Edward de Bono is an expert in the fields of creativity and developing thinking skills. His 1985 book, *Six Thinking Hats*, presents a very simple technique for applying different types of thinking in order to explore all aspects of a problem. Using all six hats helps generate possibilities and alternatives that we would probably never consider without the use of this deliberate technique. Very briefly, de Bono’s six thinking hats include:

1. **White hat**
   White represents paper and the information you put on it
   With the white hat you ask questions such as, What do we know? What do we need to know? and How/where can we get the missing information? White hat thinking seeks to uncover objective facts and figures.

2. **Red hat**
   Red represents emotion
   Use red hat thinking to express your intuitive feelings about the thing being considered.

3. **Black hat**
   Black represents a robed judge
   With the black hat you explore the difficulties and dangers of a situation or...
idea as well as faults in logic or design. Black hat thinking, critical judgment, is the most frequently used.

By learning to use the other hats as well, judgment is temporarily suspended, which is very important to expanding alternatives and possibilities.

4. Yellow hat
Yellow represents sunshine and optimism

Just as the black hat is used to explore weaknesses and threats, the yellow hat is used to examine strengths and opportunities. With the yellow hat you ask questions such as, What's good about this? and What are the benefits?

5. Green hat
Green represents growth, life, and energy

The green hat is used for bringing up new possibilities, generating and discussing creative ideas, alternative solutions, or modifications of the idea being explored.

6. Blue hat
Blue reminds us of the over-arching sky, so blue is the color used to represent how we think about our thinking

Blue is used for metacognition and for organizing our thinking processes. Blue hat thinking can be used any time to ask questions such as, What have we learned so far? and What's our next step? The blue hat is also used initially to decide what you hope to achieve by the end of the problem exploration.

Let's describe the various hats we can wear

The white hat
White is neutral

While wearing the white hat we ignore arguments and proposals; we examine the facts, figures, and information that we have, and identify what information we don't have and how we might get it.

- What information do we have here?
- What information is missing?
- What information would we like to have?
- How are we going to get the information?

The black hat
The black hat is the logical negative.

It is the hat of caution and critical judgment. It is the most used hat, and perhaps the most valuable hat, because mistakes may be disastrous.

At the same time, it is very easy to overuse the black hat. It is easy to kill creative ideas with early negativity.

- The regulations do not permit us to do that.
- We do not have the production capacity to meet that order.
- When we tried a higher price the sales fell off.
- He has no experience in export management.

The yellow hat
The yellow hat is for optimism and the logical positive view of things

It looks for feasibility and how something can be done. It looks for benefits, but they must be logically based.

- That might work if we moved the production plant nearer to the customers.
- The benefit would come from repeat purchases.
- The high cost of energy would make everyone more energy efficient.

The red hat
Red is for feelings, hunches, and intuition

It permits people to put forward their feelings without the need for apology, explanation, or attempt to justify them.

Intuition may be a composite judgment based on years of experience, and it can be valuable even if the reasons behind it cannot be spelled out consciously.

Putting on my red hat, this is what I think about the project:

- My gut feeling is that it will not work.
- I don't like the way this is being done.
- My intuition tells me that prices will fall soon.
The green hat

The green hat is for creative thinking, new ideas, and additional alternatives.

Putting on the green hat makes time and space for creative effort.

This is where we engage in lateral thinking and other creative techniques.

- We need some new ideas here.
- Are there any additional alternatives?
- Could we do this in a different way?
- Could there be another explanation?

The blue hat

The blue hat is the thinking overview or process control hat

It is usually used by the chairperson of the meeting; it sets the agenda for thinking; it suggests the next step for thinking; it asks for summaries, conclusions, and decisions.

- We have spent far too much time looking for someone to blame.
- Could we have a summary of your views?
- I think we should take a look at the priorities.
- I suggest we try some green hat thinking to get some new ideas.

The biggest enemy of thinking is complexity, for that leads to confusion. When thinking is clear and simple, it becomes more enjoyable and effective. The Six Thinking Hats concept is very simple to understand, and very simple to use. Two main purposes of the Six Thinking Hats concept: 1) simplify thinking by allowing a thinker to deal with one thing at a time. Instead of having to take care of emotions, logic, information, hope and creativity all at the same time, the thinker is able to deal with them separately. 2) allows a switch in thinking. Committee members may be asked to take off one type of hat and try on another to allow for different ways of looking at the problem.

It's not uncommon for meetings to get bogged down in arguments where people take positions and defend them to the death. The Six Hats is a cooperative tool rather than an adversarial tool. In a normal meeting, it's easy for someone to voice the negatives rather than highlight the positives if they do not support an idea. The Six Hats technique challenges participants to see all sides. For people who see the downside in everything, the Six Hats technique offers them ample opportunity for black hat thinking but challenges them to think in other ways as well.

Rather than limiting people, the aim of the Six Hats is to get the thinker to use all six hats.

Sometimes it is possible to put together a sequence of hats that will assist in thinking productively about a matter.

The Six Hats method is both powerful and easy to use. The method emphasizes "what can be" rather than "what is" and how we design a way forward—not on who is right and who is wrong.

Visit http://www.amazon.com/Six-Thinking-Hats-Eduard-Bono/dp/0316178314/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1322059076&sr=8-1 to learn more.

The actual order will vary with the situation but for a new matter or problem, the sequence might be:

White - to get information
Green - for ideas and proposals
Yellow followed by Black on each alternative - to evaluate alternatives
Red - to assess feelings at this point
Blue - to decide what thinking to do next

For a well-known proposal, the sequence of hats might run:

Red
Yellow
Black
Green (to overcome negative points)
White
Blue
Successful Chairing for a Successful Committee

Chairing a committee can be a daunting yet very worthwhile task. The job of a committee chair is a complex one that requires the diplomatic skill of a seasoned politician, the team management skill of a major league professional sports coach, and even the patience and fortitude of an ant colony at a picnic.

Chairs need to be knowledgeable about their committee’s mission and current activities. However, during their term of service they will have many opportunities to learn about past activities and potential future efforts.

Effective committees and successful chairs learn from each other.

Communication is key to a chair’s success. They must be good listeners, good communicators, and good organizers. Successful chairs:

• Communicate with members and the assigned staff person regularly
• Communicate all pertinent information regarding committee activities and expectations
• Ensure all members have the opportunity to offer feedback during meetings and via email
• Encourage all members to be involved and have projects or programs to work on for the committee
• Follow up with committee members so they understand exactly what is being requested of them
• Answer all internal and external committee correspondence quickly, even if only to forward to the appropriate staff person to respond
• Praise members’ efforts in writing and verbally at meetings

Learn more about chairing a meeting and leading committees towards accomplishing the mission by visiting http://www.the-aps.org/careers/careers1/pdfs/Being%20committee%20chair.pdf.

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