



VIS-IT® SOLUTIONS TRAINING DOCUMENT

THINKING WITH HEXAGONS TECHNIQUE OVERVIEW

The basic Thinking with Hexagons technique is quite simple. At first, it seems similar to brainstorming. Someone takes on a role of “facilitator” to guide the process. Participants are invited, in turn, to share each of their ideas that are relevant to a specific Focus Question. The meeting’s facilitator, or another person serving as the “scribe,” writes a few words (a “headline” phrase) that represent each idea on a single hexagon, sequentially numbers the hexagon, and then posts it alongside others on a work surface for everyone to see.

After all ideas have been offered from everyone, the group arranges the hexagons into several “clusters” of ideas that seem to “belong together.” Each cluster contains ideas that share a common association concept (the “glue”), which links them. Each cluster’s common concept becomes the cluster’s written label. These cluster labels become natural “synthesis ideas” for further attention or action. Finally, the group assesses how well it met the session’s purpose, describes next steps, and designs, if appropriate, the next focus question.

- The Thinking with Hexagons technique is significantly better than typical brainstorming sessions because:
- The purpose of the session is explicit, and the focus question is very clear and visible.
- Each participant is given a few moments of quiet time to jot down their answers to the focus question, thus empowering introverts.
- The ideas are captured on hexagons that can be moved around, not stuck on flip chart paper.
- Everyone has a chance to participate equally, and each person’s idea is given equal weight when offered. Instead of stopping with lists of ideas, ideas are arranged into clusters that share a common associative concept, and therefore...
- Participants see the bigger picture of which the issue is a part.

Advanced Thinking with Hexagons techniques may involve:

- Using different color hexagons to further classify ideas.
- Breaking a meeting into several distinct thinking sessions, each with its own specific focus question.
- Creating new ideas by forcing a “synthesis” idea from two or more other ideas.
- Giving the group the opportunity to discuss, and then explicitly describe, how the clusters are related to each other, i.e., to see the issue from a systemic perspective.
- Inviting other groups to add additional ideas, and having the new group re-cluster the hexagons to see what other associative concepts emerge.

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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