

Affinity diagram

Writing each research observation on a note and grouping the notes by affinity, bottom-up, until the themes that connect them emerge.

In Spanish

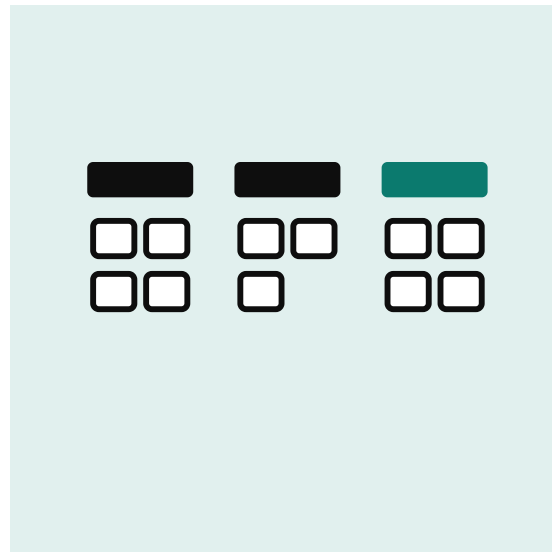
Diagrama de afinidad

Origin

The KJ method of anthropologist Jiro Kawakita (1967); in design, Beyer and Holtzblatt (1998)

Output

Observations grouped into themes



What it's for

It helps you organize lots of scattered, varied data without imposing categories on it in advance.

Key elements

One idea per note

Short, concrete and true to what was observed.

Bottom-up

Groups come from the data, not from a prior list.

Name each group

With a sentence that says what they have in common.

How it's done



Write one observation on each note.



Group the notes that are alike, without prior categories.



Give a title to each group and arrange the groups.

Applications in design

✓ When to use it

Right after fieldwork, as a team and with the notes in view.

✗ Avoid

Starting with categories already decided: that way you only confirm what you believed.

👁 Don't fall for it

Keep track of where each note comes from so you can go back to the source.

Connections

Builds on

■ Insight

■ Design synthesis

Related to

■ Brainwriting (6-3-5 method)

■ Contextual Design

■ In-depth interview

■ Brainstorming

■ Empathy map

■ Mind map

Authors and works

1967	Jiro Kawakita	Created it to organize fieldwork data that was very different from one item to the next.
1998	Hugh Beyer and Karen Holtzblatt	Made it part of their design process to synthesize what was learned during visits.

Sources

Original sources

- Kawakita, J. (1967). Hassōhō [Método para generar ideas]. Chūōkōronsha.
- Beyer, H., & Holtzblatt, K. (1998). Contextual design: Defining customer-centered systems. Morgan Kaufmann.

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