



Toolkit Page 114

Six Thinking Hats

Edward DeBono, an expert on the study of how people think, developed this approach that allows individuals and groups attend to all parts of a problem. If people know that they types of questions they value will be addressed, they can relax while the group uses different hats in their approach to the problem. For instance, if you tend to approach problem solving by looking for what's wrong, you will be assured that there will be sufficient time for you to focus on the negative.

In meetings, people often say “let’s put on our analytical hat.” DeBono takes this hat analogy a step further. He has identified six thinking hats. Here they are.

White Hat: Deals with facts, figures, and objective information.

Do we have the money to do this?

What’s the timeline?

You missed an crucial piece of information in your analysis.

Red Hat: Deals with emotions and feelings.

How do you feel about this approach?

What Level 2 impact will it have on people on our team?

I’m uncomfortable with this change.

Black hat: Deals with logical errors in thinking.

Have you thought through the implications of this on productivity?

You missed some important details in the second section of the proposal.

Yellow Hat: Deals with positive constructive thoughts.

I like this idea.

What are the potential benefits if we take this approach?

Green Hat: Deals with creativity and new ideas.

Here's another angle we could take on this proposal.

What other ways might we consider to build support for this idea?

Blue Hat: Deals with control of the other hats and thinking steps.

Now that we've looked at this using all the hats, what should be do next?

What stands out to you, now that's you've heard all the opinions and reactions?

Let's integrate the ideas into a coherent plan.

You've probably recognized that in most meetings we only put on a few of the hats. The other hats often can give us critical information.

Consider using the Six Thinking Hats as a model for a problem-solving meeting.

- Pick an order for attending to each of the hats. (Always wear the blue hat last.)
- Specify how much time you will spend on each hat. No need to spend the same amount of time on each.

Learning More

I highly recommend Edward DeBono's book, *Six Thinking Hats*. This fine and practical book will give you lots of ideas for putting this approach to good use.

© 2010 Rick Maurer. Rick uses his Change without Migraines™ to advise organizations on how to lead change effectively. He is author of many books including *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*. In 2009, he created the Change Management Open Source Project, a free resource for people interested in change in organizations. You can access the open source project as well as many free articles and tools from his web site: www.rickmaurer.com