



## Collaborative tools, services and training

Meet smarter, not harder!

Always I am right. It is so invariable it startles me.  
And now it looks very much as though I may be wrong, and that upsets me.  
But I should not be upset, because I am right.  
I must be right because I am never wrong.  
Hercule Poirot  
Cards on the Table (2005)

### training events coming up

#### Brisbane

**Strategic Thinking & Planning**  
18–19 August 2010

**Working with Value Systems**  
14–15 September 2010

**Group Facilitation Methods**  
19–20 October 2010

**Understanding & Leading Change**  
9–10 November 2010

Please contact me if you are interested in any of these courses.

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## Cards on the table, or the wall, or...

Lots of people know about using cards as part of their workshop. Here are some ways to make the most of this tool at each stage of the session – from brainstorming to organising to naming clusters to reporting.

### Make sure this tool is fit for purpose

What do I mean by a “card”? Simply something on which an individual or small group writes its data for processing during the rest of the workshop. It will vary according to the size of the group and the needs of the session. Sticky notes are good for 2-4 people, A5 sheets are good up to 20 people, A4 sheets work up to 60 people. Beyond that, you are really into data projection territory.

Cards can be colour-coded to help distinguish between different types of data or where you might be “pre-clustering”. Cards can also be different shapes. I’ve seen hexagonal cards used with great effect, especially when creating ‘stepping stones’. Usually, however, they are rectangular because that’s how paper comes out of the packet. My personal preference is for the landscape format.

The better the data on the cards, the easier, faster and more effective the rest of the session. Remember, brainstorming entails getting the data you need. It’s all about quality. You can help participants with this by:

- Giving a **really clear context** or focus for the session.
- Asking **one simple brainstorm question**.
- Giving **clear instructions** about what’s needed, supported with some **examples**.

**One item per card.** Clustering the (quality) data starts by connecting items and then explores those connections in depth. This is physically reinforced by moving items around as required. If a card has multiple items, those items can potentially go to different clusters...

**Big legible writing** sort of speaks for itself. If people at the back of the room or the table are struggling to read what’s there, it’s yet another obstacle to their participation. A good idea here is to only give people those marker pens with the big tips. That way they just can’t write very small...

**4–6 words per item** is about keeping the expression of the idea/issue/data simple. It is the headline, not the story. The story can be explained further, if required, and extra notes added to make sure the detail is not lost.

Once you’ve finalised a cluster and given it a clear title that captures the underlying insight, you can write that **title on a new card**. Outline it in red for extra effect if you want. Then you can run a line of sticky tape down the whole cluster to keep the cards together when they are all packed up.

So, what’s your experience of choosing and using cards? Please, go online and share your thoughts.

Go well!

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One item per card

Big legible writing

4-6 words per item

New title card for each cluster