

“When you deal with a big company, it is not always easy to get the opinion of large groups of employees. Focus groups are time consuming and do not cover all opinions. Working with Synthetron has allowed us to involve a big part of the company when defining our Employer Value Proposition. The Synthetron process is simple, the outcome very valuable, and our people really enjoyed participating. Thanks to the chat sessions we now have a more realistic view about how our employees perceive us as an employer.”

– Sandra Vandorpe
VP Engagement & Operational Excellence, Belgacom

Results & Benefits

A very useful report for different levels throughout the organisation was prepared with the following insights:

- A **synthetic overview** of the entire company with the common EVP building blocks and specific accents (differences) for each of the segments.
- A **detailed picture per segment** of the building blocks of their EVP:
 - the **drivers** for motivation and de-motivation working at Belgacom;
 - the **image** that employees have of the company, of the employer today as well as the aspired one;
 - the language and behaviour (LaB) **mindset insights** and related communication advice for each of the different segments;
 - an overview of the management **implications** of the given insights.
- **Presentations** of these Synthetron results were subsequently given to several top managers in the Belgacom organisation.

The report and the different workshops with the VP and the Employer Branding team served as valuable input to build a relevant Belgacom’s Employer Value Proposition, in motivating language based on the acquired LaB insights.

Getting a sharp and strong EVP turned out to be very **beneficial to Belgacom** for many purposes. Some uses are illustrated below:

1. It served as a basis to build the internal and external **employer branding plan** as well as in communication internally;
2. **Job advertisements** were also rewritten based on the EVP.
3. The EVP was used to develop the new **career site**.
4. When launching new **employee programs** to address strategic priorities, the EVP is deeply considered in the development of the branding and communication plans.



“Your employer brand isn’t what you say it is, it’s what people tell you it is.”

– Sir Terry Leahy
former CEO of Tesco

Belgacom’s operating structure consists of four pillars: Consumer Business Unit (CBU) and the Enterprise Business Unit (EBU); Service Delivery Engine & Wholesale (SDE&W) and Staff & Support (S&S), which provides all the horizontal support functions of the Group’s activities.

Case study Belgacom

Employer Branding, Employer Value Proposition & Engagement

More than 500 employees were asked their perspective and opinion about Belgacom as an employer in 11 online Synthetron discussions, each one lasting no more than an hour. The result gave the company valuable input, and enabled it to identify a more sharply defined Employer Value Proposition and so attract both the right people and improve internal communication.

Why an Employer Value Proposition?

Understanding the Employer Value Proposition is the basis for engaging the right target audiences to build an organisation. Knowing and understanding where your EVP comes from will ensure consistency and effective engagement for a company’s processes, communication and policies. An Employer (sometimes also referred to as Employee) Value Proposition is the essence of the Employer Brand. It is the sum of the emotional & functional benefits of an organisation to its current and prospective employees. An EVP captures the core values of the Identity (internal perception – what current employees experience), the Image (external perception – what outsiders believe) and the Intent (aspiration – what you want to be both in terms of strategic intent as well as employee expectation). The more the Identity, Image and Intent have in common, the stronger and clearer the EVP.

The Challenge of Belgacom

Belgacom is an autonomous public-sector company listed on the Belgian stock exchange. It is the incumbent telecom operator in Belgium and has about 15.000 employees. The Belgacom Group owns and manages several brands including Belgacom, Proximus, Scarlet, Telindus and Skynet, either as a result of mergers or buy-outs. Belgacom

offers residential and professional customers a range of telephone services (fixed and mobile), internet, as well as television and ICT sourcing and integration solutions. Belgacom has been successful – and continues to grow and change its markets, products and services.

The **HR challenge** faced by the Belgacom Group was twofold: (1) how to **keep the level of motivation** and engagement of its employees high, and (2) how to **attract the right people**. It’s at times like this when a clear Employee Value Proposition is required. A review of the old EVP related research data made it clear to the Belgacom Employer Branding team that the vast majority of the available data was either too generic or not sufficiently substantiated. There was a marked need for a more profound understanding of “who we are” and “who we want to be”. It was going to be necessary to understand what the different segments of the Belgacom population felt, thought, and aspired to – and what they most wanted to change, so as to build the new EVP.

The Belgacom Employer Branding team decided to work with Synthetron to get the desired insights for their new EVP. They had understood that the Synthetron methodology of proactive crowd-sourcing works exceptionally well in circumstances where there is such a diverse and geographically spread out group of people.

Approach

Synthetron uses its unique methodology to listen to staff and so reach actionable conclusions in an objective, safe and transparent way. Our proprietary software and specialised analysis techniques follow a structured process to efficiently deliver a synthesis of the opinions and ideas, concerns and wishes of the participants – without anyone having to leave their desk!

For staff, it's like spending an hour on an instant messenger programme. They work online in a stimulating peer-to-peer discussion, while still remaining completely anonymous. Collaboratively they identify the most important ideas. For managers, it's a chance to reach beyond the direct inner circle, to listen deeply and to test hypotheses anonymously. For HR, it delivers clear, insightful, conclusive results in a matter of days - in a way never possible before – in a way in which real value is added to the business.

The Synthetron approach consists of seven consecutive steps. Importantly it doesn't measure people, instead it revolves around smart listening to what people say matters to them – for example, around the topic of employer branding.

The heart of this methodology is the **Synthetron Discussion Platform** (Engage phase), an online discussion application that can easily engage up to 1000 participants, typically for one hour, via an online moderated, anonymous chat type discussions. It allows decision makers to ask focused questions to large groups and get insights into the top opinions and ideas of these groups.

Let's take a look at how it worked at Belgacom, as they explored the right Employer Value Proposal.

1. During the **In-take phase**, we clarified the current situation, the desired results and the key issues. Important and relevant information is gathered (e.g. from previous HR surveys) and put together to define the five dimensions of an Employer Value Proposition on which to focus: (1) affiliation with Belgacom, (2) organisational culture, (3) HR policies (incl. career development and remuneration), (4) way of working, and (5) the job itself.
2. In the **Design phase**, we identified the **selection process** (of the potential chatters), selected the segments and developed the script that would be used during the online discussion. Six business critical target **segments** were carefully identified that are essential to achieve business strategy, a.o. ICT professionals, customer and non-customer facing employees, with and without portfolio, as well as the high potentials.

The script consisted of five major blocks of questions, designed to balance the 3Hs: the behaviour side (Heart), the rational site (Head) and the practical site (Hands) of participants input (see Synthetron's 3H model). The first question/discussion was designed to understand what motivates (or is felt demotivating) in the employees' day-to-day activities. Then, there were questions about personal engagement towards Belgacom as a company, as well as Belgacom as an employer. The next question asked participants to share aspirations when working at

Belgacom. Finally, the discussion would finish off with a round-up of advice on how to increase engagement in the coming years.

3. The **Recruit phase**: Selection of the potential participants was done by Belgacom; considering workforce planning and a segment-customised invitation sent via internal mail, and supported by the division heads. This would result in an actual participation rate of more than 50%.
4. The **Engage phase**: **505 persons** participated in **11 discussions**, coming from **6 different segments** (parts) of the company. All discussions were done separately in either French or Dutch – so that everyone was able to chat in their **native mother tongue**; only the Synthetron discussion with the High Potentials was done in English.

- The discussions were **moderated** at the Belgacom premises, with the Employer Branding team co-moderating and managers of the different business units observing the discussion. In total, participants interactively shared **more than 6000 ideas** and feelings on what drives them, what demotivates them, or what they value at Belgacom as their employer (feedback phase). Next, we shared aspirations and the potential EVP (co-creation phase).
- Participants were able to not only share ideas, but also react on each other's ideas, particularly those that **collaboratively** had been identified as the most relevant ideas. These are called **"synthetrons"** (tron = element

of synthesis). At the end of the discussion, it was clear that participants were enthusiastic to have been invited to share their ideas, in such an open and safe space, and to read and evaluate those of others.

5. During the **Analyse phase**, the complete synthetron list of discussions was analysed **bottom up** and this at **different levels**: from content, EVP framework, buzz words, enablers-blockers and including language & behaviour analysis (contextual mind-set based).
6. The **Report phase**: An overview of all segments was made in the **management report**, including which value propositions already work for each segment and which do not; what they have in common and what they don't, and the engagement "booster" levers. For each segment, a **profile sheet** was created indicating the level of engagement and how to improve/maintain it; recommendations on how to best communicate with each group (based on the Language & Behaviour analysis done after each discussion); the engagement differences between Dutch and French speaking participants; and a behavioural description of the segment.
7. The **Share phase**: A **brief two-page report** was sent the next day with each participant. It included the top synthetrons, as well as some figures and graphs on the discussion dynamics. Key words were presented in a word cloud. Participants were also thanked for their time and participation.

A study of Right Management (2009) has consistently shown that engagement leads to higher financial performance, higher customer satisfaction and higher employee retention. Moreover, they found that there is a strong relationship between the level of employee engagement and organisational performance. When business needs to do more with less, engaged employees and the right Employee Value Proposition can make a significant difference.