

Affinity Diagram



What is it?

The Affinity Diagram is an interactive data collection method which allows groups of people, in a short time frame, to identify and sort large quantities of ideas. Affinity means likeness or close relationship.

When is it used?

The Affinity process is used when people need a non-judgmental process for collecting and grouping ideas.

Where is it used?

Affinity Diagrams are often used, but not limited to steps 1, 5 and 9 of the **PDSA** - Proletunity Improvement Process.

Why is it used?

Affinity Diagrams:

- are very spatial and interactive.
- allow groups to quickly collect and organize hundreds of ideas.
- give all ideas equal weight.
- encourage everyone to contribute.
- allow ideas to be grouped according to their natural relationships.
- give team members the opportunity to view ideas of other team members.
- give voice to the silent majority and provide perspective for the vocal minority.
- bring out ideas that otherwise might be lost.

Sample uses:

Use Affinity Diagrams to address the following types of questions:

- What do you need to know about the Civil War or Botany?
- What are the causes of poor behavior?
- What are the barriers to improvement?
- What are the causes of variation?
- What are the Proletunities affecting us?
- What are all the elements of a successful project?

Other uses:

PROCESS

Affinity Diagram

1. Clearly define and write the topic for the session at the top of a flip chart.

What are our key achievements to date?

or

What are the problems and/or opportunities for improvement?

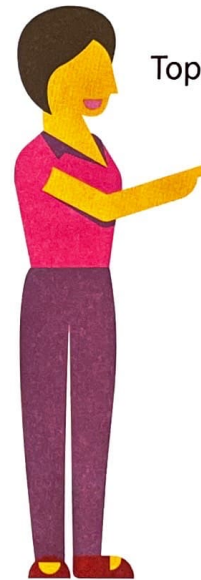
2. All team members individually Brainstorm (page 22) ideas relating to the stated question or topic. As Brainstorming (page 22) takes place, individuals silently write each idea on a sticky note or note card and place it in front of them. Place only one idea on each slip of paper.
3. Team members then randomly place ideas on the topic flip chart or stick them on a smooth surface such as a mirror or a white board.



4. Team members, as a group, silently place ideas in like categories.



5. Finally, label the main idea for each category by writing it on the flip chart or placing a header card at the top of each column.



Topic: School Improvement



CAUTION!

Brainstorming (page 22), at the beginning of the process, should be done in silence. Talking tends to inhibit participation.

Ideas should be stated as briefly as possible; one word is often too brief, a sentence is often too detailed. Usually two to six words can adequately convey the idea.

Allow enough time for everyone to generate ideas, but not so much time that some members lose focus. Three to five minutes is often an adequate amount of time. However, remember that some of the most creative ideas come near the end of the Brainstorming (page 22) session.

It is important that all members of a team working on the task be able to see all of the ideas. It is the responsibility of the group to see that everyone participates.

If a stated idea is unclear, any individual can ask for a clarification from its author. Otherwise, no talking is the rule during the organization phase. Care must be taken to prevent judgment of any ideas throughout the process.

Affinity Diagrams work best with a large table (preferably round). People can rotate around the table to see contributions from other team members.

Flip chart paper works well because you can roll up the Affinity Diagram, transport it and retain it as a record.

Tape down the sticky notes if you wish to keep or transport the chart. You may wish to transfer the result to a computer for long term use.