

# Juan Carlos Vidal

Allentown • Madrid • Saucon Valley



Teknion

## New Advisory Board member lends global perspective to Lehigh Valley campus

At Penn State, the university community is encouraged to infuse their academic programs and goals with a global perspective. For some, taking on this challenge could mean study abroad, while for others it could mean online courses with international partners, field study, or a research sabbatical. The knowledge gained by looking outside of campus borders helps to prepare students for the careers and social interactions of our increasingly interconnected 21st century world.

Juan Vidal, one of the newest members of the Penn State Lehigh Valley Advisory Board, is a prime example of how a global perspective can lead to career opportunity and success. With his latest business endeavor right here in the Lehigh Valley, Vidal is making a name for himself as a forward-thinking entrepreneur who is not afraid to step outside the box to set himself apart from his competition. As managing director of the international company Offix Systems, Vidal's career experience, which has taken him all over the world, brings a distinct global perspective to the Advisory Board.

Born in New York City to a Cuban father and Spanish mother, Vidal's path to settling in the Lehigh Valley began, somewhat surprisingly, in Venezuela, where he lived from the age of two. When it came time for college, Vidal decided to return to the United States. His brother had already made the move, making the transition smoother, and Vidal went on to earn a degree in finance and economics from New York University.

After holding numerous positions in the banking and transportation industries, Vidal and his brother were invited to return to Venezuela and work at the printing business owned by his father and grandfather, whom Vidal credits with helping to inspire his own entrepreneurial characteristics. To prepare, they enrolled at the Rochester Institute of Technology where they earned master's

degrees in management printing sciences with the intention of taking over the family business upon graduation. Unfortunately, political instability in Venezuela persuaded the family to divest from the business just as the brothers completed their coursework.

With the future of the family business in Venezuela uncertain, Vidal's path led him back to the Big Apple where he was recruited to serve as managing director of Genesis Worldwide Courier. Then, in 2002, an opportunity to manage his own business presented itself. Vidal partnered his experience with his wife, brother-in-law, and father-in-law to rescue a troubled office furniture supplier – and Offix Systems was born. Vidal and his team of architects, designers, and space planners took over the company's warehouse in Allentown and immediately began looking for ways to set their business apart from area competition.



**Top Photo:** European Partners, De Pablo, sitting on the left and Vidal sitting on the right in their Madrid, Spain showroom.

**Bottom Left:** Lehigh Valley Partners; Vidal and Adriana, Rodrigo & Hernando DeFrancisco in their Allentown, PA showroom.

**Bottom Right:** Their new showroom in the Promenade Shops at Saucon Valley.



Their strategy was to offer something that no one else could, and so Offix Systems became the area's only authorized dealer of Teknion brand furniture. A rising star in the furniture industry, Vidal says that Teknion was a natural match for their company, with the brand having earned awards for its innovative designs, use of recycled fabrics, and their concentration on sustainability, waste reduction, and environmental protection.

In 2007, Vidal and his team, in partnership with his sister and bother-in-law, decided to introduce Offix Systems to the international marketplace and opened Offix Systems Iberica, which provides the Teknion furniture line to sections of southwest Europe including Spain and Portugal, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Andorra, and Gibraltar. Offix Systems Iberica also operates a showroom for the Teknion line in a retail/industrial district in Madrid, Spain.

Motivated by the success of the retail showroom space in Madrid, Vidal and his team decided it was time to bring some of that European flair back to the company's roots in the Lehigh Valley and opened a showroom in the Promenade Shops in Saucon Valley in November 2008. Vidal's retail-style approach to sales is not

standard practice within the industry and has helped give Offix Systems a distinct identity among its competitors.

"Given the current economic climate, some might consider the showroom at the Promenade to be a risky undertaking. To us, it was a bold but calculated decision. We feel that the retail space will enhance our ability to serve our customers and, hopefully, set us apart from local competition," says Vidal.

In addition to providing local companies with access to innovative office design, Vidal also serves the community on various boards and committees, including the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, and is a former board member of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of the Lehigh Valley.

"Juan is young, energetic, and has a real interest in education and the community," said Howard Kulp, fellow Advisory Board member. "His diverse cultural and professional background makes him a great role model not only for our current students, but also for future students and supporters of Penn State Lehigh Valley." 🐾

*"When Howard approached me about the Advisory Board, I was excited to make a connection with Penn State. I believe that serving my community is vital to both my personal and professional success, and working with the local Penn State community is a great way to do that."*

**– Juan Carlos Vidal**