

Dupont Latin America Delivers Customized Supply Chain Education to Support Fast-Growing Business

Leveraging the flexible and customizable Principles of Operations Management courseware, DuPont Latin America creates a targeted education program to advance productivity and meet KPIs

Goals

- Provide foundational supply chain education to workers new to this functional area
- Elevate employee performance to meet KPIs and increased customer demand
- Disseminate best practices across a geographically diverse, rapidly growing workforce

Approach

- Build a customized education program using Principles learning modules to emphasize knowledge in specifically targeted areas
- Identify language coaches and mentors among the workforce to overcome translation and comprehension barriers
- Roll out education using a collaborative team approach that promotes heightened communication, collaboration, comprehension and engagement

Results

- Employees gained foundational knowledge as well as a strategic understanding of the larger role they play in the value chain
- Efficiency improved and the existing workforce was able to meet increased demand
- Increased collaboration strengthened teamwork and cross-divisional information sharing
- Standardized terminology acts as a conduit for the supply chain culture DuPont aspires to create

DuPont has a massive and complex supply chain that has earned recognition for its performance, end-to-end visibility, sustainability and risk prevention. So, when DuPont Latin America needed to train its supply chain workforce to meet fast-growing customer demand, it turned to APICS's Principles of Operations Management (Principles) education suite to deliver a customized, targeted learning program.

DuPont's Latin American subsidiaries have achieved significant growth in the past five years, at a rate twice the GDP necessitating the rapid recruiting and hiring of professionals to support activities across the supply chain organization. As this young workforce grew, an internal study revealed that more than half of the employees had less than five years of supply chain experience, and more than 30 percent had less than two years' experience. While the Latin America workforce is talented and educated—the majority hold college degrees—many did not have formal supply chain education or hands-on experience.

As a result, they sometimes performed their work activities without seeing the larger context of the overall operation, and different plants in different countries developed disparate ways of communicating and carrying out work activities.

Management identified the need for a formal education program that would achieve three broad goals:

1. Increase knowledge in supply chain fundamentals for professionals with no formal supply chain education.
2. Standardize best practices.
3. Establish a common language to streamline communications within the organization and among external suppliers.

The range of languages and locations involved added complexity to the training initiative. While some DuPont Latin America offices are in urban areas like São Paulo and Mexico City, other facilities are in remote, rural areas, spread across multiple nations. Furthermore, although all employees have a working knowledge of English, it is a second language—with Spanish or Portuguese primarily spoken in the workplace. DuPont needed to effectively convey complex supply chain concepts to this multinational, geographically diverse workforce.

"Some have even been promoted, like the man who worked for 25 years in a remote DuPont plant. Following his completion of Principles training, he was named plant manager."

Mexico City-based DuPont program manager Laura Hartig, CSCP, SCOR-P and recently retired Program Manager—SCM Continuous Improvement Janice Gullo, CFPIM, CSCP, SCOR-P, operating from Delaware, led the education initiative. Hartig and Gullo selected APICS's Principles courseware to meet their training objectives.

DuPont selected the Principles courseware based on previous positive experiences. DuPont has partnered with APICS to deliver supply chain education since 2005, when the company undertook a major supply chain transformation project. Since that time, DuPont has launched numerous APICS education initiatives to fortify operations and improve performance. The results achieved through education and training earned DuPont the 2007 APICS Corporate Award of Excellence and the 2015 APICS Corporate Award of Excellence for Central and South America.

Delivery via Distance Learning

The Principles program is made up of five courses:

- Inventory Management
- Operations Planning
- Manufacturing Management
- Distribution and Logistics
- Managing Operations

Each can stand alone as a mini-course or be combined with other learning modules. There are nine sessions and two exams within each course, and all 45 sessions can be mixed and matched to create a unique training curriculum. Hartig and Gullo recognized that the flexible learning modules would enable a high degree of customization to create issue-specific training for different internal groups.

DuPont conducted 21-week training programs using an online portal that allowed instructors to reach individuals in remote areas who might not otherwise have had access to this type of education. Participants met for two hours each week. The classes were conducted in English, with local language coaches on hand to assist with translating complex concepts and completing homework assignments.

“We developed a network of coaches and mentors so participants could have a local mentor in their native language who was familiar with the concepts,” Hartig says. “These mentors were key to ensuring that we were able to follow up with each student at their own pace.”

During the initial pilot implementation and benchmarking phase, Hartig and Gullo immediately began to see positive results. In an internally developed program assessment, a sum score of 80 percent set the expectation of success. Benchmarking surpassed this mark and continued to increase as they made strategic improvements to the training based on participant feedback.

Following successful completion of the pilot, DuPont Latin America rolled out Principles education on a larger scale, leveraging existing video conferencing linkup technology, local mentors and language coaches. Participants studied and completed homework together, creating an internal social network. This collaborative approach was a critical component in the success of the training, promoting heightened levels of teamwork, communication, comprehension and engagement.

“The best part was creating the social network of supply chain professionals. This is a great foundation moving forward for the generation of professionals we have coming in.” Gullo notes.

Meaningful Improvements in Job Performance

Meanwhile, Hartig and Gullo continued to fine-tune the education program, finding that the flexibility of the Principles learning modules helped to maintain participant momentum and interest. DuPont Latin America ultimately retained 90 percent of participants throughout the duration of the training.

Managers carefully tracked employees’ performance in the training and in their jobs, seeing noticeable progress. Team members became much more receptive to learning and sharing best practices among colleagues. Many experienced meaningful improvements in their ability to perform their jobs and moved into different, more challenging roles. Some have even been promoted, like a man who worked for 25 years in a remote DuPont plant and became plant manager shortly following his completion of Principles training.

Communications within the organization and with outside suppliers and vendors also improved, and employees felt more interconnected with their peers across DuPont Latin America locations. Managers noticed that the work environment changed for the better: The common supply chain language and deepened collaboration served as a conduit for the development of a stronger internal culture.

News of the positive results spread, and demand for the training increased as other Latin America business unit leaders wanted to achieve similar results for their teams. The ability to customize the Principles training modules allowed Gullo and Hartig to continue to expand the program, creating tailored sessions and courses for a variety of departments.

APICS education—Principles in particular—became the key to combating the unique challenges facing each business unit. Where does a team want to improve? Forecasting? Demand management? Scheduling? MRP? A custom-designed curriculum can target specific areas that require attention.

Meanwhile, the enhanced knowledge base acquired by the employees allowed the right people to be moved into the right roles during restructuring, without losing business focus.

To date, more than 100 DuPont Latin and South American team members have completed Principles training.

“The employees are much more capable than when they came in,” Gullo notes. “We have their confidence set in place, they know where they can go to get more materials if they need to, and it gives them a springboard to go to the next level of supply chain. We’ve had several people go on to become CPIM certified and that has been very rewarding.”

“We have plants in unimaginable places where employees have no access to other formal training about supply chain,” Hartig adds. “I definitely feel touched by the letters of appreciation we received from people as we leveraged technology to reach them.”

“This is a great foundation moving forward for the generation of professionals we have coming in.”

— Janice Gullo

About ASCM

The Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM) is the global leader in supply chain organizational transformation, innovation and leadership. As the largest non-profit association for supply chain, ASCM is an unbiased partner, connecting companies around the world to the newest thought leadership on all aspects of supply chain. ASCM is built on a foundation of APICS certification and training spanning 60 years. Now, ASCM is driving innovation in the industry with new products, services and partnerships that enable companies to further optimize their supply chains, secure their competitive advantage and positively impact their bottom lines. For more information, visit ascm.org.