

Synectics™

A Powerful Innovation Tool

Generating new products, services and marketing strategies can be daunting in today's competitive marketplace. Synectics™ sessions provide an environment for creative strategic thinking and for translating that new thinking into actionable outcomes. As an invention tool, Synectics™ facilitates the creation of innovative approaches for differentiating a product, service, brand or client experience.

The Synectics™ creative problem solving methodology is based on a body of knowledge derived from research into the innovation process. The approach uses a structured participant session designed to heighten collaborative idea generation.

How Does it Work?

Synectics™ engagements consist of three steps: 1) consultation with the client and preparation of a client task statement, 2) facilitation of the ideation/strategy session (generally one-half or full day depending on the objectives) and 3) delivery of a management summary. The task statement guides the selection of proven, specially designed exercises. The session(s) are led by a Synectics™-trained facilitator whose task is to lead the group and:

- Foster creativity and innovative "breakthrough" thinking
- Identify and evaluate relevant product/service/brand/strategy solutions
- Enumerate key action steps and team assignments

What Are The Deliverables With Synectics™ Sessions?

Following sessions of this kind a document entitled "Easel Notes of the Proceedings" is delivered that serves as a transcript of the workshop's activities and output. Included in this document is the facilitator's management summary which outlines salient insights, implications and suggested next-steps. This document is delivered within 3-4 days time after the session is conducted.

Role of the Client and Facilitator

In a Synectics™ session, there are three key participant roles:

The Spokesperson: It is customary that one member of the management team agrees to accept this role, being defined as the person who has called the meeting...who is most directly affected by the outcome.

The Facilitator: S/he assumes the group leadership role and guides the team as an experienced problem solver.

The Participants: A critical body of eight to ten people who, by virtue of their disciplines and/or expertise, are expected to contribute generously to the content. Our programs have been successfully used by representatives from marketing, advertising, strategy consulting, promotion, packaging, industrial design and engineering, to name a few.

The Applications

Our programs have been utilized by our clients successfully for a variety of business growth objectives to:

- Create new products in particular categories

- Position products/services
- Build market-focused growth strategies
- Extend product/brand lines
- Develop advertising and promotional concepts
- Provide direction for organizational development
- Define business strategy and long-term goals

Some specific examples of individual engagements include:

- A credit card provider was able to identify specific initiatives and research needed to minimize credit losses and add long-term value to the division.
- A direct marketer explored ways to leverage catalogue sponsorship via merchandising, distribution, positioning and market targeting.
- A national brewing company outlined a new marketing strategy for one of its leading brands.
- A mutual funds provider generated services custom-designed for the wealth segment.
- A national foods manufacturer was able to create new ideas for an integrated line of vegetable juice, diced tomatoes and salsa.
- A financial services firm redesigned its website to maximize competitive differentiation and promote unique customer benefits.

Synectics™ Integration with Market Research

One of the most powerful applications of Synectics™ is to use the technique following a round of qualitative research. In this scenario, a workshop is organized

and directed by a facilitator, who can be, but need not be the moderator. Participants include those who observed the focus groups. Key hypotheses are identified and an action plan of next steps is articulated. While it is not designed to take the place of a final report, a Synectics™-style debriefing is a powerful way to leverage the findings of the qualitative process—especially their implications for strategy and implementation.

Quantitative research also benefits from the use of this process. One of the most useful ways in which this technique can be leveraged is to include it as a "Discovery Day" lead-in to a round of quantitative work. In this application, the researcher(s) and client team identify what's been done to date, what knowledge is accrued, what needs to be accomplished in the quantitative study, what (new) questions need to be asked, etc. This greatly increases the effectiveness and impact of the investment made in a quantitative research study.

Actionable Innovation

In facilitated Synectics™ sessions, company participants (and appropriate outside parties such as ad agencies, package design, R&D consultants, "creative consumers", etc.) experience a special environment that promotes "out-of-the-box thinking" and creative problem solving that can drive more effective marketing and business results.

Dialogue Resource, LLC. is a marketing research and consulting firm located in Boston MA.