



Shurtape Technologies: A Transformative Journey in Process Development and Training

Overview of Shurtape Technologies

Headquartered in Hickory, North Carolina, **Shurtape Technologies, LLC**, is a fifth-generation, family-owned business and one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketers of adhesive tape and home and office products. Their diverse product lineup includes masking and paper, foil and film, packaging, double-coated, cloth and duct and other specialty tape products. The company also provides tape application equipment, automated carton erectors and carton sealing solutions.

Shurtape's journey traces back to its deep North Carolina roots, beginning in 1880 as **Shuford Mills**, a prominent domestic textile manufacturer specializing in spun yarns and cordage. In 1955, Shuford Mills expanded into adhesive tape production, creating a tape division that would later become a separate entity. By 1996, this division was officially established as **Shurtape**, marking the start of its evolution into a global leader in adhesive solutions. With approximately 1,700 employees across facilities in the U.S., U.K., Germany, Mexico, Peru, Denmark, Australasia, UAE, and China, Shurtape offers products under several popular brands such as Duck®, FrogTape®, Painter's Mate®, Shurtape®, T-Rex®, Kip®, and Pro Tapes®.

The Turning Point: A Unique Approach to Problem-Solving

Shurtape's leadership team, identifying potential areas for improvement, took an unconventional approach: they allowed employees to define the top three issues themselves.



George Stamatoukos, Director of Corporate Engineering, remarked, "One of the unique characteristics of Shurtape is that it is a large company but has retained that family business culture and values. When we realized morale was low, we took action for change. Over a few months, we came up with a list of ideas of what we could do to make things better and what our root problems were.

There were issues with false starts on projects and just not getting things done the way we thought we should. Things were getting missed. Communication was suffering. We were just kind of struggling. And so, we started digging into the main cause. Once identified, we decided to challenge employees to come up with solutions.”

Three-day workshops led by the HR team at the company’s facilities in North Carolina and Ohio revealed three critical issues:

1. Communication
2. Accountability
3. Project Management

Stamatoukos identified, “Of the three issues, two of them are cultural: communication and accountability. We knew we had to do other things before we start generating improvement on those. But project management, that’s a tool. So, we targeted project management first.”



Project Management Training: An Eye-Opening Start

Having previously worked with NC State University Industry Expansion Solutions for Lean Six Sigma training, Shurtape engaged Industry Expansion Solutions for project management training.

During the first day of the three-day course, it is typical for a trainer to ask numerous questions of the organization to identify current process strengths and weaknesses.

Stamatoukos said, “And a lot of the answers were, we don’t know.” One of the questions was how do you prioritize? “ We don’t. It was one of those, we think we do, but we don’t. We don’t have a process at all,” Stamatoukos continued. “And the trainer said, I can go through this three-day class with you, but I don’t think your problem is project management. Your problem is the process. You don’t have one.”

Shurtape paused the training to collaborate with Industry Expansion Solutions on developing a framework for process development. They introduced tools such as matrices, charter templates, and status updates, customized with Shurtape terminology to enhance clarity and ownership.

Implementing Change: Training Across Departments

Once the processes were refined, Shurtape resumed training, starting with the manufacturing team and gradually expanding to R&D, marketing, IT, sales, and HR. Nearly 80% of employees have since completed the training, with HR integrating it into onboarding for applicable roles.

Stamatoukos explained that he attended every session with every group to offer Shurtape explanations of the project management techniques. “They would ask the instructor a question on project management or a tool, and she could answer based on the PMI kind of point of view. Well, sometimes that made sense to people.

Sometimes it didn’t. I was able to speak up and say, well, consider this... And I would put an example that related to them in their role at Shurtape. The employees found a lot of value in learning project management principles, but having me in the class, to be able to interpret how it fit their needs at Shurtape, that helped bring it home for them,” said Stamatoukos.

Results: Transformative Organizational Impact

Shurtape reported a **significant economic impact**, encompassing cost savings and strategic investments.

Stamatoukos explained, “This process helped us organize our capital expenditures, helping us to target our spend

more strategically. In the past, we divided the money across different plants and each chose which projects they were going to do. But it never failed, by the end of the year, we only accomplished two-thirds of the projects and money spent because we would not have enough time to finish them all.”

This year, Shurtape will allocate capital expenditures based on the new processes and optimize for how quickly they can complete projects. Shurtape is seeing the financial benefit of implementing the new processes and training because now they can organize, identify, and prioritize projects and complete them faster. Previously they were spending a lot of time on projects that were not warranted because they did not have a system for prioritizing.

The new processes and project management training also influenced quality and capacity. Business boomed for the tape and packaging industry during COVID, and steady growth has continued since then. “We were pushing as much product as we could out the door, but we still weren’t filling all the demands of the customer. Now we are focused on building future future capacity and pulling the triggers a lot sooner. It really helps,” said Stamatoukos. He continued, “In the past we had to deal with old equipment that we couldn’t replace because nobody knew how to justify buying new equipment. The new process has even helped us to identify and create financial justification for major expenses, like equipment, including showing the benefit of technology with higher yield.”

Additional benefits included:

1. **Improved Communication and Accountability:** The cultural shifts emerged naturally as teams adopted consistent processes.
2. **Enhanced Efficiency:** Faster project completion and better resource allocation reduced wasted effort.
3. **Future Capacity Planning:** Shurtape now plans up to two years ahead, improving responsiveness to demand and justifying investments in modern equipment.

Lessons for Other Manufacturers

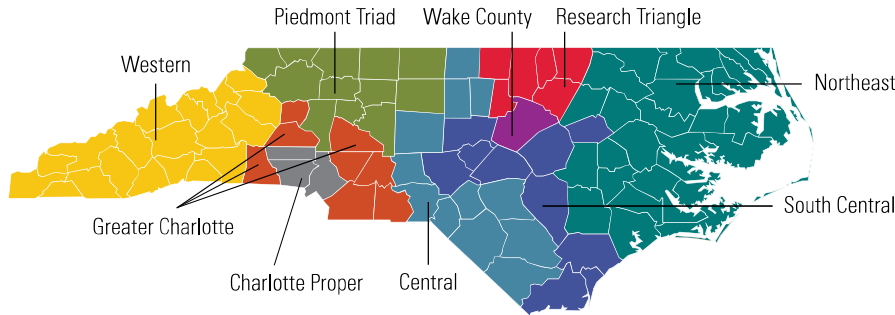
Reflecting on the experience, Stamatoukos emphasized the importance of a structured, collaborative approach:

“Understand what you currently do, define the right way, and map out the journey. It’s progressive—you need commitment from top to bottom, supported by performance data.”

Shurtape’s story highlights how engaging employees in problem-solving, coupled with targeted training and process development, can drive transformative change across an organization.



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