



Origins Of Verbal Defense & Influence

The beginnings of Vistelar's Verbal Defense & Influence program date back to the early 1980s and, since then, the program has evolved under the leadership of Gary Klugiewicz, Director of Training at Vistelar and with the input of a large number of individuals. As a result, we often get questions about the program's origins and, specifically, about Gary's relationship with Dr. George Thompson, founder of the Verbal Judo Institute, since they worked together for more than eight years. Answering these questions is the goal of the information below.

Gary's early career in training public safety professionals was mostly in defensive tactics. "Verbalization" training was restricted to giving orders.

This all changed in the 1980's when Gary met Daniel Vega, a social worker and crisis intervention specialist, who emphasized the use of verbal skills to diffuse conflict in crisis situations. He coined the term, "verbalization skills" and was the originator of the phrase, "All defensive tactics must combine verbalization skills with physical alternatives." In 1982, Vega's methodology was incorporated into Dr. Kevin Parson's groundbreaking RISC Management System that became Wisconsin's Defensive & Arrest Tactics (DAAT®) training program.

Later, this material was incorporated into Gary's Principles of Subject Control (POSC®) training program for correctional, healthcare, and mental health professionals.

Since then, Gary has drawn on the work of a number of influential trainers, academic researchers and practitioners to develop Vistelar's Verbal Defense & Influence (VDI) methodology and training system into what it is today.

These visionaries included:

- Bob Willis and Jim Smith, two defensive tactics instructors with whom he created the Active Countermeasures® training program in 1982
- Charles Remsberg and Denny Anderson, founders of Calibre Press where he was a national instructor of their Street Survival Seminar® for over five years between 1986 and 1990 and has been an ongoing instructor with them for over 25 years
- Subject matter experts at PoliceOne.com, Force Science Research, TeamOne Network, and other training organizations where Gary has held a variety of roles over the last three decades
- Col. Dave Grossman, author of On Killing and Dr. Kevin Gilmartin, author of Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement
- Robert Lindsey, known as "Coach" by his friends and colleagues, who, since 1983, has served as Gary's mentor
- Dave Young, a nationally-recognized defensive tactics instructor and future founder of Vistelar whom Gary met in 1993
- Jack Hoban, founder of Resolution Group International and a major contributor to the ethical protector concept that Vistelar includes in its teachings, who Gary first met in the mid 2000s.

Others who have contributed to VDI include Jane Dresser, a mental health nurse from Milwaukee County Behavioral Health, Jeff Mehring of Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Milwaukee, Dr. Karen Huebner of Purposeful Teaching and all of Vistelar's many consultants, trainers and advisors, most of whom have collaborated with Gary for decades.

In addition to all these individuals, Dr. George Thompson had a significant influence on Gary and the VDI methodology. Gary took his first "Verbal Judo" branded class with Dr. Thompson in 1994 and

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assumed the role of Director of Research and Development for the Verbal Judo Institute in 2004. During this period Gary and Dr. Thompson were primarily focused on training the law enforcement community.

In 2009, Gary teamed up with Allen Oelschlaeger and Dave Young to form Vistelar, with the goal of using their combined expertise to address the entire spectrum of human conflict (verbalization through defensive tactics) and offer their services to more markets beyond just law enforcement.

Shortly, thereafter, Dr. Thompson joined Vistelar and his Verbal Judo brand and training were added to Vistelar's offerings. Dr. Thomson remained a member of Vistelar until his death in June of 2011.

Two of Dr. Thompson's long-time instructors, Peter Harrell and Tony Pinelle, joined Vistelar in 2010 and have remained with the company as active Verbal Defense & Influence consultants.

Between 2004 and Dr. Thompson's death in 2011, Gary co-taught scores of courses with Dr. Thompson as his protégé. and, over his career, has trained hundreds of thousands of individuals in verbalization skills.

In November of 2013, the Verbal Judo trademark and training programs reverted to Dr. Thompson's family. The Verbal Judo Institute remains operational under their ownership.

Since the founding of Vistelar in 2009, Gary – with the support of a growing business – has been able to greatly accelerate his research and development efforts to keep the Verbal Defense & Influence program in tune with the latest research, attitudes and trends in conflict management and adult learning – and for it to meet the goals Vistelar has set for the program: to reduce complaints, liability and injuries, while improving performance, morale and overall safety.

Here is some of what Gary, in conjunction with Vistelar's employees, consultants, trainers, advisors and hundreds of certified instructors, has accomplished since 2009.

- Published four books:
 - *Confidence in Conflict for Everyday Life* by Kathy Mangold, a Vistelar Consultant
 - *Confidence in Conflict for Campus Life* by Jill Weisensel, a Vistelar Consultant
 - *Confidence in Conflict for Sports Officials* by Peter Jaskulski, a Vistelar Consultant
 - *Confidence in Conflict for Healthcare Professionals* by Joel Lashley, a Vistelar Consultant and Bob Willis, a Vistelar Advisor
- Hosted four Beyond Conflict conferences with hundreds of attendees
- Expanded team of consultants, trainers, advisors and certified instructors
- Fully implemented Vistelar's Emotionally Safe Performance-Driven Instruction™, the company's proprietary training methodology that improves retention and, more importantly, enhances the student's ability to actually perform the learned skills in their work and personal lives (fire drills versus fire talks)
- Integrated the concepts of "social contract" and "bystander mobilization" into the program
- Solidified VDI's structured methodology into ten elements and captured them on Vistelar's Communicating Under Pressure (CUP) Card
- Increased emphasis on non-escalation versus de-escalation
- Added training on nonverbal communication and proxemics to the program
- Implemented a "mosaic" approach to training that enables instructors to offer programs of different lengths to meet the needs of the audience

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- Increased support of Vistelar’s certified instructors via a membership site, monthly coaching calls, enhanced courseware and a wealth of online training resources
- Expanded into fourteen market segments, including healthcare, transit, utilities and education
- Developed VDI online training programs for several market segments
- Incorporate audio and video recording of students during both live and online training programs using Vistelar’s proprietary Learning XLeator™ technology

And, with all this, Gary has continued to work with the Vistelar team to ensure that Vistelar’s training addresses the entire spectrum of human conflict – from interpersonal discord, verbal abuse and bullying – to crisis communications, assault and physical violence.

Since forming the company, Vistelar has received hundreds of testimonials and peace stories that reflect the success of the business and our ability to train people how to “respond” in an effective manner during stressful interactions, instead of impulsively reacting. These are available for viewing on the Vistelar.com website.

To summarize, the origins of the Verbal Defense & Influence program date back to the early 1980s and its evolution since then is the result of ongoing R&D by Gary Klugiewicz and the influence of a large number of individuals, including Dr. George Thompson.

Gary Klugiewicz and Dr. Thompson worked together from 2004 – primarily training police officers – until the formation of Vistelar in 2009, at which time Dr. Thompson joined the company and folded his program into Vistelar’s Verbal Defense & Influence. Dr. Thomson remained a member of Vistelar until his death in June of 2011.

Today, the Verbal Judo Institute continues to exist under the ownership of Dr. Thompson’s wife.

Although sometimes confused with “Verbal Judo,” the Verbal Defense & Influence program is a far different program than what Dr. Thompson taught while he was alive. While the VDI program is inspired many of Dr. Thompson’s concepts and incorporates ideas from scores of other verbalization experts, it continues to evolve as Vistelar’s team learns more about how to best manage conflict.

Today, Verbal Defense & Influence is unique as compared to other training companies in the “conflict” space due to:

- Over three decades of research and development
- Emotionally Safe Performance-Driven™ instruction
- Incorporation of the “social contract” and “bystander mobilization” concepts
- Emphasis on non-escalation over de-escalation
- Structured methodology that is captured on a single two-sided card
- Five Drill vs. Fire Talk approach to training
- All programs are designed to keep people safe – physically, organizationally, legally and emotionally.
- In conjunction with Vistelar’s other training programs, addresses the entire spectrum of human conflict
- Offers programs designed for fourteen different market segments
- Four published books in Vistelar’s *Confidence In Conflict* series, with more in development

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- Consultants, trainers and advisors with diverse expertise in a wide range of disciplines and markets
- Online training capabilities that allows for online and blended training programs
- Learning XLerator™ technology that enables the capture and sharing of video/audio role-play sessions, resulting in more efficient and effective learning

Individuals who are certified instructors with other “conflict” training companies can become certified in Verbal Defense & Influence at a discounted price. To learn more please contact us.