

Affinity Diagramming

25 minutes

Organize and cluster ideas by themes through collaborative sorting. Transform individual sticky notes from Post-Up into meaningful patterns and actionable...

Research

Beginner

H HOW TO RUN

1 Total Duration:

1 Silent Sorting

- Team members silently read all sticky notes
- Move similar ideas together without discussion
- Anyone can move any note at any time
- Allow natural clusters to emerge

12 min

2 Theme Naming

- Group discusses emerging clusters
- Create descriptive name for each theme
- Write theme names on different colored sticky notes
- Place theme headers above each cluster

8 min

3 Insights & Patterns

- Step back and observe complete diagram
- Identify surprising patterns or relationships
- Note clusters with most/least items
- Discuss implications for project or problem

5 min

KEY TIP

Decide beforehand whether to use predetermined categories or let themes emerge naturally (emergent approach usually yields better insights).

O OBJECTIVES

- > Organize ideas into meaningful clusters
- > identify patterns and themes across contributions
- > create shared understanding of complex information
- > develop category names collaboratively

M MATERIALS

ESSENTIAL

- Sticky notes from previous Post-Up exercise
- Different colored sticky notes for theme headers
- Large wall space (minimum 6 feet wide)

OPTIONAL

- Digital camera for documentation
- Numbered labels for cluster priority
- String or yarn to show relationships

P PARTICIPANTS

3-8

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- During silent sorting, discourage talking - maintain quiet working atmosphere.
- Watch for "outliers" that don't fit any category - these often represent innovation opportunities.
- If team struggles with theme naming, use "I noticed..." or "These are all about..." prompts.
- Some ideas may belong to multiple categories - that's okay.