

Six Thinking Hats

—a detailed discussion of this innovation method

Introduction

Dr. Edward de Bono's "Six Thinking Hats" introduces an innovative method called "parallel thinking," which is designed to improve group problem-solving and decision-making. The essence of "parallel thinking" lies in its ability to minimize time wasted on arguments by focusing on exploring solutions together rather than debating over who is right or wrong.

This method encourages looking towards future possibilities and finding ways to move forward constructively, rather than getting stuck in disagreements.

Objective White

Characterized by its neutrality and objectivity, the White Thinking Hat mandates an analytical approach, focusing exclusively on objective facts and data.

Sensitive Red

Red Thinking Hat, representative of the spectrum of human emotions, allowing and encouraging participants to openly express feelings and intuitions without rational explanation.

Creative Green

Akin to the verdancy of lush grass, the Green Thinking Hat epitomizes creativity and imagination. It champions creative thinking, brainstorming, and alternative approaches.

Rational Blue

This Blue Thinking Hat role ensures the strategic utilization of the various thinking hats, oversees the progression of the thought process, and culminates in synthesizing conclusions.

Optimistic Yellow

Adorned with this Yellow Thinking Hat, individuals are inclined to adopt an optimistic stance, emphasizing hopeful, affirmative, and constructive contributions to discussions.

Pessimistic Black

Black Thinking Hat, permits individuals to engage in critical analysis, embodying skepticism and inquiry.

How to apply “Six Thinking Hats”

Next, we will look at how the innovation method "Six Thinking Hats" can be useful in an actual teamwork.

In order to make the application of this method more understandable, we take a new product development scenario as an example: a company is planning to develop a software product. The product development team is responsible for planning and designing the new product.

Face the facts

Whether we are developing a new product or iterating on an existing one, we need to have a basic understanding of the current situation and trend of the industry. Market research is a quick way to do so.

Data analytics, on the other hand, helps the team working from the collected data to find out the correlation between important information such as product benefits, points of sale and other information.

At this stage, team members should put on their "White thinking hats" and only focus on facts.

Explore the possibilities

After the members are all aware of the information from the preliminary research, we should organize all team members to put on their "Green thinking hats", i.e. organize a brainstorming session. The purpose of brainstorming is to get as many new ideas and creativity as possible. So in this process, team members come together to share as many thoughts and ideas as possible, regardless of whether they are feasible or reasonable.

Strengths & weaknesses

In the Competitor Analysis and Strategy Analysis session, we need to analyse the following aspects as comprehensively as possible: competitors' and our own products, market policies and opportunities, corporate resources and capabilities, the benefits and the risks of investing resources.

Team members can be divided into two parts, those colleagues on "Yellow thinking hats" are responsible for looking for strengths and opportunities on a positive side; correspondingly, those colleagues on "Black thinking hats" look for risks and problems on a negative side.

Express emotions and feelings

After the programme design is completed, we basically had a prototype of the product, this is when the "Red thinking hats" come into play.

Members can put on their red hats, see themselves as users, and express their feelings about the product's prototype. The development team can make further adjustments to the product after understanding the gap between product content and user needs.

05

Overall and rational thinking

Those members wearing "Blue thinking hats" represent the leader and organiser. They are crucial in maintaining coherence and direction throughout collaborative problem-solving endeavors. They need to track and control the team in the entire planning process, so that they can maintain a balance between each thinking hat.

04



Edward De Bono believes that: "the main difficulty of thinking is confusion, where we try to do too much at once. Emotions, information, logic, hope and creativity all crowd in on us. It's like juggling too many balls." Six thinking hats is a technique that simplifies thinking by maintaining focus on one element at a time and allowing a change in thinking while minimising conflict between members in a group. Therefore, the correct use of the Six Thinking Hats can help us to think rationally, efficiently and comprehensively.