

The Basic Facilitator's Toolkit

Facilitating with Sticky Walls

by Wayne Vick, CPF

Background: Next to the flipchart a Sticky Wall, aka the "Wall of Wonder," is the preferred tool among professional group facilitators working with small to medium size groups. Among the tools of a facilitator this one provides the most flexibility and offers the greatest potential for engaging all participants.

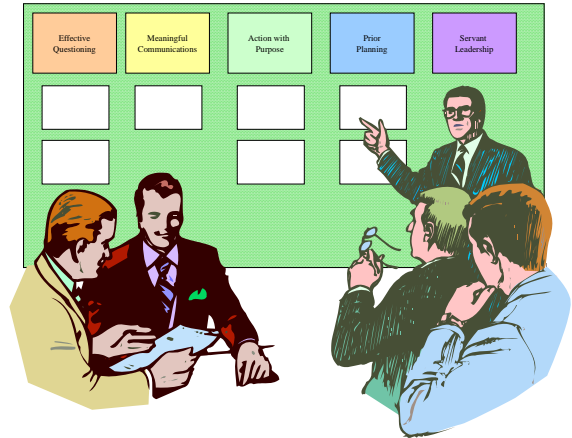
Buy a kit: Sticky Walls can be purchased or made in a variety of colors. Sticky Walls are available from Dynamic Leadership Consulting Group, Inc. (<http://www.FacilitationCenter.com>) for \$69 (plus S&H) in about 8 colors. They are pre-treated and ready to use out of the package. The ICA-USA offers untreated sticky walls and kits from \$50 to \$120 in blue or purple.

Construct a kit: You need not buy a sticky wall as they are easy to construct. To do so you will need the following:

- 60" Rip-Stop Nylon 1.6 oz (about \$30 retail)
- 3-M Spray Mount Artist Adhesive (\$13/can)

A Sticky Wall can be made to nearly any length. Most often they are found in 10' to 12' lengths. For a more professional look sticky walls should be hemmed. Rip-stop nylon is used because it is thin, light weight, and is usually treated to be impermeable. The weights range from .75 ozs to 1.9 ozs. The fabric has a dull and shiny side. Place the hem on the dull side and use the shiny side for the work surface.

Applying Adhesive: The 3M Artist Mount adhesive has a strong, yet temporary, odor. When you spray the fabric you need to be in a well ventilated area or outside. If inside, clean the floor and lay down newspapers to protect from over-spray. We recommend doing this outside. Unfold the Sticky Wall and lay it flat, with the hem side down, shiny side up. Follow the directions on the can to properly mix the adhesive. Clear the spray head with a short sprit into newspaper, otherwise you'll end up with a blob



of thick adhesive where you start spraying the fabric. Lightly spray the fabric using smooth motions holding the can about 10 to 14 inches above the cloth. Do not spray the 3" to 4" area around the edge of the sticky wall. Avoid unnecessary overspray by pointing the can in from the edges when you spray. One 10.25-ounce can should provide 2 initial applications. With the proper application you should see an even light gray film on the cloth when held at an angle to the light. If you can readily see the adhesive on the cloth you are applying much more than needed.

Using the Sticky Wall: (See Figure 1 below)

It is not uncommon for a facilitator to use several Sticky Walls in a single event. I have used as many as 12 during Strategic Planning. Having multiple colors helps differentiate among several group activities. The numbered paragraphs

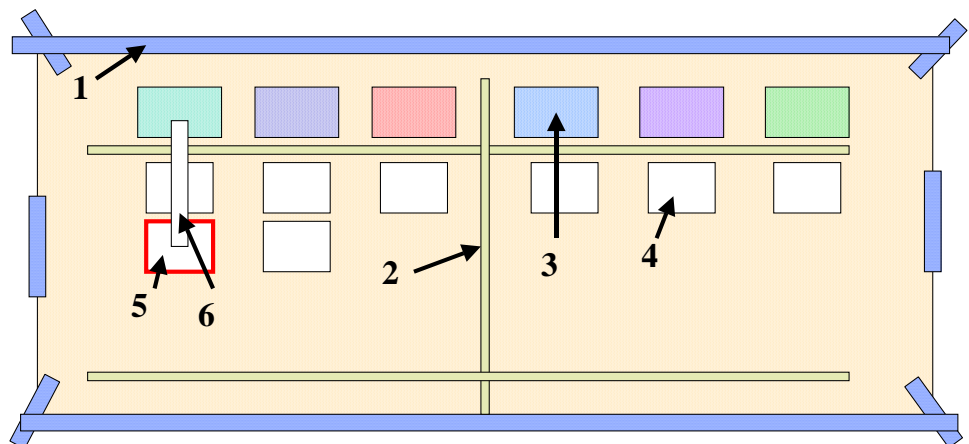


Figure 1: Sticky Wall Elements

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below relate to the numbered items in Figure 1.

1. With an assistant, attach the sticky wall to the wall no higher than 6 to 7 feet with 2" or 3" blue painters masking tape, push pins, Velcro, or snaps. (note: test the tape on the wall to ensure it does not remove the paint)
2. Use 1/8" or 1/2" artist or masking tape to create a variety of matrices, flow lines, etc as needed. Use contrasting colors of tape and sticky walls.
3. Make title or header cards from colored paper.
4. Don't waste money on Sticky or Post-It Notes. Use plain paper, 24 lb is best, paper from the recycling bin, or index cards. Use whole, in halves, or quarters but, consider the size of the group in selecting the size of the sheets. The larger the group the larger the cards and markers need to be. Use water-based markers that will not bleed through thin paper.
5. Use colored pens to outline the page to make special items stand out.
6. Use 1/2" or 3/4" transparent tape for easily grouping pages on completion of the work to keep the items together under a symbol or header card. This maintains the integrity of the groups for documenting. Or use a digital camera to take photos of the sticky wall.

Other Tips for Using the Sticky Wall: When using both a sticky wall and flip charts you can rub the flip chart pages against the sticky-wall to transfer some of the adhesive to the back of the flip chart for posting on the wall instead of using regular masking tape.

Demonstrate to the group proper writing on pads for use on the sticky wall. In normal handwriting, write "Can you read this" and place it up on the wall. Starting in the back of the group, ask them if they can read it? Show them the proper way using 1.5" to 2" printed letters.

Be aware of the ability of the group to view the items placed on the board. Sometimes items that are placed low on the board are obscured and something of importance may be missed during the session.

Seeing individual items among 40 or more on a wall is difficult. When referring to an item at the board, point to the idea to help move the attention to it.

When discussing the grouping of issues organize the cards so they are parallel to the floor. As a card is considered turn the issue to a 45-degree angle. This helps differentiate the ones being discussed from the ones they are not. If a card is not included in the group, return it to the orientation of the main group. When done with a group, move it aside on another part of the sticky wall to clear a work area.

If someone says they want to move an item, ask them to explain while physically moving the item. If someone is going to object or comment they will probably do it when you move the item.

People see things differently. When there is disagreement about which category to place a card when grouping, ask the participants in disagreement to describe how they view the item. Usually, their perspective or interpretation is different. Duplicate the item, noting the differences on the card and put it in both columns.

At the conclusion of a session fold the Sticky Wall with the adhesive inside and little or no air trapped inside.

3-M Artist Mount Adhesive™ is a repositionable (semi-permanent) spray adhesive. When a card is pressed against it and removed, some of the adhesive remains on the back of the card. Over time the adhesive will lose its adhesion quality. Follow the tips for Applying Adhesive (above) to renew the adhesive quality of your Sticky Wall.

Before the new application wash and dry the Sticky Wall to clean off marks and release wrinkles. Most of the adhesive will remain on the cloth. After five or six applications of adhesive you may want to replace the Sticky Wall with a new one. Most Sticky Walls last two to three years before they have to be replaced.

Resources:

Wall-of-Wonder Article

<http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/rational/library/content/RationalEdge/nov01/SpecifyingRequirementsNov01.pdf>

Dynamic Leadership Consulting Group, Inc. 703-913-6513

http://www.facilitationcenter.com/index.php?option=com_phpshop&page=shop.browse&category_id=8d21230b527b534040aeeba0a71f8068