Aytül Erçil

Vistek

“ I saw an opportunity to improve how companies make things. ”

COUNTRY	Turkey
INDUSTRY	Technology
EMPLOYEES	24
YEAR SELECTED	2011
WEBSITE	www.vistek-isravision.com

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

There's a pattern to Aytül Erçil's track record in academia and the computer vision industry: excellence. With her deep experience in both computer pattern recognition and statistical data analysis, the professor turned entrepreneur Aytül founded Vistek in 2006 to take advantage of new commercial trends in her dual fields of expertise. Vistek delivers "smart" camera-based automation systems that can quickly and effectively scan various processes, and then output statistical analysis. **Over the last five years, Vistek has offered sophisticated automating systems to Turkish clients across a broad range of industries, including automotive manufacturing and glass bottle production.** Vistek's systems can pick out defects on an assembly line just as easily as it can match car parts to specific vehicle models during production. Today, Aytül has grown Vistek into a team of Turkey's top robotic engineers who can develop and implement computer vision systems for corporate clients like Ford.

Aytül has always been ambitious and passionate when it comes to engineering. At a young age, she ranked in the top 100 in Turkey's university entrance exam, beating out more than 1.5 million students and winning a spot at the prestigious Bogaziçi University. She graduated in 1979 with a double major in Electrical Engineering and Mathematics, and went on to complete a Masters and PhD in Applied Mathematics from Brown University in the US. Aytül returned to Turkey in 1988, taking a teaching position at Bogaziçi University, where she became an Associate Professor (one of the youngest ever in Turkey) as well as the Director of the Bogaziçi University Pattern Analysis and Machine Vision Laboratory. In 2001, Aytül was recruited by another of Turkey's top schools, Sabanci University (SU), which boasted a more entrepreneurial environment. At SU, Aytül taught courses, but also founded and directed the Sabanci R&D Center, which was certified as an EU Center of Excellence. Through her work at the Center, Aytül attracted the attention of Turkish technology fund and incubator Inovent.

With support and encouragement from Inovent, as well as her own overwhelming desire to turn her research into something more concrete than academic papers, Aytül launched Vistek in 2006. The vision for Vistek was simple: translate Aytül's incredible expertise into profitable projects for real-world clients. Using a project-based business model and maintaining its relationship with Sabanci University, Vistek developed customized image processing software which was then integrated with hardware (cameras, computers, and lenses) to make sophisticated machine vision systems. In its first few years, Vistek brought on seven engineers and made inroads providing customized systems and per-project consulting to impressive clients like Bosch and Sisecam. Yet, at its capacity, Vistek could only manage six projects simultaneously. Aytül's grand vision for the company was to deliver large-scale impact through commercial robotic vision products.

In late 2009, Aytül partnered with German competitor ISRA VISION. The global leader in computer vision applications for the glass industry, ISRA VISION has thus far worked with Vistek to define new key product lines and participate in joint distribution. In exchange for a 24% share of the company and two seats on Vistek's board, Aytül secured a partner that can help the company grow. ISRA VISION gains a foothold in Turkey as well as the Middle East and Central Asia; in return, it has started to Vistek's products globally since 2012.

Given the global market size and key players, Vistek has selected a strong strategic partner in ISRA VISION. According to the Automated Imaging Association, the machine vision industry is estimated at US$7.1 billion in 2011, with most of the market served by industry powerhouses in Germany and France. **As the market continues to grow in emerging economies like Turkey, Vistek has an opportunity to offer world-class systems to new segments of consumers.** Today, Vistek and ISRA Vision are looking toward the growing healthcare sector, where computer vision still has huge potential applications such as remote monitoring of patients. Vistek has put Turkey on the map for computer pattern recognition and machine vision systems, proving itself a global pioneer in the development of computer vision technology.