

Affinity Diagrams

Affinity diagrams are a great method to use when you want to make sense of a large volume of mixed information and data—facts, ethnographic research, ideas from brainstorming, user opinions, user needs, insights, and design issues. Affinity diagrams require you to group information in an organized manner, and this method can therefore be one of the most valuable methods to employ during your design process.

In the case of mixed information, it is best to group from the bottom to the top. Once you group information, you then draw connections between those groups to connect the dots and develop new and deeper insights about your users and the problems they face. These insights will help define your problem statement and help you develop potential ideas for solutions. In other words, affinity diagrams help you to synthesize.

How to Create an Affinity Diagram

Part 1: Group Similar Pieces of Data

- 01:** Write pieces of data, small documented facts, drawings, ideas and observations down on separate Post-it notes, cards or pieces of paper and put them all up on a wall or whiteboard or lay them across a table. Post-it notes are preferable at this stage as they allow the design team to easily stick up and move pieces of data around to cluster similar pieces of information.
- 02:** Choose a Post-it at random and make it the first Post-it of a first group.
- 03:** Take another Post-it and ask “Is this similar to the first one or is it different?”. Place

it in the first group if it's similar or in its own group if it's not.

04: Continue Post-it by Post-it as you place similar ideas together and create new groups when ideas do not fit into an existing cluster. Note: it's OK to have lone Post-its at this stage—pieces of data that don't fit into any clusters can sit on their own, in other words.

Part 2: Discuss and Clarify Your Clusters

- 01:** You should have 5–10 groups at the end of the process, and it's now time to talk about the clusters in more detail. Discuss the rest of the steps in the process with your team and complete them together one by one.
- 02:** Categorize the clusters by giving each cluster a title. The title should be enough detail that you don't need to read each post-it in the group to get a sense of what information is in the cluster.
- 03:** Discuss any controversial pieces of clusters and pieces of data in each cluster and reorganize them into different clusters if appropriate.
- 04:** Use lines to connect related groups, and combine clusters to create super groups if necessary.
- 05:** You'll have now organized all your information and data and are in a much better position to synthesize it further to create a problem statement and move on to ideation.



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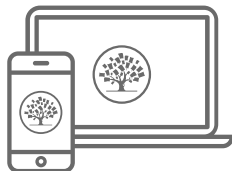
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