

Case Study

GroupSystems Success Story: Procter & Gamble

ThinkTank Drives Ideation in Procter & Gamble's 'Innovation Gym'

In a room in West Chester, Ohio, ideas are born that touch nearly all of us. It's the legendary Procter & Gamble "Gym," where people across the company gather both physically and virtually to brainstorm new products, solve problems or build better teams.

Three billion times a day, Procter and Gamble (P&G) brands touch the lives of people around the world. From the kitchen to the bathroom and beyond, P&G products are some of the most trusted on the market, including Tide®, Pantene®, Folgers®, Iams®, Crest®, Duracell® and Gillette®.

The company's innovation Gym, located near its Cincinnati headquarters, serves as an incubator of sorts for innovation. Established by chairman and CEO, A.G. Lafley, the facility brings together employees and consumers for true collaboration.

The company's focus on consumers and design has paid off. Business Week named P&G number seven on its "World's Most Innovative Companies List" in 2007. The same year, the Wharton school of Business gave P&G its "Consumer Goods Technology Award."

A Key Tool in the P&G Toolbox

Since 1992, Procter and Gamble has used GroupSystems to support collaboration. It's an interactive, web-based solution that helps teams brainstorm, make decisions and take action in areas such as product R&D, finance, marketing, human resources, and more. P&G facilitators leverage ThinkTank in the "Gym" and elsewhere with same-place, same-time groups, as well as same-time, different-place teams.

"ThinkTank is a key tool in my interactive toolbox," said Rick Gregory, Section Head, Innovation Evangelist. "I might combine ThinkTank with a custom music playlist, the right setting, facilitation templates, Post-It notes, big paper and hula hoops."

Internal "clients" come to P&G's facilitation team for assistance in planning and executing meetings. Facilitators often recommend that groups use ThinkTank, which not only expedites and enriches outcomes, but also reduces the time facilitators spend preparing post-meeting documentation.

Facilitators use ThinkTank's Categorizer function to brainstorm ideas, and then Organize to group them into common "buckets." The solution helps build consensus among groups by identifying areas of disagreement, encouraging focused discussions, and iterative voting to narrow down lists further.

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— Teresa Parry, Innovation Guide

Customer

Procter and Gamble
www.pg.com

Employees

138,000

Annual Revenue

\$76 billion

Business Benefits of GroupSystems

- Anonymity enriches the quality and quantity of ideas.
- Meetings with ThinkTank produce more results in shorter periods of time.
- On average, facilitators save three hours on post-meeting documentation.

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The Power of Anonymity

ThinkTank adds an important dynamic typically missing from physical and even virtual meetings – anonymity. Participants type in their comments and ideas into the ThinkTank interface, and vote on issues, without identifying themselves. Teresa Parry, Innovation Guide, finds it particularly beneficial when meetings involve sensitive subject matter or hierarchies.

“The anonymity breaks down barriers between titles because it's completely anonymous,” Parry said. “I see it as a breakthrough tool when there's tension or sensitive topics within groups.”

Because participants type in their ideas, ThinkTank also encourages them to share comments in more complete thoughts. That results in more complete documentation after the meeting.

Fast Ideation

Parry also sees ThinkTank as a solution for expediting ideation. Participants contribute ideas quickly and build on them easily, until they reach consensus with voting in ThinkTank.

One group had just one day to develop product claims. Using ThinkTank, Parry helped them capture ideas and arrive at a narrowed list of claims.

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Reducing Post-Meeting Busywork

Client satisfaction aside, ThinkTank also saves busywork and time for P&G facilitators. As a service, they provide complete post-meeting documentation for their clients.

With ThinkTank, participant contributions themselves serve as the documentation for meetings. That means no painstaking transcription at the end of sessions or frustration in trying to read someone else's handwriting.

“ThinkTank probably saves three hours of post-meeting work, on average,” Parry said. “It's a complete record of the session in one place. That means we get information back to the client faster.”

In an organization like P&G, where creativity and speed are the makings of competitive advantage, ThinkTank helps bring out the best in P&G's people—faster.