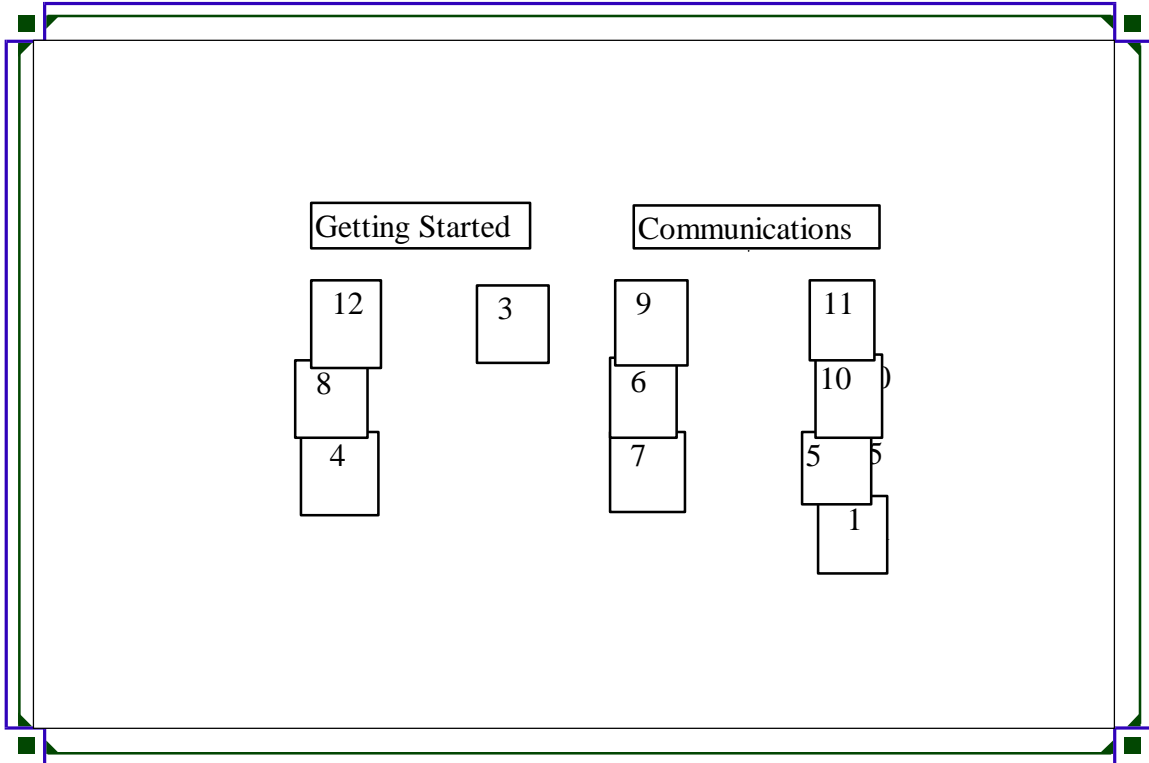
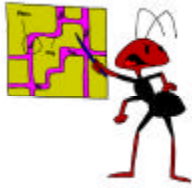


## AFFINITY DIAGRAM



### Purpose

An **Affinity Diagram** is used to help organize large numbers of ideas or data into manageable groupings of information. It is commonly used during brainstorming or other information gathering work sessions.



## Process

1. Begin by writing the issue to be considered on a flip chart for all to view. In developing the issue statement ensure that the statement is both neutral and concise. An example might be “What tasks need to be done to implement this change?” Allow for discussion and editing to ensure consensus support is attained for the final version. ( See example A)
2. Conduct a brainstorming session to address the agreed on issue statement. Each team member identifies characteristics that positively support the objective issue and records each issue on “post it” notes or similar paper large enough for all team members to read. Ideas should be concise and be limited to between five and ten words. Ensure ideas are worded to avoid vague responses. Instead of “better roads” consider something more concise like “wider paved shoulder surfaces.” Another example might be instead of “shorter lines” use “waiting line of not more than ten minutes.” All ideas are accepted without criticism and without editing by the recorder. There is generally little or no discussion during this process. ( See example B)
3. After all ideas have been submitted, have the team members post them on a wall or flip chart so that all the ideas can be viewed by all team members.
4. Have team members gather around and group sheets that are related in some way. They may be on the same topic, effect common work groups, or some other criteria that links the sheets together. If one or several sheets are not connected with any others, allow them to stand as separate groups on their own. If one idea seems to belong in more than one group, duplicate the idea and put it in both places.(See example C)
5. Look through the sheets in each group seeking for the one sheet that contains the main idea of that grouping and ties the other sheets in the grouping together. This sheet becomes the header sheet and is placed on top of the other sheets. If a grouping does not contain a header sheet that is all-encompassing, create one and use it for the header sheet. (See example D)
6. When the organization in step 5 is complete, look at the header sheets and place related groups side-by-side on the wall. Cascade sheets belonging to each grouping under the header sheets. Prepare new header sheets to group several groupings into “superheaders.” (See example E)

7. The process is now complete. The components of the issue statement have been clearly organized and presented for further analysis by the team.



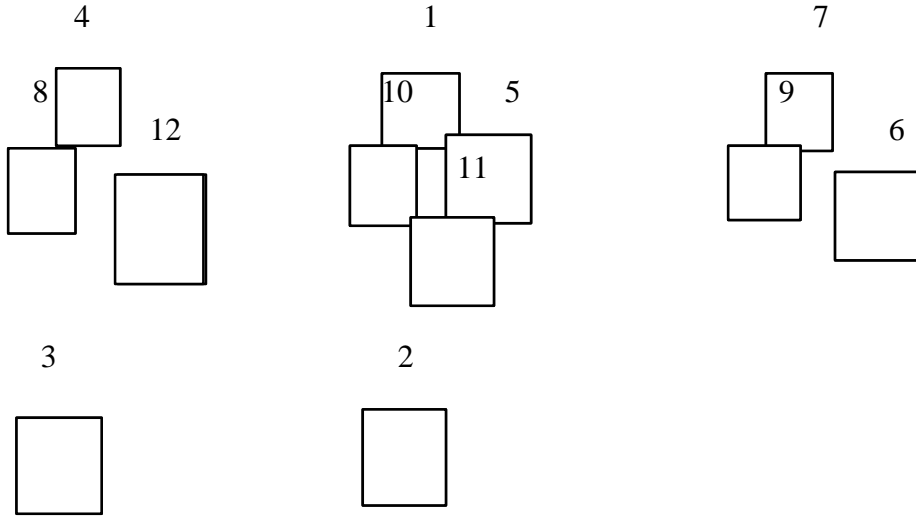
**Example**

Example A:

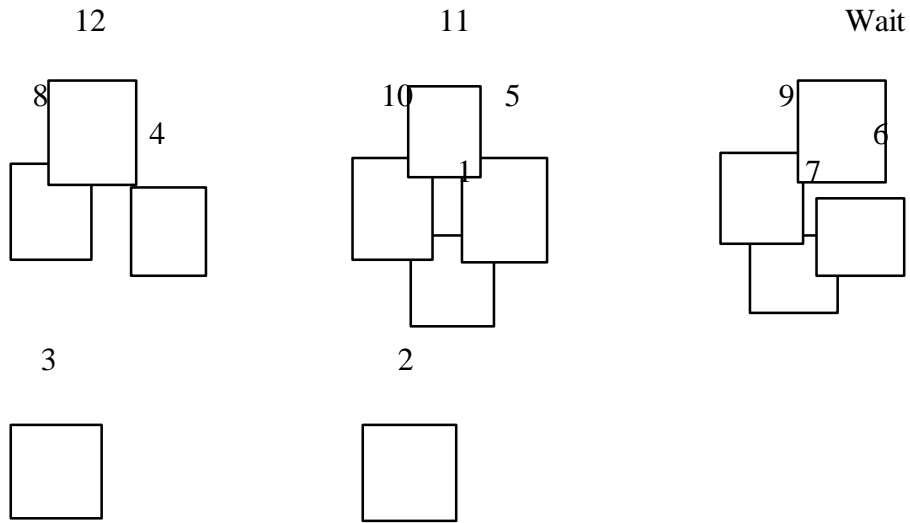
<p><b>What tasks need to be done to implement this change?</b></p>
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Example B:

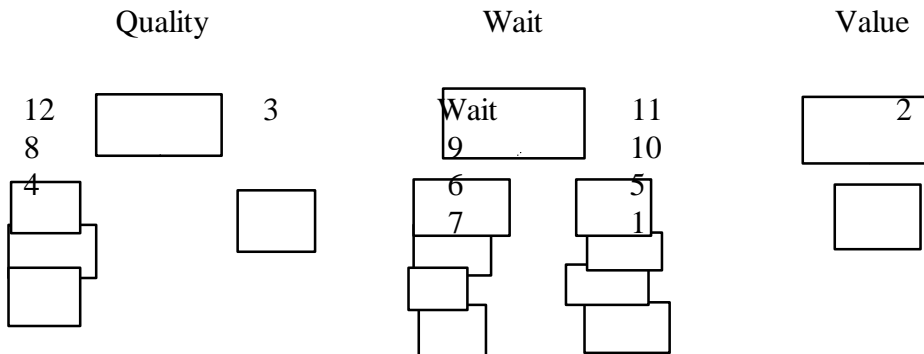
<b>Idea #1</b>	<b>Idea #2</b>	<b>Idea #3</b>	<b>Idea #4</b>
<b>Idea #5</b>	<b>Idea #6</b>	<b>Idea #7</b>	<b>Idea #8</b>
<b>Idea #9</b> Example C:	<b>Idea #10</b>	<b>Idea #11</b>	<b>Idea #12</b>



Example D:



Example E:





## Key Points

- Use of large post-it notes will help speed up display of statement sheets.
- If one person wants to move a sheet from one group to another, let them do it. Eventually consensus in the organization will emerge.
- If two items are alike and both team members who submitted them agree, combine the items.
- During the brainstorming session, encourage independent thought to avoid “Group think.” There is generally no discussion or evaluation during this step.

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