

Diversity of Thought

What is it?

Diversity of Thought (or Multiple Perspectives) is an effective approach used to obtain opinions, identify weaknesses in concepts, improve on ideas, and brainstorm new possibilities. There are many powerful techniques used to look at decisions from a number of important perspectives, for example, the Delphi Technique, Crawford's Slip Writing Method, and Six Thinking Hats.

"Here we will be focusing on the Six Thinking Hats technique which forces teams to move outside their habitual thinking style, and helps them to get a more well-rounded view of a situation. Six Thinking Hats can be used in meetings or by individuals. In meetings it has the benefit of blocking the confrontations that happen when people with different thinking styles discuss the same problem."¹



Image Source <http://charitychannel.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/1.png>

How do I start?²

Separate the topic or issue into the following six roles. Each thinking role is identified with a colored symbolic "thinking hat." By mentally switching "hats," you can easily focus or redirect thoughts, the conversation, or the meeting.



White Hat – Just the Facts

Focus on available data, facts and figures. Look at the objective information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge. Analyze past trends, and try to extrapolate from historical data.



Red Hat – Emotional Thinking

Use your subjective feelings, intuition, gut reaction, emotion and opinion. Think how other people might react emotionally.



Black Hat – Critical Thinking and Risk Assessment

Look at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively to make plans tougher and more resilient. Try to see why ideas and approaches might *not* work. This highlights weak points, flaws and risks in a plan so you can eliminate them, alter your approach or prepare contingency plans. Many successful people get so used to thinking positively they often cannot see and prepare for problems.



Yellow Hat – Positive Thinking

The optimistic viewpoint helps you 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 keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.



Green Hat – Creative Thinking

Generate creative alternatives to the problem. This is the brainstorming/freewheeling, where there is little criticism of ideas.



Blue Hat – Management

This process control hat is worn by people chairing meetings. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, the chair may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, she will ask for Black Hat thinking.

¹ MindTools. Six Thinking Hats. http://www.mindtools.com/community/pages/article/newTED_07.php

² de Bono, Edward. Six Thinking Hats. http://www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php

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Important Tips

- Engaging allows emotion and skepticism to be brought into what would otherwise be purely rational decisions. It opens up the opportunity for creativity within decision making.³
- Actively using the Six Thinking Hats technique may help you to avoid public relations mistakes and spot good reasons not to follow a course of action before you have committed to it.⁴
- Just one hat may be used ("What's your red hat on this issue?"), or a combination of the Six Thinking Hats may be used in a particular sequence to examine an issue.⁵
- If everyone focuses on the same type of thinking at the same time, this "parallel thinking" will minimize conflict and promote progress. When switching hats, everyone changes to the different mode of thinking to tap into their collective knowledge. This eliminates egos and has the potential to dramatically reduce the amount of time spent in meetings.⁶



Image source <http://www.bmunusantara.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/six-thinking-hats.jpg>

How can I learn more?

- **Video - Six Thinking Hats**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVfx3j8QaM8&list=PL702F1D69C09530FF>
- **NASA "Conflict Resolution Day"**
<https://youtu.be/NWwRALI55kY>
- **Delphi Assessment**
<http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R1283.html>
- **Video - Delphi Technique**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YOpGW5_p-A
- **Video - Apple's "Think Different" Campaign**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GMQhOm-Dqo>

Thinking Hats	Focus	Insights
	• Facts and figure	
	• Emotion • Gut reaction • Anger?	
	• Pessimistic • Cautious • Why it won't work?	

Thinking Hats	Focus	Insights
	• Optimistic • Sunny • Positive	
	• Creativity • New ideas • Other ways of doing things	
	• Takes control • Organises • What next?	

Image source <http://img.docstoccdn.com/thumb/orig/117582689.png>

³ MindTools. Six Thinking Hats. http://www.mindtools.com/community/pages/article/newTED_07.php

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⁵ de Bono Consulting. <http://sixthinkinghats.com/>

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