

IMAGINATION UNBOUND

From futuristic screens to high-tech tape, innovation flourishes in Charlotte USA.



TVisions' inTouch Interactive Walls

By Gina Carroll Howard

★ In a dramatic scene in *Minority Report*, Tom Cruise uses DreamWorks movie magic to toss images around on a futuristic screen. TVisions has done Spielberg one better. The company's inTouch Interactive Walls, measuring five feet tall and fifteen feet wide, allow visitors in corporate lobbies, hotel atriums, and universities to toss pictures and videos from one end to another, or to touch the screen and split it so multiple users can run different applications simultaneously.

"We saw a revolution coming in touch screens for mobile devices," says TVisions president Mike Feldman, a former University of North Carolina at Charlotte professor who holds more than 80 patents, including one for the "tossing" technology. "We felt that there was a need for touch-screen products that could bring people together."

The Charlotte-based company designs custom software and makes hardware for its wall and table models in a variety of settings. The five-year-old business has experienced explosive growth, moving from a three-room house to increasingly larger office parks.

"We have found the Charlotte region to be rich in the personnel

needed for technology start-ups, including researchers, engineers, and skilled technicians," Feldman says, adding he also has discovered the area to be a good source for angel investors and venture capital.

But not all innovative companies in Charlotte USA are young ones. Shurtape Technologies, LLC has its roots in a yarn-spinning company that began in 1880. Through a combination of acquisitions, partnerships with inventors, and its own ideas, the privately held Hickory, North Carolina-based company has developed a reputation for innovation and has become one of the largest global adhesive tape manufacturers.

One of its consumer brands, FrogTape, changed the painter's tape market by using a patented edge-treatment technology to prevent paint from bleeding under the tape. Its Duck Tape brand has over 200 options, including colors like Funky Flamingo. With unlimited means for self-expression, Duck Tape pops up as wallets, purses, and even prom wear for the annual Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest. The brand boasts nearly 5.5 million Facebook fans that help fuel innovation with product suggestions.

"Innovation is about stretching the bounds of how you think about a product or a market," says Shurtape CEO Stephen Shuford, the fifth generation of his family to lead the company. "We have more ideas than our research and development department can metabolize. There are oceans of ideas out there, and a critical aspect of being an innovative company is to tap into creativity and ingenuity wherever it exists."

With this much inspiration, it's no wonder that innovation flourishes in Charlotte USA. ★



Shurtape Technologies' Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest

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