

Brainstorming and Affinity Mapping

People: 3-8

Time: 30-45 minutes

Purpose:

The affinity map helps you structure ideas or challenges after a brainstorm. To gain an overview of what might seem like a chaos of hundreds of ideas, you divide your ideas into categories. The human brain is better at taking decisions if all options are easily grasped and comparable - the affinity map will help you have fewer options to overview at once.

But first comes the brainstorm:

How to:

- 1 Make sure everybody knows what to brainstorm on, e.g. “Ideas to solve Challenge A”, or “Target Group B’s challenges”.
- 2 Set the timer for 2-5 minutes for an *individual* brainstorm where everyone draws their own ideas on sticky notes, alone, in silence. One idea per sticky note - you will need to move them around later.
Note: 5 minutes is the max! If longer time is granted, participants start to put too high expectations on themselves.
- 3 At the end of the timer, everyone presents their ideas one at a time and all ideas are placed in the middle of a table or on a board - no comments from crowd while presenting! This can take up to 15 minutes depending on the group size.
- 4 Optional: Based on the presentation, new ideas might arise. Do step 2 and 3 again. (Do as many iterations as you wish).



Brainstorm individually



Draw 1 idea per sticky note



Set the timer on 2-5 minutes



Present the ideas - no criticism

Affinity mapping

Once all of the ideas have been presented, you can start categorising the ideas and build your affinity map.

How to:

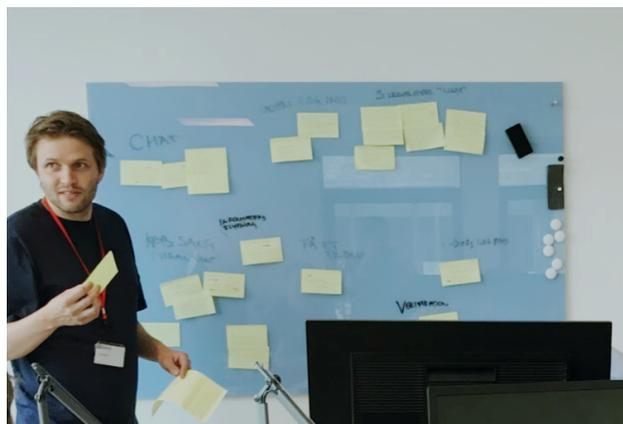
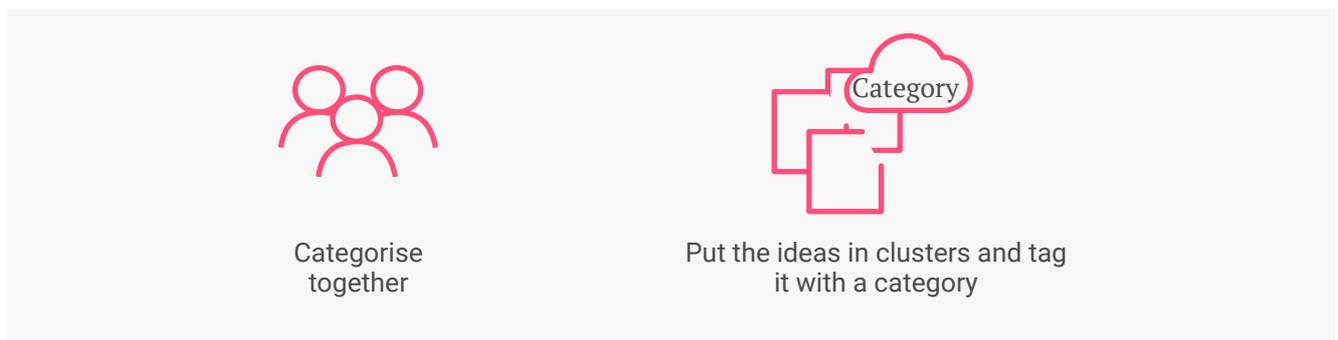
- 1 Together in your group, go through the ideas again and cluster those that are similar. Physically, place the ideas next to each other. Move an idea when everybody agrees on where to put it.
- 2 Give each cluster a headline or a category. Discuss a proper wording for each headline.

Note:

Don't force the ideas into a category - make a new one that fits. The aim is to easily grasp the ideas - not to forget half. The right amount of clusters covers everything with sufficient nuances.

In case of disagreement, either write both categories or split the cluster if it's because the cluster is covering too much.

There is no right or wrong categorisation. What the common denominator is, is up to you. For example, the ideas can be based on same technology, do the same thing in two different ways or describe the same functionality.



The affinity map may look something like this. Each post-it has an idea on it and ideas that are somehow similar are placed next to each other. A tag, such as 'Chat', is added above the clusters.