



## Linking people for conclusive discussions

### The challenge

The President and VPs of the business identified two main concerns from the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey. Their challenge was to get a better understanding of the underlying causes and to identify possible solutions. They charged a project team to provide them with these insights. After a round of internal workshops they had a list of 200 ideas and needed a way forward.

### Synthetron's role

The project leader asked Synthetron to help with large-scale focus group discussions. Synthetron obtains its insights through real-time discussions of employees (10-200) typically lasting about an hour.

In these free-flow interactive discussions, the participants put their minds together anonymously from their PC. Together they filter out their best insights.

The result of such a discussion is a ranked list of important ideas: the synthetrons.

It is an easy process: participants are in front of a friendly interface via a simple internet link to the Synthetron server.

### Synthetron services used

- 1 Preparation: both practically – segmented approach and invitations – and with regard to content – prepare the discussion script with the project team, including the hypotheses to be tested.
- 2 Moderation of the actual discussion – with project managers in co-moderating or probing roles.
- 3 Management Report based on a content analysis of the synthetron list so the client can understand root causes and identify solutions on which to focus.

### Approach

Four groups of two different management levels were taking part in a one hour interactive discussion on one of the two areas of concern identified from the Employee Satisfaction Survey.

The discussion was structured first to answer polls based on the Employee Satisfaction Survey and then to reveal the specific reasons behind these scores. Participants were then invited to discuss:

- 1 problems and roadblocks with respect to the two main areas of concern
- 2 root causes of these problems
- 3 necessary conditions for significant improvement and the key levers to focus on.



## Synthetron Case Employee Satisfaction Survey follow up

### Synthetron focus groups

### helped a Shell business

### address key concerns

### following their Employee

### Survey, April 2005



## Results

The 120 participants made a total of 1402 statements, out of which 310 synthetrons – with different level of support – were filtered out by the participants (synthetrons are statements that surpassed a certain level of support from participants). Of the synthetrons, 50 had medium to top support levels. Participants gave very positive feedback on their experience: “easy interface, fun and intellectually challenging and free discussion”.

## Outcome

The Synthetron Management Report was based on the content analysis of the synthetrons. This concise report includes a management summary identifying the main root causes, the key solution areas and the list of hypotheses that were not recognised as root causes. In the attachment every conclusion line of the management summary is backed up by the reclassified list of synthetrons (the statements of participants with their context and level of support).

## Impact

The President and VPs of the business were very pleased with the report and the Synthetron method because they found it has helped them to:

- ▶ understand the main root causes for the concerns shown up by the People Survey
- ▶ prioritise the issues and solution areas
- ▶ unveil some important issues that would not have been addressed otherwise
- ▶ realise that some initial hypothesis of root causes were after all not that important
- ▶ engage the participants who gave very positive feedback on their participation
- ▶ work out a practical solution and plan.

## Timing

The elapsed time between the first meeting to discuss the script/process and the Management Report was less than 3 weeks.

You may be curious to see what a Synthetron discussion looks like. Check it out at:  
<http://www.synthetron.com/animation/en>



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