

SYNERGY

In business, people may choose either to work together as a team or work separately to attain goals. Synergy occurs when a company chooses to utilize teams to increase performance, drive strategic growth and reach common goals. Companies may use a synergistic approach to enhance communications, promote knowledge sharing, streamline processes and bridge the generation gap.

Synergy describes the benefits a business experiences by strategically organizing itself to maximize cooperation and innovation. In simple terms, a synergistic organization achieves more as a group than its parts could in isolation. Increasing synergy requires a careful analysis of your organization's current strategies to identify better ways of doing business.

Complementary Skills

Analyze the different departments of your organization to identify the key skills of each section. Find a way to connect the departments so that the skills and insights of each complement and support the others. For example, say you have a sales department that excels at creating new accounts and a research team devoted to designing new product lines. A synergistic connection between these two departments might consist of a joint team that combines the disparate skills in a complementary way. You could task the group with identifying product innovations that can overcome specific sticking points, such as product usability, that salespeople currently encounter while negotiating with clients.

Enhance Communications

Synergy extends communications across departments, and teamwork is encouraged to reach strategic goals. For example, the sales department and IT department work together and share skill sets to create a new customer service portal and increase market share. A company that promotes synergy could use technology, such as tablet computers and video conferencing, to provide mobility, ease of access and real-time discussions. This may help employees improve communication skills and deliver exemplary customer service.

Identifying and eliminating communication blockages also can increase synergy by developing coordination. For example, ask department heads to meet regularly to discuss current activities. The proceedings might spur conversations that lead to innovative ideas for cooperation.

Promote Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing permits feedback from co-workers and collaboration between internal and external stakeholders. Synergy may involve the use of customer relationship

management products such as Salesforce.com and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to facilitate the exchange of ideas and to solidify relationships. When individuals work together in a synergistic fashion, expectations, rules and best practices are apparent. This environment fosters learning and growth and spurs innovation, which is advantageous to a company's competitive standing and strategic value.

Another way to increase synergy is to allow employees to share successful strategies, according to the book "Strategic Management: Awareness and Change," by John Thompson and Frank Martin. For example, if the manager of your sales department discovers that an incentive program motivates her staff well, that same approach might work well in other departments.

Streamline Processes

Collaboration and knowledge sharing across the organization can lead to business process improvement by eliminating redundancy, reducing cycle times and increasing efficiency. If, for example, a marketing department and sales department enter customer account information on separate computer systems, streamlining the process will prevent duplication of efforts and free up resources. This poses opportunities for process automation and a reduction of labor costs, which can positively affect a company's bottom line.

Efficient Performance

Eliminating structural redundancy also can increase synergy by identifying ways to streamline operations, allowing each department to focus on being maximally efficient within its own role. For instance, forcing several departments to deal with customers in addition to their production responsibilities is less efficient than creating a single, dedicated department for handling customer service. With the creation of the new customer service department, the other departments can hand off difficult client issues to the experts.

Bridge the Generation Gap

A synergistic environment helps bridge the gaps among multiple generations, such as millennials, Generation X and baby boomers. Without it, each group might adapt, communicate and work in different ways. This could negatively affect a company's productivity and the way it functions as a whole. For example, according to a study published by Ernst & Young, 78 percent of respondents perceive millennials as the most technically capable, but only 45 percent of respondents agree that the same generation works well in teams. A synergistic approach would pair the group with another generation that has strong

team skills and poor technical skills, and facilitate team-building exercises and social media activities to encourage members to learn from each other.

Alliances

You also can create synergistic alliances with other businesses that have resources or strategies that sync well with yours. A chocolate maker, for example, might supply its products at a steeply discounted rate to a local bakery, which in turn will promote the chocolate supplier to its patrons. Both businesses benefit from the synergistic connection in ways that neither could alone.