

I want to generate new ideas by framing a constructive discussion with my team.



## THINKING HATS

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

INSPIRED BY  
de Bono, E. (1985) Six Thinking Hats. USA: Little, Brown and Company.



**REQUIRES SOME DIALOGUE** with colleagues/peers.  
Plan for some time to interact and fill out in collaboration over a day maybe.

# What is it & why should I do it?

**Thinking Hats** allow a range of different viewpoints and perspectives to be brought into a discussion, whilst still keeping the focus on the issue at hand. It's a technique which can be used to encourage people to look at a topic from a number of different perspectives, making what might be a very complex issue a stimulating focus point for conversation. The team learns how to separate thinking into six clear functions and roles, getting them to look at all sides of an issue. Structuring the conversation around these different viewpoints helps avoid endless, free flowing debates around topics, and instead helps create a meaningful, focused discussion. This technique was popularised in the book *Six Thinking Hats* (De Bono E. 1985).

Each hat is a different theme, which indicates a particular viewpoint. In a group setting all team members think about a topic using the range of hats, helping them focus on the topic from each viewpoint at a time. This also helps getting contributions from all team members. This range of viewpoints can uncover new ways to address a particularly difficult problem, for instance by making an overly familiar issue feel 'strange' again, and it helps teams to develop a shared understanding.

## ? HOW TO USE IT

There are two ways of using the Thinking Hats:

**1.** Everyone 'wears' the same hat at the same time. Choose one of the hats and ask everyone to contribute to the discussion from that hat's point of view. Each of the six hats is used to discuss an issue.

**2.** Everyone 'wears' a different hat and the topic is discussed from multiple points of view. All hats need to contribute sufficiently to the discussion. Hats can be switched around during the discussion, forcing people to look at the issue differently.

Both approaches help teams to engage in critical discussions. The hats break up the conversation into focused parts that can

be conducted one after the other, instead of simultaneously. There is no correct order for which hat comes first or last, but for the first few times, it may be easiest to use the sequence as indicated on the worksheet (from factual to management).

The use of these hats may seem artificial at first, but once you go through the exercise a few times, the advantage becomes evident.

If 'hats' are not appropriate for the situation just use T-shirts, badges, or cards with the themes of the hats on them.



FACTUAL



EMOTIONAL



LOGICAL



CAUTIOUS



OUT OF THE  
BOX



MANAGEMENT

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