Making Decisions Using the Six Thinking Hats

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The Six Thinking Hats method, developed by Edward de Bono, is a powerful tool for group discussion and individual thinking. This approach encourages people to step outside their habitual ways of thinking and look at things from multiple perspectives. By wearing six metaphorical "hats," each representing a different direction of thinking, users can explore ideas in a structured and comprehensive manner. The method is designed to streamline meetings, enhance decision-making, and foster effective communication. The Six Thinking Hats method is particularly useful in these scenarios:

- **Problem-solving sessions:** When trying to resolve complex issues or finding solutions to complex problems.

- **Decision-making processes:** To assess all angles of a decision thoroughly before coming to a conclusion.

- **Brainstorming or innovation meetings:** When generating new ideas and creative solutions.

- **Conflict resolution:** To understand different viewpoints and develop empathy among team members.

- **Evaluating new ideas or strategies:** To assess the viability and potential challenges of new initiatives and directions.

Understanding the Six Thinking Hats:
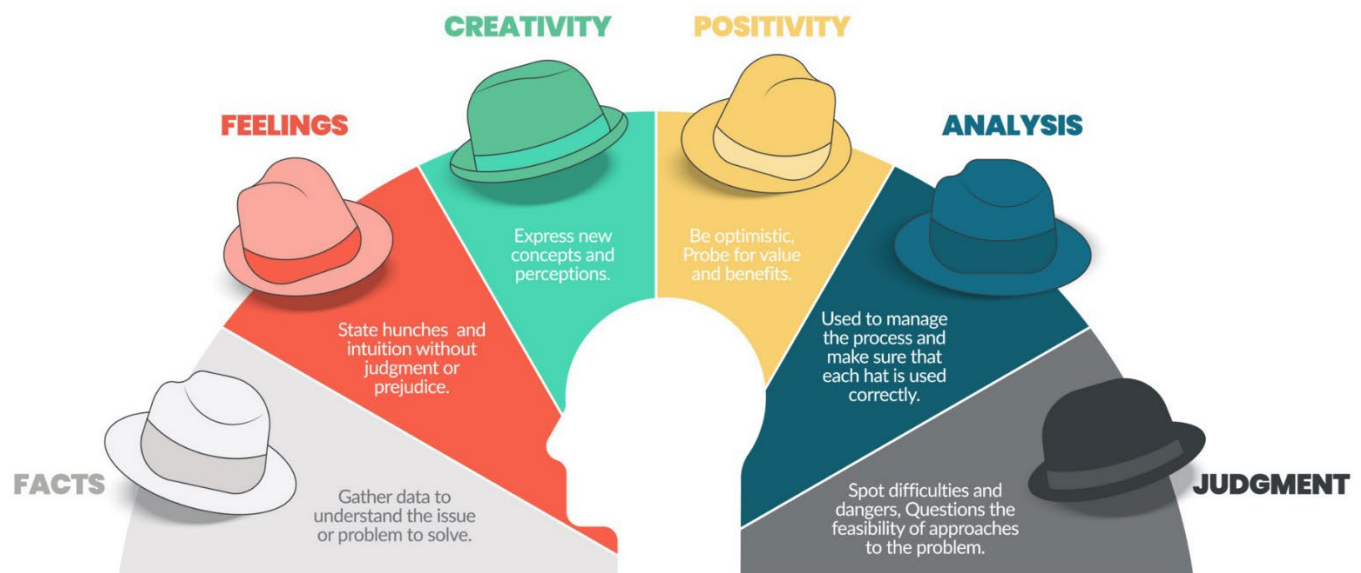
- **White Hat:** Focus on available data and information, looking objectively at what you know.

- **Red Hat:** Express emotions and feelings, sharing fears, likes, dislikes, and intuitions without justification.

- **Green Hat:** Encourage creativity and new ideas, thinking freely without boundaries.

- **Yellow Hat:** Be optimistic and explore the positives, focusing on benefits, feasibility, and how things can be done.

- **Blue Hat:** Control and organize the thinking process, ensuring that the Six Thinking Hats guidelines are adhered to.

- **Black Hat:** Be cautious and critical, identifying why an idea might not work, which helps to identify potential weaknesses.

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How to Use the Six Thinking Hats:

1. **Set the Goal or Question:** Clearly state what you want to achieve from the session. This could be a problem statement or a decision that needs to be made.

2. **Allocate Time:** Decide how much time will be dedicated to each hat, ensuring a balanced approach. Typically, 2-5 minutes per hat is sufficient for effective discussion.

3. **Rotate Hats:** Move systematically through the hats. It's essential for each participant to engage with the current hat's perspective, setting aside personal biases.

4. **Document Insights:** Keep a record of important insights and ideas that arise from each hat. This will help in understanding the diverse perspectives and compiling a comprehensive view of the discussion.

5. **Evaluate Outcomes:** Review the collected information and insights to make a balanced, well-informed decision. Assess how the different views contribute to the solution or decision.

Tips for Effective Use:

- **Lead with the Blue Hat:** Start/end sessions with the Blue Hat to set objectives & summarize conclusions.
- **Encourage Full Participation:** Ensure that every participant contributes to each hat's perspective.
- **Be Open-Minded:** Participants should embrace each hat's role, even if it challenges natural tendencies.
- **Keep Time:** Maintain discipline with time limits to keep the session productive and on track.

Example: Imagine a business team using the Six Thinking Hats to decide whether to launch a new product.

- **White Hat:** They examine market data and customer feedback.
- **Red Hat:** Team members discuss their gut feelings about the product's appeal.
- **Black Hat:** They consider the risks and potential market competition.
- **Yellow Hat:** They discuss the potential benefits and success of the product.
- **Green Hat:** Brainstorm additional features and market strategies.
- **Blue Hat:** Summarize insights and plan the next steps based on the collective input.

Measuring the Effectiveness of the Six Thinking Hats:

To determine the effectiveness of the Six Thinking Hats method in your meetings and decision-making sessions, consider implementing the following evaluation techniques:

1. **Decision Impact Analysis:** Track the outcomes of decisions made using the Six Thinking Hats method. Evaluate the success of these decisions in terms of business metrics, implementation efficiency, and problem resolution success. Compare these outcomes with decisions made through other methods.

2. **Idea Implementation Rate:** Monitor the number of ideas generated during each hat's phase and track how many of these ideas are eventually implemented. This can help assess the creative value and practical impact of the ideas generated through the Green Hat thinking.

3. **Participant Engagement Levels:** Observe and note the level of engagement from all participants during sessions. The Six Thinking Hats method should increase participation by providing a structured way for every voice to be heard. Evaluate whether quieter team members become more active during sessions.

By systematically measuring these aspects, you can gain a clearer understanding of how the Six Thinking Hats method enhances your team's decision-making and problem-solving capabilities. Adjustments and improvements can be made based on this feedback to optimize the use of this method in future sessions.

Conclusion: The Six Thinking Hats method offers a disciplined approach to thinking that can significantly improve decision-making and problem-solving. By exploring different perspectives, teams can avoid common pitfalls of group discussions, such as confrontations or going off-topic, leading to more innovative and effective outcomes. Use this method to transform your team's thinking processes and achieve clearer, more structured discussions.

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GRIFFEN EXECUTIVE SOLUTIONS

Six Thinking Hats Template

Set the Goal or Question: _____

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Hat	Role	Focus	Brainstorming Ideas	Theme/Insights
	Analysis	Organization and Planning	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	
	Facts	Facts and Information	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	
	Creativity	Ideas and Creativity	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	
	Positivity	Beliefs and Values	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	
	Feelings	Feelings and Instincts	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	
	Judgement	Risks and Caution	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	

Evaluate Outcomes: _____

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