The Affinity Process

Training Module

*A method to organize many ideas into a few categories*

Affinity Process

A small group or mini-workshop

THE AFFINITY PROCESS is a method for getting a group to

respond from both the creative gut level and the intellectual, logical level. The process helps groups to efficiently organize innovative new thought patterns and encourages true participation because every person's ideas find their way into the process.

The Affinity Process is similar to the Workshop Method and is well suited for groups of less than eight in number.
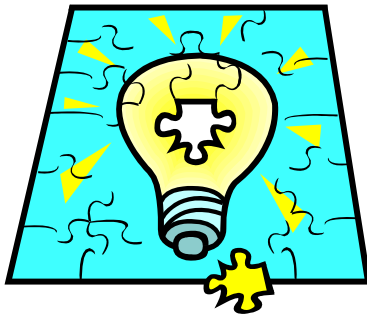
Learning objectives:

- Generate and organize large amounts of data.

- Identify direct applications for data.

- Practice leading a team in organizing data.

RIGHT BRAIN

LEFT BRAIN

There is a theory that suggests that the brain has two distinct sections or sides - the left side deals primarily with the analytical skills while the right side focuses on the creative process. An affinity harnesses those creative forces that are often present, even if only unconsciously.

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

Affinity

D E F I N I T I O N S

Relation, connection, or alliance; similarity in kind or nature; a natural attraction

In chemistry, that force by which bodies of dissimilar nature unite in certain specific proportions to form a compound, different in its nature from any of its constituents.

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.*

- *The topic itself is emotional or highly charged.*

- *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.*

SYNONYMS

Kinship

Relationship

Connection

Tie

Union

Strain

Resemblance

Similarity

Correspondence

Association

Interconnection

Combining Power

Magnetism

Proximity

Nearness

Vicinity

Steps to Create an Affinity

1. Use ideas generated through brainstorming

    a. Phrase the issue/question to be considered

      - Broad, neutral statement/question

      - Clearly stated, well understood

    b. Write issue/question on flip chart

      - Get agreement

    c. Generate ideas

      - Suggest each person identify 5 to 10 ideas so that group collectively produces 40 to 50 ideas

    d. Print one idea per index card or post-it, using large legible letters

    e. Phrases are required; no one-word cards to prevent misinterpretation

      - Phrases should be concise – no more than 3 to 5 words

      - Use a noun and several adjectives or noun and verb, e.g. NOT: meetings, USE: unplanned, unfocused meetings.

      - Avoid clichés, ambiguous terms, abbreviations

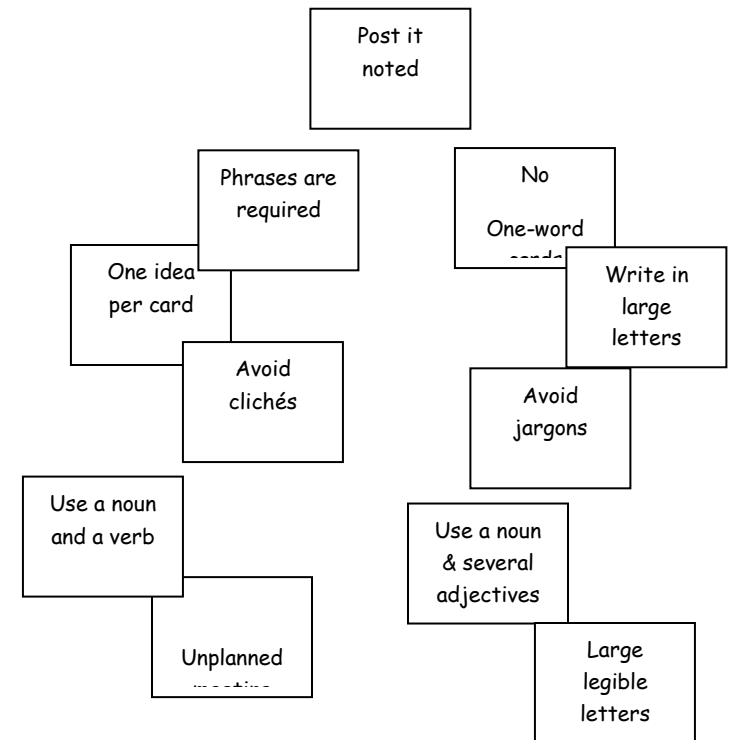*OPTIMAL GROUP SIZE*

5 to 8 people

MATERIALS NEEDED

- ✓ 1 magic marker per person

- ✓ 10 to 15 post it notes or index cards per person (4x6 or 5x8 size)

- ✓ Masking tape

- ✓ Flipchart paper (to create a smooth surface for posting ideas)

Post It Notes

No one-word.	One idea per card
A noun and two adjectives	LARGE LETTERS
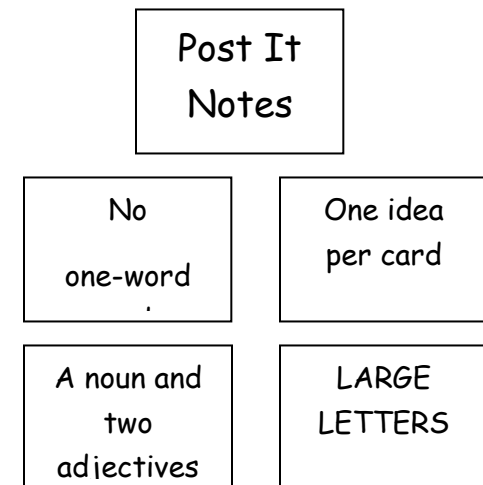
Steps to Create an Affinity continued

2. Display the completed cards

    a. Post on the wall

        • Put up newsprint first so they'll stick better if post-its are used

        • Allow enough space in front of work surface

3. Arrange cards into related groupings

    a. Cards are moved around in SILENCE to encourage unconventional thinking while also discouraging semantic battles that can go on and on.

    b. Anyone can move a card into another cluster if they feel it is more related to a different cluster. Handle agreements by just moving the card silently.

    c. Individuals move cards to form clusters of related cards.

    d. Ensure adequate space for movement of 5 to 8 people

    e. Encourage team not to contemplate, but to react to what they see, to go with their "gut" level reaction.

    f. Speed, rather than deliberation is needed.

    g. Encourage team to allow new groupings to surface. Avoid unconsciously sorting cards into "safe" known categories. This pigeonholing will force fit everything into existing logic, preventing breakthrough from occurring.

Post it noted

Phrases are required

No One-word cards

One idea per card

Write in large letters

Avoid clichés

Avoid jargons

Use a noun and a verb

Use a noun & several adjectives

Unplanned meeting

Large legible letters

Steps to Create an Affinity continued

4. Create the header cards. Talking is now allowed.

    a. Read aloud all the cards in the group, talk through the major theme of the grouped cards; give the theme a name.

    b. Phrases are required; no one-word cards

        *   Phrases should describe the central idea of the cards within each grouping, both the content and the spirit.

        *   Phrases should be concise, stated in three to five words.

        *   Phrases should make sense standing alone.

        *   Avoid jargon or clichés and "lack of …"

    c. Draw a border around each header card to make it stand out.

5. If needed, draw a line around the cluster of cards clearly grouping all related cards with the header card.

Avoid Clichés

Phrases are required

No-One Word cards

One idea per card

Write in Large Le

Large Letters

Use a noun & several adjectives

Group all related cards

Try Post it

Unplanned meeting

Draw a border

Avoid Jargons or Clichés

Avoid Jargons

Central Ideas

Concise phrases

Use 3-5 words

Go with "Gut" feeling