterprise software better than anyone else, and they have a proven track record.”

Vista’s values also resonated with Pluralsight, including its culture of excellence; continued learning; emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); and sustainability. “After that, they trust the founders and CEOs to define the culture that will be most effective for their business,” Skonnard says.

Smith knows Vista’s methods work. After building the infrastructure, innovation happens quickly and effectively, he says. The upfront work frees the CEO from waking up every morning trying to fix problems created in the past. According to Smith, reducing the noise that comes from operational inefficiencies is a first step towards innovation, growth, and scale. “My job is to make your life quiet,” Smith tells CEOs. “Once you get them operationally quiet, they can accelerate. We want the visionary to focus on new products and new technologies.”

PARTNERSHIP WITH PURPOSE

Vista’s transparency supports great partnerships. “We spend a lot of time up front saying, ‘here’s what we think this company is capable of, here’s where we think we can add value, and here’s where you can add value to our ecosystem,” Smith says.

This is one reason Vista’s founder network is its strongest referral source. In the past three years, 71 percent of Vista’s private equity fund transactions were founder-influenced, Smith says.

As “value creation catalysts,” Smith says, Vista plans in-person, expert-led educational events with peer-to-peer networking. Last year it held 23 events—multi-day sessions for CEOs, CXOs, function leads and others.

Since co-founding Pluralsight in 2004, Skonnard has worked with more than a dozen investors. Vista’s [events] actually deliver value,” he says. Vista continues connecting executives through Zoom calls and Slack channels. “It’s not just creating the relationships but cross-pollinating expertise and best practices,” Skonnard says.