

Decision Making Tool

Six Thinking Hats

Many of us approach decision making in the same way each time. Six thinking hats forces you to move outside your habitual thinking style and look at problems from a different perspective. This activity allows you to view a problem from many angles and not only view successful solutions or outcomes but also potential resistance or failures.

Benefits of Six Thinking Hats

- Allows the team to work on a creative level to address difficult issues.
- Allows the team to explore unknown areas or situations.
- Allows the team to see the connections between ideas and deal with them in groups.
- It can assist the team to identify a priority area of focus.

Benefits of Six Thinking Hats

- A powerful decision making technique in a group situation that allows everyone to explore the situation from each perspective as the same time.
- Changing your thinking style could help you find new solutions to a tricky problem.
- Allows a more rounded view of the situation.
- You can use six thinking hats in a meeting or on your own.

How To Undertake Six Thinking Hats

When looking at a problem or analysing a solution, undertake a team meeting where each member wears a different colour hat. Each thinking hat is a different style of thinking. A variation to this technique is to look at a problem from the point of view of different professionals or customers (for example doctors, nurses, management, patients) :

White Hat "Information"

With this hat you focus on information and data. Look at the data you have and analyse past trends. Look for gaps in your knowledge and either try to fill them or give a reason for them.

Yellow Hat "Benefits"

This helps you think positively and have an optimistic view that helps you see the benefits of the plan. This helps you keep optimistic.

Red Hat "Feelings"

With this hat you look at problems with your gut reaction and emotion. Consider how others would react emotionally and react when they are not aware of your reasoning.

Green Hat "Creativity"

With this hat you develop a creative solution to the problem with little criticism of ideas. You can use a creative tool to undertake this step.

Black Hat "Judgement"

Look at the decision's potential negative outcomes by looking at it cautiously and defensively. Try and see why it might not work as it can highlight the weak points of the plan. This type of thinking can help develop a tougher and more resilient plan as it allows you to eliminate the weak points or prepare how to deal with them.

Blue Hat "Process"

This hat represents process control and normally worn by the facilitator of the group. This person will drive the discussion and direct the activity into green hat thinking if required when ideas run out.

Be Well Health Clinic decided to use Six Thinking Hats to consider ways to increase team productivity. By undertaking this activity with the team, Carol the Practice Manager was able to understand the problem from different perspectives and make an informed decision around the issue involving the whole team.

Carol allocated each team member a coloured hat and asked them to come up with some ideas, thoughts or solutions using the thought process allocated to them. This is an example of some the feedback:

How can we increase productivity	
White Hat "Information"	Allocated tasks are not being completed. Patients are left waiting on hold. Mistakes are being made with billing.
Red Hat "Feelings"	I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work I have. I feel there is not equal distribution of responsibility. I feel anxious working with certain colleagues.
Black Hat "Judgement"	Making any changes to staff roles and responsibilities may upset staff. Why do we have to work more and be more responsible with no reward?
Yellow Hat "Benefits"	If work is shared equally, it will not be up to one person to do everything. If we improve productivity, the team morale will be lifted. We will work better as a team and support each other if we find a solution.
Green Hat "Creativity"	We could use a process map to identify who completes what tasks and when and identify if distribution of responsibilities can be shared further. We can brainstorm some solutions and ideas on how to solve this issue.
Blue Hat "Process"	What further ideas can we have to address this issue? Who in the team is happy to be involved in this process?