

An EXCELLENCE INSIGHTS 2-Min. Briefing

SIX THINKING HATS

What Is It? Six Thinking Hats is a parallel thinking technique developed by creativity guru Dr. Edward de Bono in the mid 1980's.

Why Use It? In meetings and problem solving sessions, people tend to think at different speeds, at different depths, and in different sequences (and they tend to talk over one another). The Six Hats technique unbundles and rebundles the thought process. Meetings are said to take only half to one-tenth the time as before, and richer, more innovative solutions are derived.

The Basics Metaphorically, participants wear different color hats each of which channels a different thought process. All participants wear the white hat, then switch, etc.



While wearing the white hat, participants are neutral and objective – concerned with objective facts and figures known or needed.



The yellow hat is optimistic and covers hope and positive thinking. When wearing this hat, participants explore the positive and probe for value and benefits.



The black hat is judgment - the devil's advocate or why something may not work. When wearing this hat, participants spot the difficulties and dangers; where things might go wrong.



The red hat indicates feelings, hunches and intuition. When wearing this hat, participants can express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates.



The green hat is for creativity and new ideas. Participants express alternatives, new concepts, and new perceptions.



The blue hat is concerned with control and the organization of the thinking process – also the use of the other hats. It is used to manage the thinking process and follow the Six Hats guidelines.

When to Use It This technique can be employed at any meeting. In operational excellence methods like Six Sigma and DMAIC, it is especially helpful in the root cause efforts in Analyze and in the solution selection portion of Improve.

About the Author Dr. Edward de Bono hails from Malta, holds an M.D. and several Ph.D.s and has written over 60 books. He is widely considered to be one of the leading experts in creative thinking techniques. His other works include *Lateral Thinking* and *De Bono's Thinking Course*.

Resources Wikipedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Thinking_Hats
De Bono's Website: <http://www.edwarddebono.com/Default.php>
Training providers:
<http://www.sidewaysmind.com/de-bono.htm>
http://www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php
