

## Eureka! First in a series: Master WorkHolding looking for the next big idea

By Kimberly Conley

In the conference room in the Catawba County Chamber of Commerce, Master WorkHolding officials are surrounded by the people that know them best including; industry liaisons from the Association of Manufacturing Technology, NC State University College of Engineering extension specialists and employees from the floor up to senior management.

The 20 year-old Morganton facility creates customized work holding equipment and tooling used in diverse manufacturing applications. They primarily serve the aerospace, defense and automotive industries.

### They are there to grow

*Eureka! Winning Ways®* is a system to identify measurably smarter methods for growth. The program is targeted for small to medium-sized industry to develop practical ideas for rapid growth.

Master WorkHolding faces international competition and a lack of client diversity. Mike Powell, chief executive officer saw a need for growth and scheduled the Eureka! session.

The flipchart in their conference room reads:

*Why are we here?*

*Improve communication*

*Fluctuating markets, new ways to enter new markets*

*Doing well now, but what about the future*

*Grow employees*

*Where do we want to go*



Master WorkHolding creates customized fixtures for a variety of industries, including automotive.



Session members sort through concept cards in search of the next big idea.

The idea generation session at Master WorkHolding, comprised of 15 individuals, produced **71 ideas** that are submitted to the growth coaches on yellow concept cards.

One of those originated with Dustin Clark, design engineer for Master WorkHolding with 3 years experience. While conversing with Joe Sauve, extension specialist with IES, Clark asked, “What about a lifetime warranty on manufactured components with a special emphasis on wearable parts?”

Sauve eagerly replied, “Yellow card that one.”

## Red light, green light



The group then honed the 71 yellow concept cards to 20. Those 20 were further refined, discussed and condensed to the top four. The four are tweaked and finalized and input into the Merwyn system, which is software that determines the success of the ideas based on overt benefit and a reason to believe. It operates on a green, yellow, red system and Master WorkHolding receives the green light with Clark's idea.

On the second day, the company developed a 30-day action plan to research and test the idea, or “fail fast and fail cheap,” according to Hall, founder of *Eureka! Winning Ways*®.

At the end of the Master WorkHolding 30 day action plan, Deborah Porto, IES growth coach assigned to Master WorkHolding, called to learn that since the initial Eureka! session, the company was in the process of implementing the warranty idea and that **four additional ideas were in the research and test stage**.

“We’re an idea company and what the Eureka! process did for us is, it actually slowed us down. And I see that as a positive. The platform is systematic and it was just what we needed to grow, intelligently,” said Powell.

This is the first in a series for Eureka! projects.

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