

As Always, High Barriers to Change in Our Sector



Types of Barriers to Change

Psychological

- *Overreliance on current and internal factors when planning*
- *Adherence to widely shared vision despite evidence of untenability*
- *Incremental thinking*
- *Tendency to default to status quo*

Cultural

- *Risk aversion*
- *Consensus-based agreement*
- *Participatory norms and processes*
- *Loyalty to academic disciplines over institutions*
- *Organizational bureaucracy*

Structural

- *Unclear decision rights and responsibilities*
- *Insufficient capacity*
- *Misaligned incentives*
- *Internal silos*
- *Legacy units and reporting lines*

Outcomes

1 Deters leaders from initiating change initiatives entirely

2 Stops change initiatives early in their tracks

3 Leads to long-term stall outs and change fatigue






In Strategy and Beyond



Strategic Planning Challenges



Underlying Cognitive Biases

<p>1 Unrealistic Goals Initiatives disconnected from external trends</p>	 <p>The Here and Now Fallacy</p>	<p>Overreliance on current and internal-state information when planning for the future</p>	
<p>2 Fad Focused Already-popular ideas dominate discussion</p>	 <p>Buzzword Blindspot</p>	<p>Desire for an innovation or trend without consideration of its personal utility or costs</p>	<p><i>Crafting Strategy</i></p>
<p>3 Incremental Ideas Emphasis placed on existing strategies</p>	 <p>Stay the Course Syndrome</p>	<p>Adherence to a widely shared vision even in the face of evidence of its untenability</p>	
<p>4 Loudest Voices Win Larger groups, but narrower discussion</p>	 <p>Paradox of Participation</p>	<p>Efforts to seek out diverse and representative input produce narrowly focused vision</p>	<p><i>Implementing Strategy</i></p>
<p>5 False Precision Focus is on metrics rather than on the strategy</p>	 <p>Data Delusion</p>	<p>Sole reliance on a narrowly defined set of measures as indicative of success</p>	

Cognitive Bias #1



The Here and Now Fallacy

Overreliance on current and internal-state information when planning for the future

› The Inherence Heuristic

The tendency to explain phenomena in terms of inherent or internal (vs. external) causes

› Projection Bias

The tendency to overweight the extent to which the future will resemble the present

Cognitive Bias #3

Stay the Course Syndrome

Adherence to a widely-shared vision even in the face of evidence of its untenability

› Sunk Cost Fallacy

The justification of investment based on past cumulative investment

› Availability Cascade

Heightened plausibility of a belief or strategy based on its repetition in public discourse

Cognitive Bias #4

The Paradox of Participation

Efforts to seek out diverse and representative input produce narrowly-focused vision

› Ringelmann Effect

The tendency for individual group members to become less productive as group size increases

› Groupthink

Prioritization of consensus over critical evaluation, leading to suppression of dissenting views

› Dunning-Kruger Effect

The tendency for inexperienced individuals to overestimate their expertise or ability

Why Higher Ed Culture Eats Strategy

Mission-, Culture-Driven Ethos Often a Double-Edged Sword

Worthy Efforts to Build Consensus Frequently Prevent Strategic Thinking



“Everyone deserves a seat at the table”

Participation in planning seen as necessary to further individual or departmental agendas

- ✗ Prohibitively long planning process
- ✗ Few in-depth discussions
- ✗ Conversations dominated by a few, loud voices



“Every idea is a good idea”

Culture of inclusion fosters belief that every contribution has equal merit

- ✗ “Wish list” plan
- ✗ Few trade-offs
- ✗ Little consideration of actionability or scale



“We’ve got to all be on board”

Complete consensus viewed as the only way to move ideas beyond committee meetings

- ✗ Bold ideas are rejected outright
- ✗ End goals are vague, watered down
- ✗ Potential disruptors prevented from participating



Wearing Many Hats

How to Achieve Diversity of Perspectives in Small, Efficient Teams



Apply Psychological Principles at Your Next Meeting

Role Play: Assign roles to your team to ensure that a variety of interests are represented in strategic conversations

Potential Role Frameworks:

- ✓ Institutional Divisions
- ✓ Functional Archetypes
- ✓ "Thinking Hats"
 - Developed by psychologist Edward de Bono in the '80s
 - Logic not necessarily step-by-step—multiple modes of thinking necessary
 - Way to get beyond immediate reactions and prevent one type of thinking from dominating

Thinking Hats Framework



Perspective

- Focus on data
- Analyze trends
- Identify gaps

Typical Questions

- What data do we have?
- What is the evidence?
- Is that a fact or a belief?



- Focus on emotion
- Provide skeptics' gut reaction

- What is your gut reaction?
- How do we think people will react?



- Focus on weaknesses
- Be critical

- What is the downside?
- Does this conclusion make sense?



- Focus on strengths
- Be optimistic

- What is the best-case?
- What are the benefits?
- What is the best next step?



- Focus on creativity
- Brainstorm out-of-the-box solutions

- What are all the possible alternatives?
- Is there any way we can use this idea?




- Focus on steering the meeting
- Direct conversation

- What is the objective?
- Are we getting anywhere in this conversation?

Takeaway: Six Thinking Hats Exercise



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Thinking Hats Worksheet and Profiles

Thinking Hats Exercise Worksheet


1. Which 'hat' describes your typical thinking style? _____
2. Which 'hat' have you chosen for this activity? _____
3. Take a few minutes to review the following prompt and respond in the box below.
You are serving on an interdisciplinary committee charged with researching and recommending a new Virtual Learning Environment/Learning Management System for your campus. Your committee has already done some initial investigating, gone to tender, and narrowed the possibilities down to a short list of potential platforms.
You've just been told, however, that you need to speed up the decision process. You no longer have time to gather community feedback on the shortlist options. In order to ensure that your committee considers a diverse set of perspectives and interests, you've decided to use the Six Thinking Hats Framework.
Write down some notes about how someone with your 'hat' would respond. What questions would you raise? What would you advocate for? What are your priorities? What are your concerns? Review the profiles on subsequent pages if you need some guidance.
4. As a group, discuss this scenario, keeping your 'hat' on. Try to take each perspective as seriously as possible and stay in character. Think about how you would respond to the other perspective with your assigned hat. The 'blue hat' is responsible for making you have time to discuss all perspectives.

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The White Hat: The Truth Is in the Data

 **What White Hat Thinking Does:**


- Collects available information
- Focuses on objective facts and figures
- Separates facts from interpretation and belief
- Prevents distortion of information and ideas
- Enriches analyses, intuition, judgment, feeling, impression and opinion

 **Advice for White Hat Thinking:**

- Adopt a neutral stance
- Pretend you are a computer
- Ask focusing questions to find hypotheses, but they need to be such
- Do not use facts to express
- Facts do not need to be perfect, large and 'on the whole' still allowed

 **Typical White Hat Phrases:**


- I want to start by thinking through what we know about this topic.
- Just give the facts without an argument
- We don't know that for a fact

 **Typical White Hat Questions:**


- What data do we have?
- What is the evidence?
- Is that a fact or a likelihood?
- Is that a fact or a belief?
- Is that a trend?

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The Yellow Hat: Eternal Optimism

 **What Yellow Hat Thinking Does:**


- Looks for the benefits, value, and potential positive outcome in everything
- Provides deliberate constructive thinking as a counterweight to critical thinking
- Thinks about opportunities, and willing to explore remote possibilities of success
- Makes concrete proposals and suggestions for what to do

 **Advice for Yellow Hat Thinking:**

- It's okay (and advisable) for proposals and suggestions to be ordinary
- The goal is to try to make things happen
- Avoid being overly optimistic. If there's not a next step that can be taken, the idea is probably too optimistic
- Focus on being effective, not necessarily creative

 **Typical Yellow Hat Phrases:**

- I have a vision where we could make this happen
- I can see how we get this done.
- There are a lot of benefits to trying this.
- This is going to work.
- If there is a remote chance this will work, we should explore it.
- Here is the first thing we should do.

 **Typical Yellow Hat Questions:**

- What is the best-case scenario?
- What are the benefits?
- What are all the reasons we could succeed at this?
- What is the best next step?
- How much do we stand to gain?
- Under what conditions would this work?

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Keep in Mind

- The hats are not categories of people or organizational roles, but modes of behavior and thinking.
- Stay with your hat—resist the temptation to shift into another hat.
- Be mindful that your hat does not dominate the conversation. Each hat should contribute for only a few minutes at a time.