

# Interview: Omar Muñiz, PE President, ShareTech Group, Puerto Rico

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*Omar Muñiz, President of ShareTech Group, discusses his company's competitive positioning as a leading engineering, architecture, environmental consulting, and construction program management firm for the Puerto Rican life sciences industry.*

## **What are the main services ShareTech offers to the clients?**

We offer project planning & program management, environmental consulting, architectural design, mechanical, process, and electrical engineering.

## **What are your client's primary needs?**

They usually need fast-track capable, innovative, feasible, cost effective, and above all, flexible industrial design and construction that meets modern day technology, schedule, budget, and quality requirements and standards.

## **During the phase out of Section 936, how did you assert the company's competitiveness?**

Impact to the service sector economy of the life sciences industry post-Section 936 did not occur immediately, but rather gradually. By tradition, the life sciences sector engineering and architectural design service needs had been mostly provided by larger local or stateside firms. Being a small and emerging local firm, we had to be both competitive in pricing and extremely flexible and oriented to specific client needs. We have been able to build and strengthen our client relationships during this time by providing a proactive customer service-type model.

## **What was the initial motivation to create the company and what niche did you want support?**

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My father started the business as an environmental engineering, health and safety (EHS) consulting firm in the late 1980s after obtaining solid professional experience working for the petrochemical industry. Puerto Rico's life science sector was growing rapidly while the petrochemical sector was fading out during this time. By way of his active participation and assuming leadership roles within the Puerto Rico Manufacturers Association (PRMA), he became very acquainted with the life sciences sector and their particular needs. Very soon the firm became quite busy servicing this sector. After working for Johnson & Johnson for several years, I joined the firm in 2000, to support a joint venture between our firm and New York based architectural and engineering (A&E) firm, Sikorski Engineering Associates (now Stantec), which was servicing Wyeth (now Pfizer) on large capital expansion projects at the Guayama manufacturing facility. Five years of continuous engineering and construction management experience motivated us to expand the company's service capabilities. In 2005, we restructured into a full service provider of engineering, environmental consulting and construction program management services to support the life sciences sector on the island. Five years later, in 2010, we added architectural design to our portfolio of professional services.

### **What have been some of the key milestones of ShareTech in recent times?**

One has been the addition of program management and architectural planning and design to our core of services. The inclusion of architectural design services really got us out of the box and gave us a broader perspective to work with our clients. Now we are not only looking at energy reduction but also planning and designing space accordingly.

### **So this diversification of services was based on clients' demands?**

We decided that in order for us to evolve as a firm we needed to work with the disciplines that complement our engineering work. In the past we would go into a building and focus on facilities, utilities, and the overall energy requirements, whereas now we are able to evaluate the layout, the people and material flow, manufacturing processes, everything wholly. Most clients were looking for the full discipline approach and only big firms had these range of services, therefore we felt the need to expand and add more services to offer a holistic solution to our clients.

### **What are the main challenges regarding human capital?**

We have been fortunate enough to have retained our professional staff through some tough years of difficult economy. Many good professionals have left the island simply because there is not sufficient work at this time. Thus, hiring may become a challenge if you are looking for experience out there. Local academia, however, remains strong when it comes to life sciences education programs. Developing young talent by collaborating with college internship programs is a good alternative. We are currently evaluating that option.

### **What do you believe that the private sector needs to do in order to continue developing and growing in Puerto Rico?**

Exporting services to other life science hubs will encourage our service sector growth while creating new economies for Puerto Rico. Working with academia to develop future professionals is also a great way of promoting growth. When we learn to do so as a whole, we will then help to bring more work to our beautiful island and thus develop opportunities for upcoming generations.

### **In five years, what do you expect ShareTech to have accomplished?**

We are currently working on license reciprocity to prepare us to do work on the US mainland. In particular, we have eyes set on North Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey and Pennsylvania because we

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know there is a good pharmaceutical manufacturing presence there. Five years from now we are looking to perform for these jurisdictions.

In addition, we are looking to service other pharmaceutical hubs such as Ireland and Singapore as well. It is fascinating to see how modern day information technology and globalization can facilitate and connect us, service providers, to our multinational clients' worldwide networks. We are also currently working on a web based platform that will help us achieve this in the next couple of years.

### **How many employees work here in ShareTech?**

We have ten engineers and technicians in the office, plus eight project engineers and managers in the field.

### **What makes ShareTech the partner of choice?**

We are flexible, we are willing to adapt to our clients' needs, we are very customer-oriented, and we can work with either short or long-term assignments. We like challenges and we have the required passion to deal with them. Availability is a strong characteristic of ours. We will be there when you need us with a strong approach, always aiming to find solutions for you.

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