

The affinity diagram is a tool for helping organize ideas, a complex issue or situation. It is a group process for groups as small as 5-10 and groups as large as 15-30 or more.

Steps for Affinity Diagram:

- Make introductions, review purpose of the meeting by stating the question the participants are to generate ideas about. NOTE: Write down the question/statement so everyone can see it.
- Ask participants to generate ideas on post-it 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 5-6 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, participants 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. (19913). Cpmtomipis Improvement Tools: Volume 1: A Practical Guide to Achieve Quality Results. Irvine, CA: Richard Change Associates, Inc.

Tague, N. (1995). The Quality Toolbox. Milwaukee, WI: ASQC Quality Press.

Figure 1. Affinity Diagram

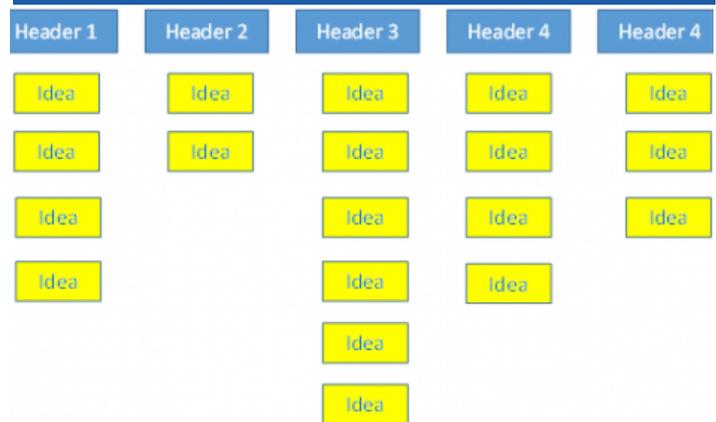


Figure 2: Supplies needed

Large post-it notes (one color) for participants

Large post-it notes (different color) for category/header names

Marking pens for participants