**Hats Off!**

Improving your inclusive thinking skills using the Six Thinking Hats framework will be a real feather in your team’s cap!

| Type | Workshop |
| --- | --- |
| Purpose | Organizational team building |
| Topics | Inclusion, collaboration, problem-solving, communication, brainstorming, decision-making, teambuilding, challenging assumptions |
| Audience | General |

## **About this activity**

According to data from software company Cloverpop, teams that include members with diverse perspectives and backgrounds are 87% better at making high-quality decisions. Inclusive thinking in the workplace fosters innovation, enhances employee engagement, and drives better decision-making by harnessing diverse perspectives and experiences.

In this workshop session, participants will gain insights into workplace biases that affect inclusive thinking. They will also discover effective strategies for mitigating these biases by actively incorporating diverse perspectives into business discussions, leveraging Edward de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats problem-solving and decision-making framework.

Hats Off! is an activity for a general audience and is optimal for groups of 6 in an in-person, hybrid, or remote setting.

#### Important details

| Best for groups of | 6, up to 48 total participants |
| --- | --- |
| Preparation time | 15 minutes |
| Duration | 60 minutes |
| Required materials | * Six Thinking Hats handout * Timer * Meeting platform, if virtual |
| Required location | * Indoors |
| Noise level | Medium |

## **How it works**

#### Instructions

Before conducting the activity (15 minutes):

The facilitator will read the instructions and copy handouts to distribute to in-person participants. Handouts should be emailed to virtual participants in advance of the session.

The facilitator will decide how to divide participants into groups of six and assign team members to breakout groups for virtual participants. If a group has less than six, they may be required to take on more than one hat in the Six Thinking Hats exercise.

Conducting the activity:

Introduction (15 minutes):

The facilitator will introduce the topic of inclusive thinking with a discussion of how common biases and stereotypes can perpetuate negative assumptions and shut down diversity of people and viewpoints.

The facilitator will introduce the following prevalent biases in workplace teams and ask participants for examples of each.

* Confirmation Bias: When we seek out or interpret information in a way that confirms or agrees with what we already know and believe.
* Affinity Bias: When we favor those individuals who are similar to ourselves in terms of background, interests, or experiences.
* Halo Effect: When we assume that someone who excels in one area is exceptional in all areas.
* Horn Effect: When we assume that someone who lags in one area is a poor performer in all areas.
* Groupthink: When we go along with the group’s opinions or decisions, even when we think they’re wrong or don’t agree.
* Unconscious Bias: When we’re not even aware of how our experiences, opinions, and biases influence our decision-making and behavior.

The facilitator will summarize that recognizing and addressing these biases and stereotypes is essential for promoting inclusive thinking. It requires self-awareness, education, and a commitment to challenging and changing biased attitudes and behaviors.

Six Thinking Hats: Part 1 (15 minutes):

The facilitator will ask by a show of hands how many participants are familiar with Edward de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats. The facilitator should then briefly explain that this methodology assigns various hats of different colors to represent distinct thinking modes in order to break down biases and assumptions and produce more inclusive thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The facilitator will divide participants into groups of six and ask them to decide on one of the following work-related topics to use in an exercise involving the thinking hats:

* A problem they need to solve;
* A change they need to communicate;
* A mistake they need to fix;
* A conflict they need to resolve;
* A new idea they need to produce.

Once the teams have their idea, the facilitator will ask groups to have each participant pick a different thinking hat and discuss the topic from that hat’s perspective. The blue hat will always start the discussion but the other colors can go in any order. Each group member will have 1 minute to share their hat’s point of view without interruption. The blue hat will then summarize the discussion and help the group reach a conclusion.

Six Thinking Hats: Part 2 (15 minutes):

The group will now pick a different topic to discuss for round two of the exercise. Once the teams have their idea, the facilitator will tell participants that they will all wear the red hat and should discuss the topic from only the red hat’s perspective. Group members can go in any order and each group member will have 1 minute to share their hat’s point of view without interruption. After everyone has shared their point of view, the team should summarize the discussion and reach a conclusion.

Wrap-Up (15 minutes):

With the remaining time, the facilitator should discuss the following questions as a group and allow for responses as time allows:

1. Was it different about the discussion when everyone wore the red thinking hat?
2. Did you observe any biases in the discussion when all group members wore the same thinking hat? When they wore different hats?
3. What is the benefit of using an exercise like Six Thinking Hats in your daily work?

The facilitator will conclude by thanking participants for their participation and encouraging them to seek out additional resources online to use this framework regularly with their team.

#### Rules

Only one hat at a time should speak during the group discussion.

Participants should only speak from their hat’s perspective.

Each participant has one minute to present their hat’s viewpoint.

#### Example

None

## 

## **Materials**

#### For facilitator

Timer

Meeting platform, if virtual

#### For attendee

Six Thinking Hats handout