

Simple, Efficient, Reliable, Global

An Interview with Leona Qi, President, Vista U.S.

EDITORS' NOTE *Leona Qi serves as President of Vista U.S. With her leadership, her team is responsible for growing the customer base in North America, the world's most mature and deepest market in business aviation. The North American region has seen double-digit year-on-year growth for Vista over successive years. Qi had over a decade of experience in capital markets and business aviation finance prior to joining VistaJet in early 2016. She held various roles at Global Jet Capital, Guggenheim Partners, and BNP Paribas. Qi holds a master's degree from Princeton University and resides between London and New York City.*



Leona Qi

COMPANY BRIEF *Vista Global Holding Limited (Vista) is a leading global business aviation company providing worldwide business flight services through its network of subsidiaries and a team of over 4,000 experts. A global group headquartered in Dubai, Vista (vistaglobal.com) integrates a unique portfolio of companies to offer asset free services to cover all key aspects of business aviation, including guaranteed and on-demand global flight coverage, subscription and membership solutions, and trading and management services. Innovating the industry for over 20 years through continuous investment in talent, technology, and infrastructure, Vista's mission is to provide the most advanced flying services at the very best value – anytime, anywhere around the world. Vista's extensive industry expertise enables it to deliver comprehensive end-to-end solutions and technology to meet the needs of business aviation clients around the world. These services are offered through its leading brands, including VistaJet and XO.*

What excited you about the opportunity to join VistaJet and made you feel it was the right fit?

I was working in finance before I switched into private aviation. I had worked on Wall Street and have an asset-backed financing background, and actually started a company called Global Jet Capital with two other cofounders to finance private jets. This is how I met Thomas (Flohr, Vista Founder and Chairman) and at that time the company had placed a historic order

to take Bombardier aircraft and was looking for financing. When I met Thomas, he spoke about his vision for expanding VistaJet around the world and the company was getting ready to enter the United States. Thomas, being an entrepreneur, asked me if I would be interested in running the Asia Pacific region since this was a region that VistaJet was focused on for growth. While I was not ready to make a change at that time, Thomas and I chatted for about 18 months and in 2016 I decided to join VistaJet

to expand its Asia Pacific business since this opportunity filled my entrepreneurial passion and interest. In 2018, I transitioned to take over the U.S. market.

I was attracted to the growth opportunities for VistaJet, and today our planes are iconic with the silver color and red stripe. Thomas wanted to build a company that provided the best service in the sky, and this was very intriguing for me since I was also interested in the luxury space, and I believe that VistaJet is at the highest end when it comes to private flying in terms of the level of service that can match the client's lifestyle.

Will you highlight VistaJet's journey in the U.S. market?

When I took over this role in 2018, the company had about 20 aircraft in the United States, and we were really just starting in this very mature market with established competitors. Initially, we were looked at as a niche player and were under the radar. At the end of 2018, we acquired XOJET which brought 40-plus aircraft, and then during COVID we made another acquisition of Jet Edge which injected more aircraft into the fleet. Over the past few years with the strength of our customer base and growth of the fleet, we have taken a significant market share in the United States. Our competitors have taken notice which shows the impact that Vista has made in this market.

When you look at VistaJet's competitors, how do you describe the VistaJet difference?

The most important thing that flyers at this level want is consistency. It is about a consistent level of service whether you are flying in New York, Los Angeles, London or Abu Dhabi, and working with a brand that you trust. It takes time to build that trust and reliability, and that is what VistaJet has been doing. We adhere to the highest safety standards, provide the highest





service standards, and are committed to delivering a consistent customer experience. We are flying some of the most successful businessmen and businesswomen, and that requires anticipating their needs and staying ahead of the curve.

How important has it been to build the U.S. team as VistaJet has continued to grow in the market?

We regularly discuss the importance of maintaining our DNA as the company is growing so quickly, and this starts with investing in training and valuing your team. Vista now has over 4,000 staff members around the world, and we are committed to maintaining our DNA which is built on innovation and a customer-first mentality. We want to make sure that every



interaction the customer has with VistaJet, from booking a flight to the experience in the air to billing, meets the customers' expectations and is seamless.

Our team is the heartbeat of the company, and they interact with our customers and know better than anyone what the customer wants and needs. We are constantly asking for feedback and ideas from our team in order to stay ahead of trends and make sure that we are anticipating customers' needs. This commitment to engage all team members of the company, no matter what level, is critical to our success and to maintaining an entrepreneurial spirit.

Do you feel that there are opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?

I come from a Wall Street background which is also a male-dominated industry. I am really proud of how far the private aviation industry has come, even though there is still a long way to go to even the playing field. I think there is a misunderstanding about the private aviation industry as many women feel that the opportunity is to work in the cabin, but there are many other areas for a woman to

pursue, such as becoming a pilot or engineer, or working in sales and marketing. We simply focus on hiring the best talent. In doing that, it happens that over 40 percent of our team are women. It's a testament to the fact that when you hire based on skill and capability, the team naturally reflects a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives.

Are you able to take moments to reflect on the growth and success that VistaJet has achieved in the U.S. market under your leadership, or are you always looking at what is next?

I am a cautiously optimistic person, and things change so quickly today that you always need to look ahead and be focused on innovation and opportunity. However, it is so important to take time to celebrate with your team and to acknowledge their accomplishments. Our customers really trust us to help connect them around the world where there is a business opportunity, and when they succeed, we succeed. Life is about celebrations, and we want to be there with our customers as they open a bottle of Dom Pérignon on one of our planes to celebrate their milestones. ●