



VIS-IT[®] SOLUTIONS TRAINING DOCUMENT

H.A.T.S. HEXAGONS ASSISTED THINKING SESSIONS

The purpose of the VIS-IT[™] H.A.T.S. technique is to maximize the thinking capability of a person or group. The method is most valuable when the organization is faced with a complex problem, opportunity, risk or decision where individual interests or opinions may be very different. The objectives of the process are to guide and focus the productive attention of each member and to create a setting where egos are harnessed for the good of the unit. In the H.A.T.S. process, the group takes on prescribed, but divergent, shared “views” of the question at hand. The issue is thoroughly explored and its dimensions explicitly mapped from all points of view. The results are aligned decisions and actions that minimize the risks of unexpected consequences and maximize the opportunities to create or preserve value.

The H.A.T.S. technique involves ten distinct directed thinking sessions that are part of one or more meetings. Thinking at the meeting is focused on a single Proposal Statement that is expressed in a Focus Question. For example, the proposal statement might be: “Our company will establish and operate a subsidiary in China.” The focus question for the meeting participants to consider is, therefore, “Should the Company establish and operate a subsidiary in China?” The proposal statement and focus question can address any important option that comes before an organization. This document includes a two-page Reference Card that is designed to help a facilitator guide the meetings.

The first six thinking sessions require that participants limit their shared responses to one of six specific viewpoints. These six H.A.T.S. VIEWS surface personal mental models and generate *shared mental models*. These mental models are the thought patterns that determine what we decide and how we act in our life and work. H.A.T.S. explicitly “maps out” these mental models. With H.A.T.S., we explore a focus question or proposal with the aim of generating a reproducible map that enables us to successfully chart, in advance, the course to our desired destination. The map describes several distinct territories that must be recognized, and by color coding (as seen on physical maps), directs explicit attention to the presence of conditions or factors that we must address.

VIS-IT[™] hexagons are designed to stimulate and document this kind of focused thinking. They are easy and fun to use. They build a group memory that can be reassembled, shared, and enhanced again by the same group or by another. VIS-IT does not offer black hexagons. A Black View idea is represented by putting a black border around a white hexagon, by drawing a large black dot at the bottom of a white hexagon, or by using orange hexagons to represent the Black View.

Preparation

Have sufficient 6" hexagons available. We recommend a six-color set, which contains 50-sheet pads of blue, red, white, yellow, orange, and green hexagons.

You will need plenty of space for posting the hexagons. An ideal surface for posting hexagons is a clean white board. Flip chart paper on easels works very well, too. Glass windows or the backs of doors can also be used.

Be prepared to write clearly in 1-inch to 1 ½-inch high block letters on the hexagons. Mr. Sketch™ markers work very well.

Conduct the session in a well-lit room, requiring no one to be more than 25 feet from the hexagon posting surface.

Arrange the participants in a semi-circular or u-shaped seating arrangement, making sure everyone can see each other, but leaving room for the facilitator to move easily to the posting surface.

State the Purpose of the Session

Once all participants are together, explain the purpose of meeting. It might be stated as: "Our purpose is to thoroughly address an important proposal that could have a significant impact on the future of our organization." Then add: "To help us, we are going to use an idea processing technique called H.A.T.S., involving multi-color VIS-IT hexagons on which we capture and arrange your ideas."

Focus Thinking and Provide Quiet Time

Near the posting surface, the facilitator writes, and then reads aloud, the Main Focus Question for the session. Our example: "Should the Company establish and operate a subsidiary in China?" The facilitator will also state the Desired Results of the thinking sessions. In this example, that might be "To recommend a decision to the Executive Committee by February 15."

Then, the facilitator instructs the attendees: "Before we reach an answer to the Main Focus Question, we are going to ask you to share your ideas about this question from several different points of view." To begin the first session, the facilitator might say, "Let's begin with the Blue View. Notice on your copy of the H.A.T.S. Reference Card that the Blue View asks us to think about what methods, tools, sequence and structure for thinking will most effectively enable us to achieve the purpose and desired results of the meeting." The facilitator might then ask each participant to think quietly about the Blue View question, and write key words representing their ideas in the Blue View space of their Reference Card copy, or on a separate sheet of paper.

Generate and Capture Ideas for Each View

When the quiet reflection time is up, the facilitator will ask each person, in turn, to state **just one** of their ideas that has not already been mentioned by someone else, and to offer a brief (minute or less) explanation of why it is important. Then, after listening to the response, the facilitator will write a “headline phrase” of usually up to seven words that captures the idea as accurately as possible on a sequentially numbered hexagon. Continue in a round robin fashion, requesting just one idea at a time, until all ideas have been captured. For more on this process, see THE SIX STEPS in the Basic Thinking with Hexagons Technique.

After completing the Blue View, the facilitator will suggest the order in which the other Views will be performed, and the time that will be scheduled for each. Each participant will record the sequence and time on their copy of the H.A.T.S. Reference Card. The sessions continue until all Views have been considered. Notice the relevant questions associated with each of the other Views. **TIP:** Number the hexagons sequentially as you move from one View to the next. Do not restart numbering with each new View.

Cluster and Map

After all of the Views have been considered, there will be many ideas captured on sequentially numbered multi-color hexagons and arrayed on posting surfaces. Now, make room on the work surfaces to arrange the ideas into clusters, or “territories,” that belong together. Label each cluster with a phrase that describes the “glue” that holds the ideas in that cluster together.

Connect and Prioritize

See the H.A.T.S. Reference Card for a description of this session.

Conclude

See the H.A.T.S. Reference Card for a description of this session.

Next Steps







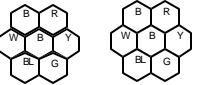
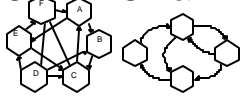

See the H.A.T.S. Reference Card for a description of this session.

H.A.T.S. Reference Card

Permission is granted to users of VIS-IT™ hexagons to reproduce as many copies of the Reference Card as needed to successfully use this method.

H.A.T.S. HEXAGONS ASSISTED THINKING SESSIONS

MAIN FOCUS QUESTION OR PROPOSAL:	Session Code	Date
		Location
DESIRED RESULTS:	Prior Session	Facilitator

Sequence Number	BLUE VIEW	What are the methods, tools, sequence and structure for thinking that will most effectively enable us to achieve the purpose and desired results of this session?	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	RED VIEW	What feelings or emotions should be recognized and understood in order to map the issue and to chart our course toward the desired results?	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	WHITE VIEW	What objective facts, figures, or other information are relevant to the Focus Question?	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	YELLOW VIEW	What constructive and optimistic ideas and logic help make the case for the Question?	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	BLACK VIEW	What negative assessments suggest real or potential problems, risks, faults, dangers, or reasons why "it won't work" based on prior experiences of the participants?	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	GREEN VIEW	What creative, innovative ideas, solutions, or options arise when we are encouraged to be free of our "normal" patterns of thinking.	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	CLUSTER & MAP	Arrange the hexagons into clusters, or "territories," that belong together. Label each cluster with a phrase that describes the "glue" that holds the cluster together.	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	CONNECT & PRIORITIZE	Create a causal drivers diagram or a causal loop diagram which links hexagons cluster labels (put each cluster label on a new hexagon) with one-direction arrows. Look for drivers, drivens, and closed-loop feedback. Prioritize actions or decisions based on leverage (drivers) working in feedback loops.	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	CONCLUDE	Inquire about the degree of consensus around the question or proposal. Determine what else needs to be known before deciding. Ask who should be informed , what part of the group's thinking should be shared , what work is to be accomplished by when , and who is accountable for its performance.	Check if Complete
Time	"The Decision is..." "I will commit to ..."		<input type="checkbox"/>
Sequence Number	NEXT STEPS	Identify proposals, questions, plans or additional information, if any, requiring any additional attention before we take subsequent, related decisions or actions. Schedule the next session, and determine who should participate.	Check if Complete
Time			<input type="checkbox"/>

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H.A.T.S. HEXAGONS ASSISTED THINKING SESSIONS

REFERENCE
CARD

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The **BLUE VIEW controls** the pace and structure of the session. Members agree on how the session will be designed, scheduled and facilitated, on what focus questions will be asked, and on what is to be produced by the group’s thinking.



The **RED VIEW** permits the surfacing of **emotions and feelings** about the issue or proposal. Members taking on the Red View are allowed, without retribution, to express how they feel, or the hunches they have.



The **WHITE VIEW objectively seeks out relevant solid facts**. Members offer, without interpretation or opinion, facts, figures, or other information that a neutral, unbiased researcher would offer to improve the quality of thinking.



The **YELLOW VIEW** of the issue or proposal is optimistic and constructive. It asks members to **suggest positive views on how to realize favorable outcomes**. This view generates ideas and logic that make the case for the question.



The **BLACK VIEW** offers **objective but negative assessments** relevant to the question or proposal. The Black View exposes real or potential problems, risks, faults, dangers, and reasons why “it won’t work” based on members’ prior experiences.



The **GREEN VIEW** offers **creative ideas, solutions, or options**. Members taking the Green View can go beyond conventional limits, and into creative, innovative thinking. They seek to **get free of normal patterns of thinking**.



CLUSTER & MAP asks members to re-arrange all hexagons into clusters of ideas that belong together. New ideas, of any view, can be added during this step. Clusters are labeled with a phrase to describe the “glue” holding them together.



CONNECT & PRIORITIZE asks members to create an influence diagram connecting the cluster labels (each label transferred to a single new blue hexagon). They then prioritize decisions or actions when drivers and drivens are understood.



CONCLUDE the session with the members testing the degree of consensus on the proposal or question. Then, who should be informed? What part of the group’s thinking during the session should be shared? Who is accountable for what?



PROPOSE NEXT STEPS enables members to suggest proposals, questions or plans for subsequent consideration. They identify work yet to do, and information yet to be obtained before taking further decisions or actions.

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ABOUT VISION WORKS

Vision Works, LLC is the creator of the VIS-IT™ Line of facilitation and thinking tools including FlowShapes™, 6" Hexagons, Jumbo Hexagons, Mini Hexagons, Big Idea Pads, and the Great Big Idea Pad. Vision Works serves a rapidly growing customer base including facilitators, trainers, consultants, managers and executives working in some of the world's largest and most innovative organizations.

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