

Affinity Diagram

Tool for Identifying Core Principles

Materials Needed:

- ◆ Sticky Notes (large and small) Use large ones as header cards.
- ◆ Felt tip pens (all the same color)

1. Each person takes 3 to 5 minutes and writes single ideas regarding core principles on small sticky notes. Phrases should be action-oriented and should contain a noun and a verb. This is a silent activity.
2. After the time period, each person sticks his or her notes on a wall, board, etc.
3. Select two or three people to arrange the sticky notes in groups according to topics or themes. This is also a silent activity. Sort in silence, in order to focus on the meaning behind the connections among all ideas, instead of emotion and "history" that often arise in discussions.
4. Select two or three different people to rearrange them once more. Again, this is a silent activity. Note: As an idea is moved back and forth, try to see the logical connection that the other person is making. If this movement continues beyond a reasonable point, agree to create a duplicate sticky note. And, it is okay for some notes to stand alone.
5. Give the large group an opportunity to ask for clarification about any of the notes, their grouping, etc.
6. Ask two or three more people to go up and put above each grouping a header card that describes the main theme of the grouping. There are two steps:
 - a. Gain a quick consensus on a word or phrase that captures the central idea/theme of each grouping and place it at the top of each grouping. These are draft header cards.
 - b. For each grouping, agree on a concise sentence that summarizes the central idea of all the sticky notes in that grouping. This becomes the final header card and replaces the draft header card.

Tip: Spend the extra time needed to do solid header cards. Strive to capture the essence of all the ideas in each grouping. The sticky notes become a resource for operationally defining each core principle.

7. Those headings become the core principles that then need to be "operationally defined."

"Operationally defined" means, "How does each staff person convert each principle into daily activity?"

As a facilitator, be prepared to challenge the group with tough questions.