
The Affinity Process

A method to organize many ideas into a few categories

The Affinity Process was devised by a Japanese consultant Jiro Kawakita in the 1960s and is sometimes referred to as the KJ Method in his honor. It is a business tool used to organize or bundle ideas and data. It is similar to the ICA's ToP "Workshop Method." The Affinity Process works especially well with small groups of 5 – 8; larger groups would probably be better served with the Workshop Method.

The 9-page training module was developed by facilitators of Millennia Consulting when they adapted the process in their use with Total Quality Management Tools used in their work with the state government of Illinois in the late 1990s.

Use When...

- There is a large volume of ideas, issues, and alternatives.
- Breakthrough creativity is required.
- Facts or thoughts are chaotic and major issues or themes need to be identified.
- A team or group is in the storming or power stage.
- Support for a solution(s) or direction is needed to ensure successful implementation.
- Every person's participation is needed





Steps to Create an Affinity

- Use ideas generated through brainstorming
- Display the completed cards
- Arrange cards into related groupings (Silently)
- Create the header cards. (Talking Allowed)
- If needed, draw a line around the cluster of cards clearly grouping all related cards with the header cards.

Use ideas generated through brainstorming

- Phrase the issue/question to be considered
- Write issue/question on flip chart
- Generate ideas
- Print one idea per index card or post-it, using large legible letters
- Phrases are required; no one-word cards to prevent misinterpretation



Display the completed cards

- Post on the wall
- Put up newsprint first so they'll stick better if post-its are used
- Post it noted
- Allow enough space in front of work surface

Post It
Notes

No
one-word
cards

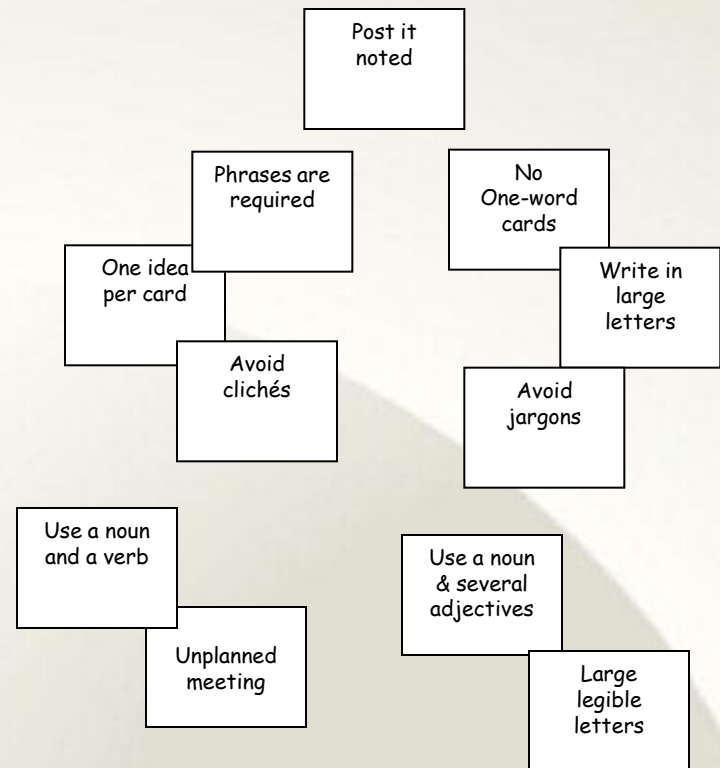
One idea
per card

A noun and
two
adjectives

LARGE
LETTERS

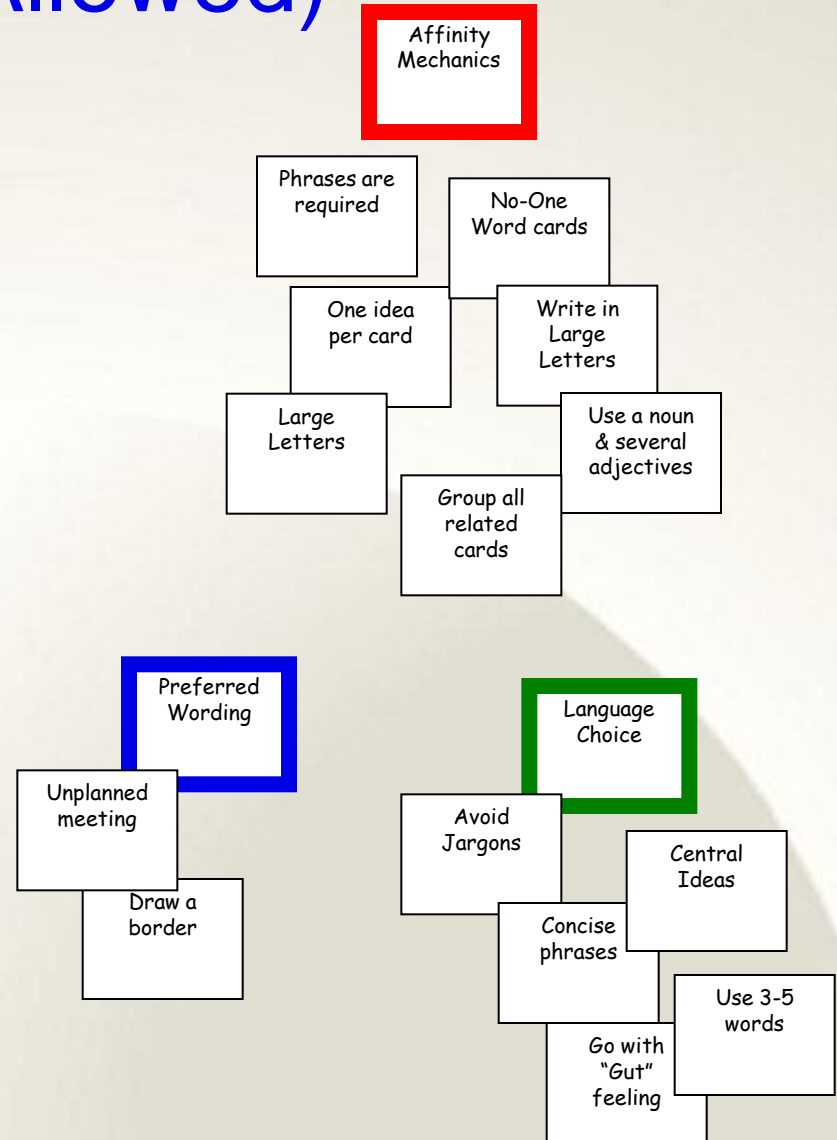
Arrange cards into related groupings (Silently)

- Cards are moved in **SILENCE**
- Anyone can move a card
- Individuals move cards to form clusters
- Ensure adequate space
- Go with your “gut” feeling
- Speed not deliberation
- Allow new groupings to surface



Create the header cards (Talking Allowed)

- Read aloud all the cards in the group
- Phrases are preferred
- Draw a border around each header card



Outcome

- Large amount of information sorted efficiently
- Truly new patterns surfaced to allow for closer examination
- Data that is representative of all the team members' collective thinking

