

## Using Affinity Diagrams

In the previous video, you learned about using multi-voting to generate ideas and then narrow down the list. What if you want to organize the ideas into groups or themes? For example, you might group ideas that are related to a specific area of the business or process step or relate to similar issues.

This is often called a theme analysis. The results of a theme analysis are shown in an affinity diagram. To create an affinity diagram, you start by generating ideas. To do this, you conduct a brainstorming session, with all of the ideas recorded on sticky notes and posted on a flip chart or a whiteboard.

Then each idea is reviewed and clarified, and the ideas are sorted into common themes. Recording the ideas on sticky notes makes it easy to physically move the items into groupings and to adjust the groupings if needed.

Finally, the themes are reviewed and named. You might take this a step further and group the themes into larger categories. For example, suppose that you're on a team that is purchasing a new piece of equipment, a very expensive and complex machine. You brainstorm all of the issues that you'll need to consider, and you group these issues into themes. Some of these themes fall into larger groupings. For this scenario, performance and capacity are related to the operation of the equipment, whereas the financial and acquisition issues are related to purchasing.

How would you use this information? You might use this as a basis for your project plan. You might expand your team to include members from these functional areas. Or you might form sub-teams to deal with the different aspects of the project. For more information about using affinity diagrams, see the Read About It for this module.