

deBono's Lateral Thinking Tools

Thinking Hats

White Hat:

With this thinking hat, you focus on the data available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them.

This is where you analyze past trends, and try to extrapolate from historical data.

Acquisition of Information

Red Hat:

'Wearing' the red hat, you look at the decision using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion. Also try to think how other people will react emotionally, and try to understand the intuitive responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

Examination of the human element: first impressions, emotions, OPV

Black Hat:

When using black hat thinking, look at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively. Try to see why ideas and approaches might not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan or course of action. It allows you to eliminate them, alter your approach, or prepare contingency plans to counter problems that arise.

Black Hat thinking helps to make your plans 'tougher' and more resilient. It can also help you to spot fatal flaws and risks before you embark on a course of action. Black Hat thinking is one of the real benefits of this technique, as many successful people get so used to thinking positively that often they cannot see problems in advance, leaving them under-prepared for difficulties.

Pessimistic approach (negatives)

Yellow Hat:

The yellow hat helps you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it, and spot the opportunities that arise from it. Yellow Hat thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

Optimistic (positives)

Green Hat:

The Green Hat stands for creativity. This is where you can develop creative solutions to a problem. It is a freewheeling way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas. A whole range of [creativity tools](#) can help you here.

Creativity (lateral thinking)

Blue Hat:

The Blue Hat stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for Black Hat thinking, and so on.

Leadership (to insure that each hat (perspective) gets adequate time)

Attention Directing Tools (to make intention to think clearly concrete)

PMI (plus, minus, and interesting)

APC (alternatives, possibilities or choices)

CAF (consider all factors)

C & S (consequences and sequel)

FI FO (information in information out)

EBS (examine both sides)

ADI (agreement, disagreement, irrelevance)

OPV (other people's views)

HV and LV (high values -determine action and low values -need to be taken into account)

AGO (aims, goals and objectives)