

FASTBREAK

A Process For Clustering Ideas Rapidly

You generate the ideas and allow individuals to fill in post-it's. One idea per post it.

Each person reads out their idea, or proposal, or incident.

This post-it is then placed on the wall – it helps later if they are in neat rows and columns. Make sure that there is a bit of wall spare to take the clusters.

You number each Post It (eg 1 to 50)

You gather everyone around the Post-It stuck on the wall, and have a couple of volunteers on hand.

You then ask for someone to nominate a pair of numbers which seem to go together. It is important that people only refer to the ideas *only* by their numbers (otherwise you slow the thing down considerably). One of your volunteers takes the pair and place them together on the other wall.

You then ask for another pair, and repeat. You then ask for another pair, and repeat. You then ask if there is another number that goes with one of the pairs. You then add that number to that pair.

By then people will have got the hang of things and will begin to shout out the number pairs, or begin to say that 33 goes with the cluster over there which has 4, 39 and 21. You will find that around 7 to 10 clusters start emerging. What also tends to happen is that people start naming the clusters (oh 17 goes with the stuff on training).

One important rule is that if a number could go into two clusters, it goes into both. What you do is have some spare Post Its, and you write down the number only and put it into one of the clusters (the original goes into another cluster). This may seem a bit fudgy, but actually doesn't make a great deal of difference to the outcome, and saves precious minutes of arguing.

It is possible that things go a bit slow towards the end. At that point encourage a rugby scrum. Anyone can physically move the ideas to a cluster, as long as they follow the basic rule

Once all that has been done, check if people want to amalgamate any of the clusters to get the numbers of clusters down a bit. It usually is a fruitless task, but keeps the debate at high energy and starts the clarification process.

The final task is to give the clusters a "name".

NOTE

Fastbreak has several different forms. This one was developed by GKA Incorporated as part of its method of constructing systems dynamics diagrams.