



Facilitating Groups: Affinity Diagram

The affinity diagram is a tool for helping organize ideas, a complex issue or a situation. It is a process for groups as small as 5 and as large as 100.

Supplies Needed

- 3x3 sticky notes (one color) for participants
- 4x4 sticky notes (different color) for category/header names
- Pens for participants

Steps for Affinity Diagram

- Make introductions, and review the purpose of the meeting. State the question the participants are to generate ideas about. Write out the question/statement so everyone can see it.
- Ask participants to generate ideas on sticky notes, one idea per note. Encourage people to write concise ideas in one to three words. (This is important when they post the ideas on the wall.) Give them five to six minutes for this task.
- Invite participants to put their sticky notes on the wall, looking for similarities with others that are on the wall. It is OK to have “loners” during this process. Encourage participants to move sticky notes around until the best groupings emerge.
- As a group, ask participants to develop a heading or category heading of a few concise words for each grouping of sticky notes. Combine groupings that seem similar, if appropriate.



References:

Chang, R., & Niedzwiecki, M. (1993). "Continuous Improvement Tools: Volume 1: A Practical Guide to Achieve Quality Results (Quality Improvement)". Irvine, CA: Richard Change Associates, Inc.
Tague, N. (1995). The Quality Toolbox. Milwaukee, WI: ASQC Quality Press.