

Idea Clustering

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	FACILITATORS	CATEGORY	DURATION	LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY
6-30	1 Moderator	Ideation Phase	25-30minutes	Simple

Description

The Idea Cluster is a tool that is used to quickly and efficiently enrich and further elaborate initial solutions and ideas. Clustering is similar to another process called Brainstorming. Clustering is something that can be done on your own or with friends or classmates to try to find inspiration in the connection between ideas [1]. It is used to organize and analyze large numbers of ideas by categorizing them.

Materials

Research material that is used in the clustering exercise might consist of different types of documentations (often dependent on the participants' resources and access to research). The material should be prepared for the clustering session, i.e. selected notes and quotes are written onto post-its (in a readable writing), photos are printed, video recordings are made into screen dumps, which are printed, and so forth. All of the prepared material is then placed on a big surface, which allows for all of the group members to see and participate [2].

- ▶ Quotes from interviews
- ▶ Photos
- ▶ Notes from Observation
- ▶ Video/Audio Recordings

Preparation

- ▶ A few minutes to prepare the wall Activity: 5–15 minutes, depending on the number of notes. Participants will need to use large sheets of paper, markers and Post-it notes. In addition the participants need to prepare their research material in advance of the exercise.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. A crowd of people stand in front of a wall of sticky notes. The people are arranged in rows. The front row actively sorts the notes; the rows behind them have various support or preparation functions. Every few seconds, the rows cycle so a new group of people come to the front and every row gets a new role. After a few cycles, the sticky notes are sorted and the group knows the content [3].
2. Set up rows of people in front of the wall.
3. Ask for volunteers for the second row
4. Add more rows until everyone is in a row
5. Explain how the task will work:
 1. In a minute, people will be asked to start sorting the sticky notes.
 2. The people of front row, will be actively moving and grouping notes in whatever way makes sense to them
 3. The people in the second row, will be actively coaching the first row
 4. People in the third row, should aim for an overview of what is happening and look for lost stickies.
6. Start the exercise
7. People might be needed to remind them, who have stepped forward of their new roles
8. Repeat the cycle every 30 seconds or so
9. After 5–8 cycles, the sorting is usually complete.
10. Step back to get an overview.

Remarks, Tips, Limitations

Tips

- ▶ It allows participants to see, at a glance, the aspects of the subject about which you have the most to say, so it can help you choose how to focus on a broad subject for writing [4].
- ▶ Clustering or mapping can help participant become aware of different ways to think about a subject [4].
- ▶ Helps groups come to consensus about most important issues [5].
- ▶ Organizing generates useful discussion[5].

Limitations

- ▶ Good facilitation is required when there is a lot of data expected[5]
- ▶ Can be time consuming when there are a large number of pieces of data [5].
- ▶ It may be difficult to find individual pieces of information/data.[5]
- ▶ It is an analog and physical activity[5]
- ▶ Differences of opinion cause disruptive behaviors as well as interactive behaviors designed to reestablish interpersonal relationships [6].
- ▶ the underlying thread of interpersonal dynamics tends to inhibit creativity and innovative decision making [7]

Strengths: Produce more possible solutions for a problem. Offers a convenient graphical presenting and analyzing.

Weaknesses: Needs multiple resources and time for analysis. Preliminary ideas are too imprecise for elevation.

References

- [1] http://guidetogrammar.org/grammar/composition/brainstorm_clustering.htm
- [2] <https://innovationenglish.sites.ku.dk/metode/cluster-analysis/>
- [3] <https://www.thisisservicedesigndoing.com/methods/octopus-clustering>
- [4] <https://www.esc.edu/online-writing-center/resources/academic-writing/process/prewriting-developing-ideas/clustering/mapping/>
- [5] <https://uxdict.io/design-thinking-methods-affinity-diagrams-357bd8671ad4>
- [6] Van de Ven, A., & Delbecq, A. (1974). The effectiveness of nominal, Delphi, and interacting group decision-making processes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(4), 314-318.
- [7] Burton, G. E. (1987). The "Clustering Effect" An Idea-Generation Phenomenon during Nominal Grouping. *Small group behavior*, 18(2), 224-238.

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