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



- 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

Deters leaders from initiating change initiatives entirely

Stops change initiatives early in their tracks

Leads to long-term stall outs and change fatigue

In Strategy and Beyond



Strategic Planning Challenges



Underlying Cognitive Biases

- Initiatives disconnected from external trends

The Here and Now Fallacy

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

2 Fad Focused
Already-popular ideas
dominate discussion



Buzzword Blindspot

Desire for an innovation or trend without consideration of its personal utility or costs

Crafting Strategy

3 Incremental Ideas
Emphasis placed on
existing strategies



Stay the Course Syndrome

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

Loudest Voices Win
Larger groups, but
narrower discussion



Paradox of Participation Efforts to seek out diverse and representative input produce narrowly focused vision

Implementing Strategy

False Precision

Focus is on metrics rather than on the strategy



Data Delusion

Sole reliance on a narrowly defined set of measures as indicative of success

Cognitive Bias #1



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

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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
- **X** 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

- **X** 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 disruptorsprevented from participating

Wearing Many Hats



How to Achieve Diversity of Perspectives in Small, Efficient Teams



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 stepby-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



- · Focus on emotion
- Provide skeptics' gut reaction



- Focus on weaknesses
- Be critical



- Focus on strengths
- · Be optimistic



- Focus on creativity
- Brainstorm out-ofthe-box solutions



- Focus on steering the meeting
- Direct conversation

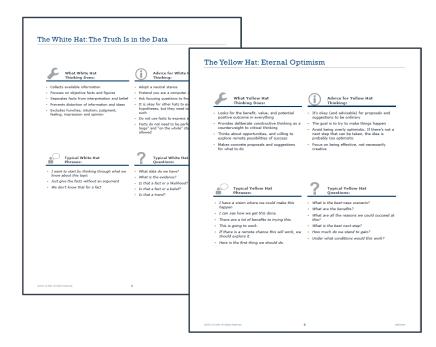
Typical Questions

- What data do we have?
- What is the evidence?
- Is that a fact or a belief?
- · What is your gut reaction?
- How do we think people will react?
- What is the downside?
- Does this conclusion make sense?
- What is the best-case?
- What are the benefits?
- What is the best next step?
- What are all the possible alternatives?
- Is there any way we can use this idea?
- What is the objective?
- Are we getting anywhere in this conversation?

Source: Edward de Bono, Six Thinking Hats: An Essential Approach to Business Management, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1985); EAB interviews and analysis.

Takeaway: Six Thinking Hats Exercise





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.