

Six Thinking Hats

Problem

How to obtain multiple perspectives of an issue?

Difficulty

Work with an SME

- **Six Thinking Hats** uses 6 differently colored hats, each representing a specific thought process (see below).
- When the team “puts on a hat,” they address an issue from that hat’s point of view. Sessions begin with a “blue hat,” to discuss the meeting and hat order.
- Sequentially, the team puts on different hats, each for a fixed period.
- The facilitator always wears a blue hat.

	Black	risk assessment
	Blue	organization and planning
	Green	creative thinking
	Red	feelings and instincts
	White	information gathering
	Yellow	benefits and values

Issue to address

Six Thinking Hats Process

Multiple perspectives of the issue

1. Select an issue (e.g., project or concept).
2. The facilitator & the team select a hat ordering:
 - **Any meeting:** Blue, White, Green, Yellow, Red, Black
 - **Brainstorming meeting:** Blue, White, Green, Blue
 - **Problem solving meeting:** Blue, White, Green, Red, Yellow, Black, Green, Blue
 - **Strategic planning meeting:** Blue, Yellow, Black, White, Blue, Green, Blue
3. The facilitator sequences through the hats, leads the discussion for each hat, and decides when to move to the next hat.

Six Thinking Hats – Example

Sample initial questions for a facilitator to ask for different hats

- Black Hat: What risks need to be considered?
- Blue Hat: What support, systems, or processes will be needed?
- Green Hat: How can we create new ideas?
- Red Hat: What are your initial reactions?
- White Hat: What information do we have?
- Yellow Hat: Why should we be optimistic?

Sample follow-on questions for the Black Hat:

1. How will this fail?
2. What are the weaknesses or risks?
3. What are potential unintended consequences?
4. How will the competition react?
5. Which stakeholders can prevent success?

Sample follow-on questions for the Green Hat:

1. How can we generate multiple problem solutions?
2. What brainstorming tools can we use to find solutions?
3. What relevant outrageous scenarios can we create?
4. How would <famous person> solve this problem?
5. What thought experiment could we perform?

Sample follow-on questions for the Yellow Hat:

1. What does success look like?
2. What makes this so successful?
3. What are the short term and long term benefits?
4. How does this make things better?
5. If we could not fail, what would we do?

Six Thinking Hats – Notes

Slide 1

1. Edward de Bono developed the Six Thinking Hats in 1986 in his book “Lateral Thinking for Management”
2. Use Six Thinking Hats to:
 - Run more structured meetings
 - Make more holistic decisions.
 - Approach problems from multiple viewpoints (e.g., facts and emotions)
 - Have more meeting collaboration and reduce conflict
 - Avoid getting stuck in a single point of view
 - Consider issues systematically
 - View issues from unusual angles

Slide 2

1. The facilitator leads the meeting by asking questions of the team.
2. The web has a wide variety of potential questions for each hat color.
3. In the time allocated, there may be only a few follow-up questions per hat.
4. If possible, have a scribe capture information from the team discussion.