

Strategic Management of Development Processes in Social Enterprises: Part 1 – Description of the Syntegration Model

In Parts 1 to 3 we present methods and instruments for managing development processes in social enterprises that the Module “Strategic Management” is offering as support for the operational modules in the [DP PSPP](#).

These are:

Part 1 - The Syntegration model

Part 2 – The Scenario Technique

Part 3 – Strategic Work

The aim of this description is to get to know the methods and how they are applied. A separate document on the topic will describe the practical procedure within the DP, which has actually involved a combination of Syntegration and Scenario-Technique (this is why the two methods will be described separately here).

Team Syntegrity or Syntegration is a model for problem solving in mid-sized groups (typically 24 to 42 people). Syntegrity was developed in 1991 by Stafford Beer, the inventor of "Managerial Cybernetics". The word "Syntegration" combines "Synergy" and "Integration" and means finding a solution to many mutually interdependent pieces of information and positions to yield a combined result. The symbol of Team Syntegrity is the icosahedron (a regular solid with 20 faces). Each corner of the icosahedron represents an issue, each edge a participant, and the whole icosahedron the cooperative interaction of the issues and participants.

Methodologically, Team Syntegrity resembles the large-group methods Open Space, Real Time Strategic Change Conference and Future Search Conference, but it is more strongly focused on solving an exactly defined problem and makes the group process serve the aim of arriving at a result.

"Team Syntegrity" and "Syntegration" are registered trademarks of Team Syntegrity International, Canada. Further information is available on their website www.syntegrity.com.

A Syntegration takes from 3 to 5 days and can be divided into the following phases:

1. Opening phase
2. Selection of topics
3. Processing of topics
4. Concluding presentation

The sequence of events in a “Syntegration” process is as follows (simplified):

Opening: the general theme of the Syntegration is formulated in an opening question that brings together the issues to be worked on.

Generation of the agenda (“problem jostle”): each participant submits contributions that he/she considers to be important (“statements of importance”). These are then

discussed and combined (“aggregated statements of importance”). Then the agenda for the actual treatment of the main theme or problem is generated in a process of synthesis and prioritization (“hexadic reduction”). It is expressed in 12 topics (“consolidated statements of importance”).

Selection of topics: assignment to groups (“topic auction”): each member of the Infoset chooses the topics to which he/she would like to make a contribution. People are assigned to teams based on the order of their preferences.

Processing of topics (“outcome resolve”): each individual team, composed of 5 players and 5 critics, discusses a topic. Each team meets several times (e.g. in three iterations). The fact that the same question, with its different but linked aspects, is dealt with by different combinations of people from the same overall group (“reverberation”) demonstrably creates a “self-organizing” process with a high integrative effect.

Conclusion: additional adjustments and presentation of the total results in the plenary group.

For details of the Team Syntegrity Model, see: Beer, Stafford: Beyond Dispute. The Invention of Team Syntegrity, Chichester: Wiley, 1994; Espejo, Raúl/Schwaninger, Markus, eds.: To Be and Not to Be, that is the System. A Tribute to Stafford B., (Publication in preparation).

Further Information

Syntegeation/ Syntegrity - Model

Over some forty years, Stafford Beer (1926 - 2002) has published a steady stream of seminal books and papers in which he has applied cybernetic science to organizational problems. In all of these he has explained underlying principles and developed new theories and recorded a great variety of practical applications. In his last book, published in 1994 (Beer, 1994) he presents a cybernetic approach to knowledge management within large groups of about 30 people, called Syntegeation®. Syntegeation is a structured, non-hierarchical process for highly effective and efficient dialogue that leads to much faster, much more informed outcomes and aligns people behind the resulting decisions, messages and action plans with a high chance for implementation. Since its invention this powerful method has been very successfully applied more than 200 times in the organization of normative, directional, and strategic planning, and other creative decision processes. The underlying model is a regular icosahedron. This has 30 struts, each of which represents a person. Each of the 12 edges represents a topic that is being discussed. An internal network of interactions is created by a set of iterative protocols. A group organized like this is an ultimate statement of participatory democracy, since each role is indistinguishable from any other. There is no hierarchy, no top, no bottom, no sideways. Beer illustrates how continued dynamic interaction between persons causes ideas and resolutions to hum around the sphere, which reverberates into a kind of group consciousness. Mathematical analysis of the structure shows how the process is determined by the even spread of synergy. The aim of this article is to present to managers and their advisors a new planning method that captures the native genius of the organization in a non-political and non-hierarchical way. That produces the best possible results in the shortest possible time

from the largest possible number of people, by making optimized use of the knowledge these people have. Knowledge management at its best.

From: Gunter Nittbaur: (Malik Management Zentrum St. Gallen, Switzerland gunter.nittbaur@mzsg.ch)

What is Syntegration?

Syntegration is a suite of powerful, science-based processes that optimize large group interaction.

These processes are an unprecedented breakthrough for addressing complex business and social challenges. They greatly accelerate and radically improve planning, decision making and alignment-building, and they elicit changes in behaviour that are necessary for real impact.

1. Teamwork:

When large groups convene to address complex issues, the discussions often go around in circles and get nowhere. There is no time for endless meetings, and no room for one-sided manipulation. The criteria for good teamwork are:

- A well thought-through division of work (or division of topics)
- Strict discipline (timekeeping, role assignment, protocols for participation, etc.)
- Group dynamics must not be pursued at the expense of concrete results

2. Optimal Cross-linking and Cross-pollination:

A group of, say, 30 people has a total of $n(n-1)$, or 870, possible relationships, assuming that the relationship of A to B is in some way different from the relationship of B to A. These distinct relationships must be organized so that every person has a highly productive exchange with every other person. The design or architecture must leverage all of the different views, information, expertise, and experiences to produce the best possible solution, with stakeholders' buy-in and commitment.

3. Effective Collaboration:

Key people are expensive people whose time is scarce and must be spent effectively and efficiently. They must be able to focus their attention as quickly as possible on the right core issues, and experience synergy as quickly as possible.

What happens at a Syntegration?

Before a Syntegration, the Sponsor articulates an opening question and selects an appropriate group of participants:

- The opening question frames the challenge. It can be broadly or narrowly defined. For example: "How can we work together to successfully implement the new organization?"; or "What must we do to improve productivity by 25% in our Claims department within the next 6 months?"; or "What are our key priorities within the first 3 months of our post-merger integration?"; or "What

must we do now and over the next 3 years to optimize growth for ABC company”;

- Participants are selected who collectively have the means – the knowledge, the experience, the perspectives, the expertise – to answer the opening question, and/or to help with subsequent execution. They almost always include a variety of executives, managers, and employees from within an organization, its departments, or teams. They may include external subject matter experts who have been sourced globally. They often include a variety of key stakeholders and influencers, such as partners, customers, and regulators.

At the Syntegration, participants:

- Deconstruct the opening question into the necessary set of topics that they agree will lead to answers
- Engage in highly productive dialogue using protocols designed to overcome the psychological and systemic barriers that usually stand in the way of such dialogue
- Use a sophisticated meeting architecture that systematically drives integration of content and people

Where does it apply?

Syntegration is applied to:

1. An organization's existing planning processes
2. Unique, complex situations that require answers and action
3. Various types of Key Stakeholder interactions
4. Large-scale business transformation

Existing Planning Processes:

- Corporate Strategy
- Strategic Planning
- Operational Planning
- Brand Planning
- Sales Planning
- Innovation Process Management

What are the results?

Syntegegration is an engine like no other. It is a system that takes a group of people and an important question as input, and produces answers, alignment, and action as output.

- Highly informed and innovative answers to the initial question - answers that tightly integrate the breadth of knowledge, expertise, and experience of all participants
- Documented strategies and/or plans of action
- Rich learning and shared understanding by all participants
- Strong commitment and broad support for action
- An enduring understanding of the context in which decisions were made and actions chosen
- New and/or strengthened relationships and networks that transcend organizational and disciplinary boundaries.

http://www.syntegrity.com/what_happens.html