

# SAME BOAT CONSULTING

## Team Brainstorming Tools

### A. Fishbone Diagram

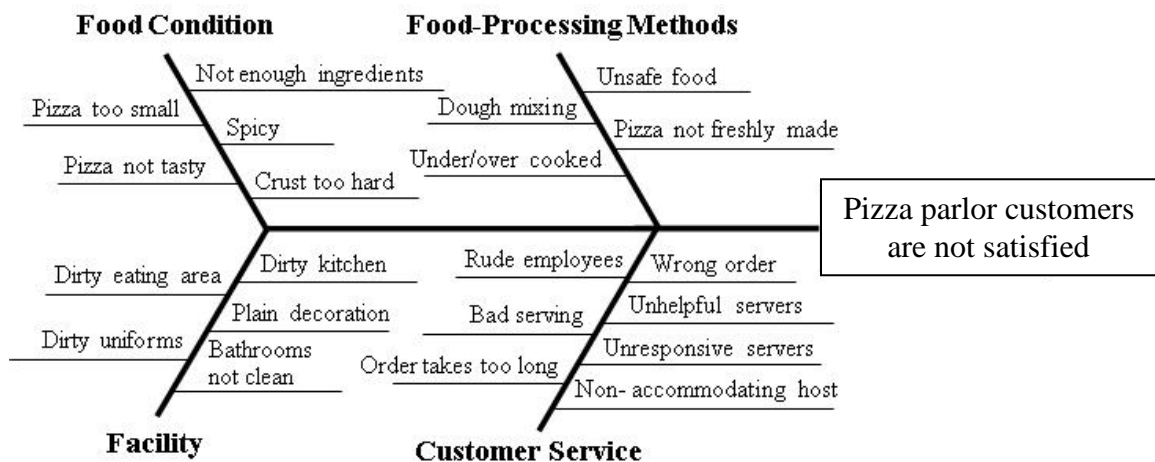
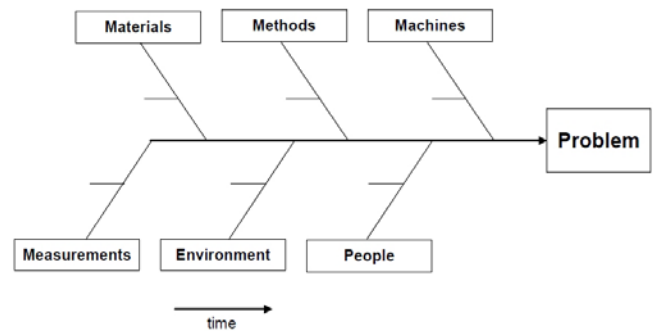
Source: Brassard, Michael and Ritter, Diane. *The Memory Jogger 2*. GOAL/QPC: Salem, NH, 2010.

#### What does it do?

1. Enables a team to **focus on the content of the problem**, not on the history of the problem or differing personal interests of team members
2. **Creates a snapshot** of the collective knowledge and **consensus of a team** around a problem. This builds support for the resulting solutions
3. Focuses the team on **causes, not symptoms**

#### How do I do it?

1. Write down the **problem** in a box on the right-hand side of a white board or paper.
2. Draw major **categories or steps** in the process (e.g. people, methods, materials). Connect them to the "backbone."
3. **Brainstorm causes** of the problem. You can either:
  - a. Make a list of causes, and then draw all of them onto appropriate branches of the chart
  - b. Draw each cause onto the diagram as it's generatedSome causes may fit in more than one category. If so, place them in both and see how the diagram works out in the end.
4. **Ask** of each cause in the diagram:
  - a. **"Why does it happen?"** This may lead to more causes - add them to the diagram.
  - b. **"What could happen?"** This may lead to deeper understanding of the problem.



5. **Uncover root causes by:**
  - a. Looking for causes that show up more than once, either within or across categories
  - b. Discussing or voting as a group

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## **B. Affinity Diagram**

Source: Brassard, Michael and Ritter, Diane. *The Memory Jogger 2*. GOAL/QPC: Salem, NH, 2010.

### **What does it do?**

1. Encourages creativity by everyone on the team
2. Allows breakthroughs to emerge naturally
3. Overcomes “team paralysis” brought on by too many options and lack of consensus
4. Encourages ownership of results by the whole group

### **How do I do it?**

1. Phrase the **issue under discussion** in a full sentence.
2. **Brainstorm** at least 20 ideas or issues. Record each idea (four to seven words) on a sticky note in bold, large print.
3. **Without talking, sort ideas** simultaneously into 5-10 related groupings as a team. Don't ask for permission; just move sticky notes that you think belong in another grouping. Sorting will slow down or stop when each person feels sufficiently comfortable with the groupings.
4. For each grouping, get a quick team consensus on a **word or phrase** that captures the central idea. Record that theme on a sticky note, and place it at the top of each grouping. These are the *draft header cards*.
5. For each grouping, agree on a **concise sentence** that combines the central idea with what all the sticky notes add to that idea. Record each on another sticky note, and replace the draft header card. These are the *final header cards*.
6. Divide large groupings into **subgroups** as needed, and create appropriate subheaders.
7. Draw the **final Affinity Diagram** by connecting all finalized header cards with their groupings.

