## Handout: Six Thinking Hats

The Six Thinking Hats is a method that allows a team to break down complex situations for analysis. It offers structure, while permitting flexibility.

There are a few “ground rules” about the method:

1. The hats are typically used one after another in sequence, although all hats do not have to be used.
2. Hat names cannot be used for what you want to say; rather, they indicate the direction in which to think.
3. Members must stay with the hat indicated at the moment.
4. Team members should expect about one minute per hat when making contributions. (The exception is the Red Hat).
5. A session with the hats should be opened with a blue hat, the role of the facilitator.

The hats function as directions, not as descriptions of what has happened. Dr. De Bono used colored hats to make the imagining easier. For example, “Let's have some white hat thinking here” means a deliberate focus on information.

The hats can be used singly to request the type of thinking, or they can be used in a sequence to explore a subject--or solve a problem.

A Six Hat session typically progresses as shown below.

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| **Color** | **Purpose** | **Questions** |
| **Blue** | Control (Facilitator) | [States objective]Why are we here? What are we thinking about? Where do we want to end up? |
| **White** | Fact-finding | What information do we have? What information do we need? What information is missing? What questions do we need to ask? How are we going to get the information we need? |
| **Red** | Feelings and emotions | How do you feel about this? |
| **Black** | Caution | What would happen if we take this action? Will it be acceptable? Do we have the resources to do it? How will people react? What can go wrong? What are the potential problems? |
| **Yellow** | Optimism | What are the positive aspects? is it feasible? What suggestions do you have? How can we get some value out of this? |
| **Green** | Creativity | What are some new ideas about this? Suppose we do this; what will happen? What are the alternatives? How can we use the idea? |
| **Blue** | Control (Facilitator) | [Summarizes and Questions]What have we achieved so far? What alternative should we be looking for at this point? What sort of outcome should we regard as successful? What are our next steps? |