

THE USE OF METAPHORICAL ASSOCIATIVE CARDS FOR WORK WITH BUSINESS DURING TRANSFORMATION

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Summary

The article aims to analyze the possibilities of using metaphoric associative cards for working with businesses and organizations. Metaphoric associative cards could be used as an additional tool in counseling to provide the ability to work simultaneously within the emotional, mental, and physical dimensions of the client, creating a secure space for reflections during the team sessions and enhancing creativity during brainstorming.

Enterprise organizations and small and medium businesses overcoming market challenges, and financial changes should adapt to any scenarios and transform rapidly by representing innovative solutions (new products, services, processes, opening new markets, going through M&A, etc.). Such transformations bring anxiety for an organization and all employees as the level of uncertainty is high and bringing clear communications to the company culture, developing space for reflection is critical (*Giernalczyk, Lohmer, 2012*).

To discover potential scenarios of strategic development, working with a portrait of the customers for improvement for customer journeys, discovering blockers or potential root causes of new project initiations working with metaphors through the session with MAC could be helpful.

Practical techniques that could be used during the work on requests of organizations described.

Key words: metaphor, metaphoric associative cards, change management, organizational psychology, strategy, insight, associations.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/6520>

1. Introduction

To survive in the market organizations should quickly and constantly adapt to the changes of reality and this process impacts all sides of business architecture: development of new value streams, changes of existing products, adaptation of strategy, reinvention of project planning, interaction with customers, etc.

Changes are usually met with high resistance because of the high level of uncertainty which requires new approaches in business analysis and change management. A high level of uncertainty increases anxiety in the team and accelerates burnout for employers. To help with the development of potential scenarios of development and structure potential focus of development could be used psychological methods such as metaphoric associative cards (MAC). Working with metaphors can help with decreasing anxiety (*Ozdemir, 2020*). Combined with other methods used during strategic sessions, metaphoric associative cards (MAC) can help reduce anxiety levels and work on requests. Being neutral by default, metaphoric associative cards can support by giving a metaphor, or association on the picture that person sees there. There are different decks of cards present currently that could be used for different purposes

working on different requests. Defining a relevant set of cards for work during the session could realize true aspirations and vectors for further development and gain the inner integrity of the company. Metaphoric associative cards can help in viewing situations from another angle and finding the most favorable strategies.

MAC could be applied both for individual and group work, helping to build relationships between team members, for analysis of group needs, etc. (Shebanova, 2020).

2. Adaptation of business to changes

Adaptation of business to changes requires strategy review and reinvention and work with potential conscious and unconscious blockers of the owner of the business and management team. Strategy now shifted from analytical to creative exercise as the challenging market and hyper-competitive environment require non-standard solutions, new approaches to work with customers, and rapid reaction of customer behavior. To give a space for creativity, the level of uncertainty and anxiety could be reduced during the sessions where metaphorical associative cards are. Cards could be used during one-to-one sessions with managers or experts or the work with a team.

MAC allows us to discover projections, identification, metaphors, associations, and insights. During the consultative process with the help of the image represented on the card, the client can come to transferring metaphoric work results to life as the association from cards serves as a mechanism of identification. This method represents the method of free associations proposed by S. Freud and C. G. Jung's method of associative experiment (Popova, Miloradova, 2014).

3. Techniques for working with cards

The article provided several techniques for using Metaphorical Associative Cards (MAC) in specific business requests. Techniques represent possible scenarios of using instruments during the work with an individual or a group within the organization, but such practices could be used in other processes in the organization or during educational processes where work with a group is required, for example (Jinghan, 2022; Ozdemir, 2020).

The following technique helps in forming a business vision and strategy development. This technique aims to determine the direction of business development and shape a vision of the dream that the business aspires to achieve in the future. The main idea is to help identify the goal and value. The technique is also suitable for both individual and group work during team sessions or strategic sessions.

Materials required for work with an individual or the team:

1. A deck of metaphorical cards. It is recommended to use any universal decks.
2. Notebooks for taking notes for participants for working with metaphors.
3. In a group work format, it is recommended to have a flipchart for recording images and reflections after individual discussions for further group analysis.
4. Also, sessions could be held in an online format. In this case, could be used digital cards and boards for illustrating the metaphors and insights during the session in the corresponding digital workplace tool (Zoom, Google Meets, Teams, etc.).
5. A quiet meeting room where the session won't be interrupted is comfortable for both individual and group work.

Questions for work with cards:

1. Define the theme and intention of the session with a focus on shaping the ideal future of the business and forming a strategic direction.

2. Select one card from the deck blindly.
3. Analyze what emotions the chosen card evokes in you.
4. What elements of this card are associated with your goal?
5. If you could choose one word to symbolize this image, what would it be?
6. How does the image on this card relate to your business right now?
7. What is the strength of the image on this card? What resource can you draw from this image?
8. What sensations in your body does this card evoke? When have you felt a similar state before? How do you feel in this state? What would you like to change to improve your state?
9. How would you formulate a goal or vision for this image? What resonates with your business in this? What would you like to take for the development and resources of your business?
10. Looking at the image, describe what you can do right now to start moving toward your goal. What steps can you realistically take now?

In a group format, this practice can be used by taking turns with each participant, working with one card selected by the facilitator, or with each participant choosing their card. The results can be recorded on a flipchart or in any convenient digital format for online work.

Such an analysis will allow participants to understand how they perceive the company's or business's goal and gather a collective vision of the future. This will help set the development direction and increase team motivation.

The following technique could be used for working with the client image. The goal of this technique is to define the portrait of a potential client in the business. The technique can be used in both individual and group settings.

A group format can help identify both a shared vision and potential discrepancies in the group's understanding of the client, which may act as a blocker for product development and sales.

In an individual format, the technique assists in understanding whom the client (business, consultant, psychologist, entrepreneur, etc.) specifically wants to work with and how they can help or provide value within the scope of their services and products. It also helps identify potential limitations and fears.

This technique can be used as a tool for addressing business development, self-improvement, starting a practice, creating a business, and overcoming business growth barriers.

Possible issues it can address include a lack of clients, client attrition, misunderstanding client needs, etc.

Materials:

- A deck of metaphorical cards. It is recommended to use portrait decks, such as "Portrait of Men" or "Portrait of Women" cards. Multiple decks can also be used to understand the potential client group better and for further work with the selected cards.

Additional materials required:

- Notebooks for taking notes.
- In a group work format, it is recommended to have a flipchart to record images and reflections after individual discussions for subsequent group analysis.
- A quiet meeting room where the session won't be interrupted is comfortable for both individual and group work.

Define the theme and intention of the session: Discuss with the participant the business scenarios for working with the cards within the theme of working with clients/target audience. Potential business scenarios could include creating a new product and identifying a new client

group, starting a private practice or business, and identifying the key client group, or discovering possible reasons for the lack of clients, etc.

- Choose the appropriate deck: Choose the best deck to use with the client. If the client is focused on a female or male audience, use the corresponding decks. If there is no differentiation for the client's product or service, you can either work with both decks sequentially or allow the client to randomly choose cards from both. Select one card blindly.
- Emotional response: What emotions does the selected card evoke in you? How do you feel about this image?
- Comfort level: Do you feel comfortable with this image? How do you perceive yourself when interacting with this image?
- Client analysis: How do you envision your client based on this image?
- Client's need: What need do you sense from the image on the card? How can you assist him or her?
- Offering support: What could you offer the client image to fulfill their need? How can you support them?
- Resonance with your product/service: How does your product or service resonate with the client's needs? What can you offer to fulfill those needs?
- Client's transformation: How will your client's state change after using your product or service?
- Reaching the client: How can you connect with this client? Where can they hear from you or about you?
- Client's feelings post-service/product: What feelings does the client have after receiving your service or product?
- Your emotional state: Describe how you feel when the client is satisfied with your product or service. What emotions do you experience?
- Physical sensations: What sensations arise in your body? When else have you felt this way?
- Communication with the client: How would you communicate with the client from this state? How would you present your product or service?

In a group format, this practice can be conducted by taking turns with each participant and recording the results on a flipchart or in any convenient digital format for online sessions.

Such an analysis will allow the team to identify commonalities and differences in their understanding of the client's image. This can help uncover any contradictions within the team and serve as a starting point for addressing them.

Technique for using Metaphorical Associative Cards (MAC) to find resources for starting a new project.

The goal of this technique is to help find the resources needed to launch a new project or create a new direction. It can be particularly useful in situations where there is a clear idea and understanding of the direction, but certain limitations or obstacles prevent its implementation for various reasons. These reasons may be subconscious, and metaphorical associative cards (MAC) can help bring them to the surface for further analysis, as well as identify the necessary resources to move forward.

This technique is suitable for both individual and group work.

In a group setting, it is essential to identify key participants whose opinions may influence the realization of the idea. Their perspectives can either drive the project forward or hold it back, and this technique can help highlight those dynamics.

The technique can be applied not only to business-related issues but also to personal matters that are stuck and unable to move forward, such as changing jobs, relocating, or making a significant decision.

Materials:

1. A deck of metaphorical cards. It is recommended to use universal, resource-based decks, and combine them with decks for working on shadow sides or fears.
2. Notebooks for taking notes.
3. In a group setting, it is recommended to have a flipchart for recording images and reflections after individual discussions, followed by a collective group analysis.
4. A quiet, comfortable place, suitable for both individual and group work.

Steps:

1. Define the session's intention: Focus on finding the resources necessary for launching a project or new direction.
2. Choose a card from a shadow-side or fear-focused deck.
3. Analyze the emotions the chosen card evokes. What feelings arise when you look at this image?
4. Project association: How does this card relate to your project or intention?
5. Emotional state: What state does this card bring out in you?
6. Physical sensations: What sensations does this card create in your body? When have you felt this state before? How do you feel in this state? What would you like to change to improve your well-being?
7. Identify a resource: What resource can you draw from this card?
8. Choose a card from a universal or resource-focused deck.
9. Analyze the emotions evoked by this new card.
10. Project resonance: How does this card reflect your project or intention?
11. Find a resource: What resource can you take from this card, and how can it help you achieve your goal or move forward with your project?
12. Compare images: How do the images from both cards resonate with each other? Do you see any associations between them?
13. Identify combined resources: What resources can you take from both cards?
14. Utilize the images: How can these images help you move forward with your intention or project?
15. First step: Analyze what you can do as a first step to kickstart your project or realize your intention.

In a group setting, this practice can be conducted by working sequentially with each participant. The facilitator can draw a card, or each participant can select their own. Results can be recorded on a flipchart or in any convenient digital format for online sessions.

This analysis helps participants understand how they view the project and provides an opportunity for a collective evaluation. The group can analyze both the meaning and the potential risks of the project, as seen by all participants involved in the activity.

4. Conclusions

Cards provide powerful tools for enhancing organization counseling and supporting clients in the discovery and investigation of problematic areas, discovering new resources for strategy transformation, and overcoming uncertainty.

MAC could be used for both individual and group work in the organization during transformations. The psychological phenomena of MAC give an opportunity during the session to help the client reframe the problem, discover solutions and resources for achieving the goals, investigate the client's unconscious processes, etc.

Bringing MAC as a tool into work with business will more effectively discover problems for overcoming changes and building strings teams.

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