

## Team Problem Solving

### The Technique

Affinity Diagram

### What is it?

An Affinity Diagram is a type of brainstorming process that can be used for organising large groups of information into meaningful categories.

### When to Use it

- It helps to clarify and make sense of complex problem
- Useful for creating Cause and Effect Diagrams

### What you need

Sticky Notes or Index Cards

### How to Work with it

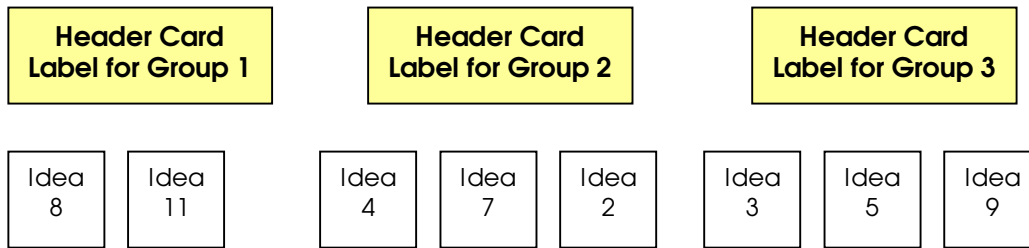
1. Define the problem
  - Ensure you state the problem as clearly and specifically as possible. Record this for everyone to see.
2. Silent Brainstorm
  - Brainstorm ideas by having each team member record their ideas silently on sticky notes or index cards
  - When the brainstorm is complete mix up all of the notes or cards and stick them on the wall or spread them out on a table.
3. Group Cards
  - Have team members arrange the cards into related groups by taking two cards that are related in “some way” and putting them together.
  - Finding other cards that belong to this group and put them with the first two.
  - Continue to build other groups of cards in the same way until all of the cards have been grouped (about 10 groups maximum).

Note that this is a creative process so it is important to suspend the naming of the groups until the next stage.

4. Decide on Group Headings

- Assess the final grouping of cards and decide what to call each group
- Create Header cards and place these at the top of each grouping. Header cards should clearly define the common thread that ties all of the cards in the group together (usually a 3 – 5 word description).
- You may now find that some cards do not belong to a group. If so, continue sorting until everyone is satisfied with the final picture.

## Example



## Ground Rules

- Decide whether talking will be allowed as team members group idea notes into clusters. Results will be different if talking is allowed.
- Team Members may take each idea note and put it with another idea note to form clusters of notes.
- Team Members may move a note from one cluster to another.
- If an idea note is repeatedly moved from one cluster to another, make a duplicate, so that it may be placed in both clusters.
- After the clusters have stabilized, one member of the group will solicit suggested wording for a header card. Allow the team to reach consensus on the text for each header card.