

Hewlett-Packard used Six Thinking Hats and Lateral Thinking to help organize a strategic planning meeting.



Hewlett-Packard is a leading global provider of technological solutions to consumers, businesses and institutions. On May 3, 2003, Hewlett-Packard merged with Compaq Computer Corporation. This was the largest technology merger in history. Following the merger, Hewlett-Packard's 142,000 employees conducted business in 40 currencies across 160 countries.

The company wanted to complete the merger without losing focus on customers. Various teams within the company were asked to create strategic plans in line with Hewlett-Packard's corporate goals. In these strategic planning meetings, each team member would present his or her business plan. However, poor group dynamics, partly due to the merger, prevented the groups from moving forward. Power struggles were interfering with team cohesion.

The team for Process and Quality Management Network Storage Solutions was having an especially difficult time working together to draft a plan. Team member Jon Albregts was given the task of organizing the strategic planning meeting. Jon had previously attended a de Bono workshop led by Master Trainer Mike Sproul, so he called Mike for advice. Together Jon and Mike mapped out a solid plan for the meeting. The team would first be sent pre-meeting work via email. This email would outline the overall goals of the group and ask the team members to present only White Hat information on their business plan.

The pre-meeting work was useful, and everyone arrived at the meeting ready to present the White Hat information.

Following the presentations, the group used the Yellow and Black Hats to analyze each initiative. Next, they engaged in a Lateral Thinking session to find alternative solutions and ideas. Then they used the Red Hat to express gut feelings about the initiative. Finally, the Blue Hat helped them identify the next steps for implementing the plan.

Six Thinking Hats provided the insight the team needed to move initiatives forward. Team members were amazed that the usual, tired arguments and debates didn't pop up in this particular meeting. Never before had the team accomplished so much so quickly to everyone's satisfaction.

Six Thinking Hats and Lateral Thinking have been used as part of the Hewlett-Packard quality initiative for several years now, and the success of the de Bono tools has spread to other divisions of the Hewlett-Packard/Compaq conglomerate.

Challenge:

- To create a new plan in line with Hewlett-Packard's corporate goals

Method:

- Use Six Thinking Hats and Lateral Thinking to guide the strategic planning meeting for the Process and Quality Management Network Storage Solutions team

Result:

- Group dynamics improve and everyone agrees on a final strategy



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