

# Facilitating with Sticky Walls

**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 facilitators toolkit the sticky wall provides the greatest flexibility and the greatest potential for engaging all participants. It is a little cheaper to use than various large size sticky notes.

**Buy a kit:** Sticky Walls can be purchased or made in a variety of colors. They can be purchased from the Process-Based Facilitator (202-498-2310 or [wvick@verizon.net](mailto:wvick@verizon.net)) for \$75 (basic shipping included). These are large 5’ tall by 12’ long available in red, burgundy, kelly and spruce green, royal and navy blue, and purple. Occasionally other colors like OD green, black, white and yellow, are also sometimes available. Special ordered colors are also available. These walls are pre-treated and ready to use out of the package. The ICA-USA offers untreated sticky walls in blue or purple in large and small formats. Shipping is extra. (<http://www.ica-usa.org/>)

**Construct a Wall:** Sticky walls are easy to construct. To do so you will need the following:

- 60” Rip-Stop Nylon 1.6 oz. (about \$45 retail)
- 3-M Spray Mount Artist Adhesive (\$17/can)
- Sewing machine

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 and durability sticky walls should be hemmed. Rip-stop nylon is used because it is thin, light weight, and is treated to be impermeable. The weights range from .75 ozs. to 1.9 ozs. Weights less than 1.2 ozs. are not recommended. The fabric has a dull and shiny side. Use the shiny side for the work surface.

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



a blob of thick adhesive where you start spraying the fabric. To ensure an even coating and coverage of the adhesive, lightly spray the fabric using smooth motions holding the can about 8 to 12 inches above the cloth. Spray the cloth once going up and down and a second time going from left to right in an even motion. 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 oz. can should provide 2 initial applications. With the proper application you should see, when held at an angle to the light, an even light gray film on the cloth. If you can readily or easily see the adhesive on the cloth, you are applying much more than is needed.

**Using the Sticky Wall:** (See Figure 1 below)

It is not uncommon for a facilitator to use several Sticky Walls during a workshop. I have used as many as 12 during Strategic Planning. Having multiple colors helps differentiate among several group activities. However, in most cases only one or two are used to ensure the group is properly focused. The numbered paragraphs below relate to the numbered items in Figure 1 on the next page.

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” (Note: test the tape on the wall to ensure it does not remove the paint). Alternatively, for fabric covered walls use straight pins instead of tape. “Height Rule”- Place the top no higher than the shortest person can reach.

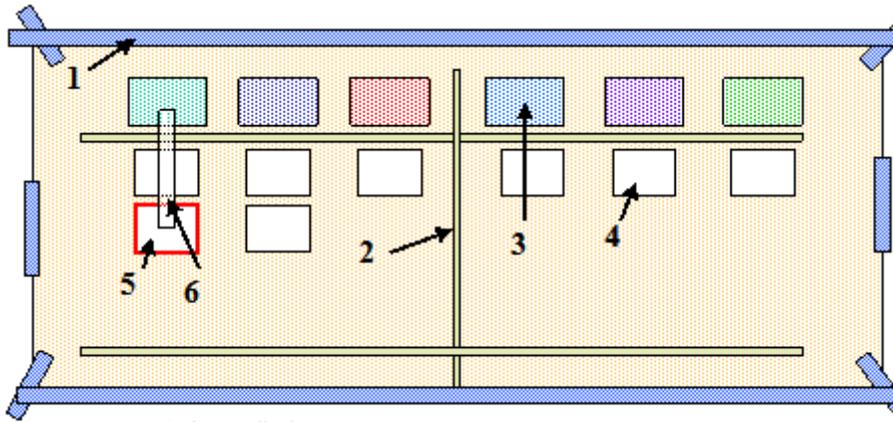


Figure 1: Sticky Wall Elements

2. Use 1/8" or 1/2" artist or masking tape to create a variety of matrices, flow lines, etc. as needed. Use tape colors that contrast with the sticky walls.
3. Make title or header cards from colored paper.
4. Plain 24 lb. paper is best, from the recycling bin, or index cards. Use whole, half, or quarter sheets, 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 transparent scotch 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. We use a digital camera to take photos of the sticky wall with the cards in place to memorialize the work. Later we will enter the data into a Microsoft Word table.

**Other Tips for Using the Sticky Wall:**

Demonstrate to the group proper writing on paper or 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 for a small group and 2.5" to 3" for larger groups.

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

Seeing individual items among 40 or more on a wall can be difficult. When referring to an item at

the wall, point to or touch the idea to help draw 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 one being discussed from among those present on the wall. When done discussing the card 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 places.

Fold the Sticky Wall with the adhesive on the inside, with little to no air trapped on the 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:**

Wayne Vick – Process-Based Facilitation

[www.FacilitationCenter.com](http://www.FacilitationCenter.com)

202-498-2310

[wvick@verizon.net](mailto:wvick@verizon.net)