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Tetra Pak Partners Achieves World Class Project Management

By J. LeRoy Ward, PMP, PgMP

The Background

Improved customer satisfaction is always top of mind at Tetra Pak. The world's leading food processing and packaging solutions company provides safe, innovative and environmentally sound products that meet the needs of hundreds of millions of people around the world each day. Founded in Sweden in 1951, today the company boasts more than 20,000 employees and operations in more than 165 countries. In 2007, it delivered 137.3 billion packages.

In order to maintain its superior marketplace position — while containing costs for the company and its customers — Tetra Pak continually seeks to improve in four capability areas it believes directly impacts all aspects of its business:

- Leadership
- Total quality
- Customer understanding
- Project management



Specifically, Tetra Pak focuses project management toward improvements in new product development, product and service delivery to its customers, and improving its own internal operations. Tetra Pak's capabilities development program drives continuous improvement in the processes, systems, people and tools associated with these four capability areas — across all levels and job functions.

Acknowledging that effective project management underpins leadership, quality and customer understanding, Tetra Pak partnered with ESI International to build and deliver a globally consistent, instructor-led project management learning and development program. The two companies have been working together on project management learning programs since 2001.

The Strategy

Tetra Pak's executive leadership understood that to achieve their aim of world-class project management, the capabilities development program needed to look beyond the project management job function. ESI worked with Tetra Pak to tailor a learning program that involves everyone from executives to front line sales and support staff, ensuring all employees have the knowledge, processes, systems and tools to contribute to the company's world-class project management goal.

“The capabilities development program has benefited from support at the highest levels of the organization,” says Matts Larsson, Director, Global Training and Development. “From the very start we knew we needed a holistic approach because if the entire organization is not speaking the same language and applying the same methodologies to drive uniform processes, systems and tools, then the foundation for success does not exist.”

Tetra Pak examined its business processes to embed project management best practices as per the Project Management Institute (PMI®). Then a thorough gap analysis was conducted to identify the competencies needed to meet or exceed the standards.

Next, to create a path to guide individuals toward the company’s goal, Tetra Pak developed and implemented competency profiles and updated job descriptions for virtually every position. “We wanted every employee working in a project to realize that he or she belongs to the project first and the specific line organization second,” said Larsson. Additionally, Tetra Pak is working with ESI to refine their recruitment tools to ensure they bring people with the right skill sets into the company in order to retain high performing project management-focused personnel.

Pre- and post-learning assessment tools complement the career paths. “These tools ensure that the people we invest in are fitted for the purpose and that this is the correct career path for them,” says Larsson.

To execute this ambitious capability development program, Tetra Pak selected ESI for its instructor-led efforts to ensure consistency of the entire learning experience from classroom materials to pre- and post-evaluation. “In the past we were forced to fly personnel to centralized locations for classes,” says Larsson. “Fortunately, ESI has the reach to deliver learning wherever we need it in the world, saving us a great deal of money while minimizing disruption to our employees and their work.”

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Matts Larsson
Director, Global Training and Development
Tetra Pak

Tactics

Tetra Pak’s capability development program is tailored to correspond to the company’s methodologies. The courses focus on a broad range of topics, including:

- Project governance
- Leadership
- Coaching and mentoring
- Risk management
- Planning and analysis
- Managing projects for non-project managers
- Project management fundamentals for sales people

A key focus area across all responsibilities has been governance with an eye to ensuring all projects are properly resourced.

“The executive governance workshops encourage a common approach organization- and world-wide while delivering a greater understanding of how to focus on strategy, value proposition and managing risks, rather than technical matters,” says Lars Eyrich, Director, Plant Sales and Engineering. “The classes emphasize interaction, giving the management team an opportunity to discuss how to apply guidelines and ensuring they have a solid understanding of the project managers’ world.”

Along with the suite of courses — all of which are delivered in English to drive consistent vocabulary across regions, teams and cultures — Tetra Pak demonstrated both its sophistication and commitment to the program through pre- and post-learning assessment tools. These tools assess competencies in the nine knowledge areas identified by PMI® as well as team members’ internal behaviors and attitudes.

Two of the pre- and post-assessment tools, ESI’s *PMAppraise: A Knowledge and Skills Assessment*® and *PM360: A PM Competency Assessment*™, enable Tetra Pak to determine the strengths and weaknesses of employees and guide refinement of the learning program. “Pre-learning and post-learning activities are essential for us,” says Larsson. “In fact, I’d say they are as important as the actual instruction.”

Results

Since initiating its performance improvement efforts with ESI, more than 800 Tetra Pak employees have participated in the program and 280 have gone through Tetra Pak’s tailored Advanced Project Management Program. Participants have earned a range of professional certificates from ESI and its academic partner, The George Washington University in Washington, DC.

The program also has helped Tetra Pak launch the benchmarking effort essential to tracking progress toward its goal of becoming a world-class project management organization. “Our focus is much clearer now,” says Larsson. “We are steadily improving the quality of our project management at all levels — from executive governance to sales and service — and this translates to continually higher levels of customer satisfaction.”

Next Steps

Tetra Pak recognizes that an effort of this importance and magnitude will never actually conclude. Rather, this on-going effort will continue to be refined in support of consistent global business processes and to ensure, once Tetra Pak achieves its benchmark of world-class project management, they maintain that position.

For more information, visit www.esi-intl.com.

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