

Author – Edward De Bono

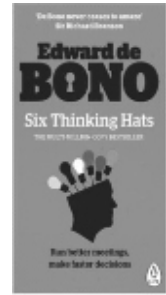
Book - SIX THINKING HATS

Publisher – Penguin Books

Six Hats Method – Parallel Thinking

“Run Better meetings, Make Faster decisions”

*Lakshmi B R



“Thinking is an ultimate Human Resource in Management”

No matter how good we become, we should always try to be better. Usually, the only people who are very satisfied with their own thinking skill are poor thinkers, they are the people who believe that the purpose of thinking to prove themselves right is to their own satisfaction.

Thinking becomes difficult because of emotions, information, logic, hope, and creativity - all crowding inside us. It is like juggling with too many balls.

The Majority of cultures, regard agreement as an aggressive, personal and non-constructive. In spite, all the novel thinking traditional thinking is at best.

Initially, when I made up my mind to choose this book for my reading many questions rushed through my mind like “What is the book really about? How is thinking related to the hat? Is that the hats which make the individual think or the thinking which makes the individual wear a Hat?” With many such questions, I took up this book. Initially, I felt, unlike other books this book also speaks about

“Do’s and Don’ts” of management. These wrong notion was erased when I moved on with the book.

This book helps the thinker to do one thing at a time. It helps to separate emotion from logic. Understanding western thinking is concerned with “What is” determined by analysis, judgment, and argument”. On the contrast, there is another whole aspect of thinking that is concerned with “What can be” which involves constructive thinking. Even though thinking is natural at some point of time situation demands you to think systematically. People often misunderstand to forceful thinking majority times. It leads to error. The author of this book has spoken about this concept of systematic thinking.

In initial chapters, the author has tried to tell the illustrations of 6 thinking hats with few major corporations which brought about the change in their decision-making process. By applying parallel thinking many corporations like ABB which used to spend 30days in taking decisions now takes 2 days. IBM which is a leading research company has reduced its time by the quarter of what they had been.



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Before moving ahead the reader has to keep in mind that the author Edward de Bono is not speaking about the colour of the hat but the type of thinking the individual has to develop in decision making. He has written on systematic and parallel thinking in a very well knit manner.

6 Hats-6 colours

Each colour of the Hat has different representations symbolizing 6 different thinking pattern an individual should adopt. Adoption of these thinking hats improves the time and quality of decision making. The book depicts the colours of hats with emotions, which the individual should use in the process of decision making.

White Hat represents “Neutral & objective nature”. It is concerned with objective facts and figures.

Red Hat symbolizes “Emotional views”. It suggests anger, rage, and emotions.

Black Hat points out “Weaknesses in ideas”. It warns to be cautious and careful

Yellow Hat shows “Optimism and covers hope and positive thinking”. It is sunny and positive

Green Hat reflects to “Creativity and New ideas”. It is a grass, vegetarian and abundant fertile growth

Blue Hat represents sky which is above everything else. It is concerned with “Control organization” which is above everything else.

Using of Hats

The author has started the book in an interesting way. He has not forgotten to make familiar the reader on the ways the hats are to be used:

Single use rule symbolizes that to a particular type of thinking usually in the course of a

conversation or discussion. We may or may not come to a point where there is need to generate fresh options

Sequence use rule says that hats can be used one after the other in a certain sequence. The sequence may be made up of two, three, four or more hats.

The author has broadly classified the using of hats:

- a. Evolving sequence allows you to choose the first hat and 2nd hat is chosen after the completion of the 1st hat
- b. Preset is setup at the beginning of the meeting under the initial blue hat. The sequence is laid out in advance and then followed. The preset sequence includes itself the “Discipline, Timing, and guidelines”

The author in the book in detail has presented the way in which the individual has to develop the thinking by just keeping the colour of the hat in the mind.

The white hat:

“Always true to never true”

The white hat is all about information. When the white hat is in use, everyone focuses directly and exclusively on information. Using this hat the individual tries to answer all the possible questions of the decision maker and the members of the group. The questions will be based on the gaps identified between the information “We have and which is to be needed” as a part of decision making. According to the author, it is also necessary to identify the missing information which would lead to the proper source.

It is usually towards the beginning of a session as a background that is going to take place. The author has quoted“ The computer that gives the

facts and figures” as an example which is best suited for a white cap. The author tries to say that the person wearing a white hat, should imitate the computer. In practice there is a two-tier system of information:

1st tier contains checked and proven facts or first class facts.

2nd tier contains facts that are believed to be true but have not yet been fully checked or 2nd class fact

White hat thinking is advisable and provides direction. The thinker strives to be more neutral and more objective in the presentation of information.

In between, there are usable levels such as "By and Large, Sometimes, and Occasionally". Information of this sort can be out under white hat, provided the appropriate frame is used to indicate the likelihood. It indicates neutrality.

The Red Hat

“Think of fire, Think of Warmth, Think of Feelings”

Usually, in normal business discussions, you are not supposed to allow your emotions to enter in. Under red hat a set of emotions like “Enthusiastic, Love it, Like it, Neutral, Uncertain, Doubtful, Mixed and Unhappy, Don’t like it” and so on cannot be used. Expression of feeling varies from culture to culture. It is always applied to a specific idea or situation. Here the member of the group is not permitted to change the idea.

Wearing the red hat allows the person to say “This is how I feel about the matter”. A person wearing this hat should never attempt to justify the feelings or to produce a logical basis for them. This hat cover 2 broad feelings:

First, there are the “Ordinary emotions” such as fear and dislike to the more subtle ones such as suspicion.

Second, there are the “Complex judgments” that go into such types of feelings and others not visibly justified types of feeling.

The Black Hat

“Survival of the Fittest”

It is the hat of survival and caution. It stops us doing things that are illegal, dangerous, unprofitable, pollution, and so on. Every animal on this earth has to learn which berries are poisonous and to read the danger signs of a predator. It has the origin of western civilization which symbolizes “Critical Thinking”. It points out how something does not fit our resources, our policy, our strategy, our ethics, our values and so forth. It basically works on mismatch mechanism.

It is used as a part of assessment, used in the design process, it helps lay out the risks and potential problems in future. It can be abused and overused it is the only mode of thinking. This is the only reason which diminishes the value of Black Hat thinking.

The Yellow Hat

“Think of sunshine. Think of optimism”

Here the thinker finds ways to transform the ideas into reality. This hat is purely judgemental and logically based but is not based on fantasy. The thinking is based on the values, target areas, circumstances and the values delivered. Basically, it emphasizes on positive and constructive thinking. It covers a wide range of spectrum from logical and practical at one end, visions, and hope at the other end. It concentrates on constructive thinking.

The Green Hat

“Symbolizes fertility, growth and the value of seeds”

It is the most energetic and creative hat. We put forward new ideas, we lay options and alternatives. It emphasizes on improving suggested ideas. It specifically demands the allocation of time towards the creative effort. It completely works on expectations. People are always good about what is expected of them. The result of this is that the people who have never thought of themselves as creative thinkers, start making a creative effort. This results in enhancing the confidence level. It helps to put forward possibilities which play a very important role in thinking. It is under this hat that suggested courses of action are put forward as a source of alternative thinking. It is also used to overcome some of the difficulties put forward under the black hat. It suggests idea modification to avoid difficulties. It includes both “The top of the head creativity and deliberate creativity”. It projects idiom of movement and replaces with judgment. Provocation is an important part of green hat thinking symbolized by the word “Po”

The Blue Hat

“Hat of overview”

Before the members of the group are requested to wear the blue hat the situation will be described prior. This hat is usually worn by the facilitator or chairperson or organizer or leader of the session. At the end of the session, it asks for an outcome. This may be in the form of a summary, a conclusion, a decision, a solution and so on. The facilitator basically here organizes the thinking itself by ordering the colour of the hat.

He directs and defines the problems, shapes the questions which are responsible for summaries, overviews, and conclusions. He acts as a

monitor of thinking and ensures that the rules of the game are observed. The hat enforces discipline.

Conclusion

The biggest enemy of thinking is complexity, which leads to confusion. When thinking is clear and simple, it becomes more enjoyable and more effective. There are 2 main purposes to the “6 THINKING HATS”:

First purpose is to simplify thinking by allowing a thinker to deal with one thing at a time.

Second purpose is to allow a switch in thinking

It is not necessary that individuals have to go through the hats in a formally structured sequence and in such cases the author lay out the structure beforehand. The concept works when it has become a sort of common language. There are many organizations in which the symbolism of the hats has indeed, become a part of everyday language - as a means to direct thinking more effectively. Ultimately organizations concentrate on the decisions which help them to take the decisions in the long run. The situation forces the individual to think. For any organization or business what matters is the type and timing of decision taken in particular situation.

By the time I completed the book I could notice that the question bank of mind was getting cleared with answers. Knowingly or unknowingly the individual has a thinking pattern. The book helped me to develop the thinking pattern. By the end of the reading, I felt thinking pattern not only changes the individual decision-making pattern but it also changes the approach towards life which in turn leads to organizations performance.

“Happy thinking time”