PEARLS OF WISDOM

What does it take? The business of self-direction

Self-direction offers you the chance to have your support needs met flexibly and in the way you think best. It can also offer opportunities for personal growth and learning in areas such as finance and planning that are complex and large in scope. However, self-direction is also accompanied by a basket of hard work and many challenges which require persistence. It is rather like a ride on a roller coaster; tricky to navigate at first. The amount of time, skill and personal emotion you will invest in the journey of self-direction should not be underestimated.

The business of self-direction

One way to survive the roller coaster of self-direction is to have in place a systematic method of thinking and problem solving. Thinking in business terms can provide this. While the meaning of the term, 'self-direction', can sometimes be blurred, it is important to remember that an individual's, self-direction is the ***business*** of their support needs; a business directed by the vision a person has for their life. In any ***business***, thinking systematically and breaking up what you are doing into segments can clarify what is happening with the core of the ***business***.

When you direct your own supports you may need to juggle different roles, each of which requires different skills, personal attributes and ways of thinking:

Developing and maintaining a vision for your life

Sharing this with others; planning and working with them to achieve your goals

Setting up processes for recruiting and managing employees, contractors and others

Dealing with budgets and other financial matters

Being accountable for financial and legal matters

Keeping all this work on track can be daunting depending on the degree of responsibility you take for your self-direction but it is important to remember that you do not have to do it all on your own.

Different hats for different roles

One method that can be used to help plan and operate your self-directed business effectively and to engage others to assist you is Dr Edward de Bono's, Six Thinking Hats®. This is a systematic method of thinking which outlines six different approaches to problem solving - the six 'hats'.

While it may be possible to train yourself to think and problem solve in different ways using different 'thinking hats', de Bono's method is used most effectively by teams engaging a range of people to work together. In the same way it is helpful to have your own team of people to help with different aspects of what it takes to direct your own supports.

The traditional terms used by Dr Edward de Bono to describe the different ways of thinking under each 'hat' can easily be applied to the work of self-direction.

The 'hats' will look different for each individual depending on how his or her vision shape their self-direction but the method can provide inspiration and tools to shape self-direction for anyone.

The Green Hat - Creativity*: Creating your dream & maintaining your vision*

The Red Hat - Feelings*: Me, Myself & I (your gut feelings and emotions)*

The Blue Hat - Process*: Direct Support*

The White Hat - Facts and Information: *Financial Matters*

The Black Hat - Judgement and Cautions*: Accountability*

The Yellow Hat - Benefits and Optimism: *Celebrating Success*

Framework: Problem solving in the context of self-direction using de Bono's 6 Thinking Hats:

The Green Hat - Creativity: *Creating your dream & maintaining your vision*

Who might possibly wear the Green Hat? The individual, their family, friends, selected key people in the individual's life and networks.

When would the Green Hat be worn? Most of the time. When you are maintaining your vision, planning at the beginning of the journey, ongoing planning and review.

How to apply Green Hat thinking. Be creative and flexible; open to new ideas and possibilities. Click here to explore the Green and White Hats working together.

What operational functions does the Green Hat demand? Keeping the dream alive. Keeping the vision at the forefront of all that happens. Strategic planning and reflection on the individual's supports. Sharing the individual's vision with their family, friends and networks of their choosing.

Why is the Green Hat important? The Green Hat is the core of self-direction because it centres on the individual's dreams and visions. These evolve over time and demand creativity, flexibility, new ideas and being open to possibilities.

The Red Hat - Feelings: *Me, myself and I (your gut feelings and emotions)*

Who might possibly wear the Red Hat? The individual, their partner, family and friends.

When would the Red Hat be worn? Every day.

How to apply Red Hat thinking. Be aware of your gut feelings and emotions based on your past and present experiences. Be prepared to give weight to these when making decisions.

What operational functions does the Red Hat demand? Expressing to others the reasoning behind how the individual's support operates and basing this on your feelings and experiences without fear of repercussions.

Why is the Red Hat important? The Red Hat captures the knowledge, based on experience, that the individual, their partner and family hold about their life.

The Blue Hat - Process: *Direct Support*

Who might possibly wear the Blue Hat? The individual, their partner and family; people engaged for this particular role, for example a key worker, coordinator or a personal assistant.

When would the Blue Hat be worn? Daily, weekly, monthly and yearly for different aspects of the role.

How to apply Blue Hat thinking. Organisational, systematic and managerial thinking.

What operational functions does the Blue Hat demand? Setting up processes to organise the support needs; managing the people who carry out this work; developing staff rosters etc.

Why is the Blue Hat important? The Blue Hat controls the sequence of operations to make the direct support happen. This can be an emotional and complex role at times but it provides the individual with ownership of their life.

The White Hat - Facts and Information: *Financial Matters*

Who might possibly wear the White Hat? The individual, key people chosen to assist with this role (paid or unpaid). At times a Host Provider could assist if you choose to engage them for this purpose. Private businesses contracted for certain aspects eg payroll

When would the White Hat be worn? When dealing with all financial matters - could be on daily, weekly, fortnightly basis; planning and reviewing budgets etc

How to apply White Hat thinking. Separate personal feelings and emotions surrounding the individual's life and support needs - this can be challenging. For some people the White Hat fits easily but for others it is the hat that just won't stay on. It may blow away without you even knowing.

What operational functions does the White Hat demand? Budgeting, payroll, legal and financial matters. Click here to explore the Green and White hats working together.

Why is the White Hat important? The White Hat is all about the money. It is critical for maintaining the core of your support and for the ongoing viability of your self-direction business.

The Black Hat - Judgement and Cautions: *Accountability*

Who might possibly wear the Black Hat? The individual, key people they have chosen to assist them with this role; their Host Provider if you have engaged them for this task.

When would the Black Hat be worn? When reporting for accountability purposes.

How to apply Black Hat thinking. Dotting the 'i's' and crossing the't's'; thinking about what underpins the operations of the individual's self-directed supports.

What operational functions does the Black Hat demand? Being up to date and incorporating regulations, legalities, safety, human resources and risk management. For example performing a home safety checklist/audit of the individual's home to make sure it complies with a safe work place.

Why is the Black Hat important? Self-direction involves rights and responsibilities. It requires being accountable for public money which means direct reporting between the individual, to the Host Provider if engaged, and then ultimately to the Department.

The Yellow Hat - Benefits and Optimism: *Celebrating success.*

Who might possibly wear the Yellow Hat? The individual and those who share the dream and vision for his or her life.

When would the Yellow Hat be worn? When celebrating successes, milestones and achievements of the dream and vision.

How to apply Yellow Hat thinking. Wear this hat with pride and positivity.

What operational functions does the Yellow Hat demand? Celebrations, reflections - capturing the Kodak moments.

Why is the Yellow Hat important? The Yellow Hat signifies progression and growth of the individual and those who are a part of their journey. It is important to acknowledge successes to sustain you for the future.

Table: *Problem solving in the context of self-direction using de Bono's 6 Thinking Hats®.* An overview of this framework in table format.

Financial matters: organisation and creativity in managing supports. In this article, Narissa Wilson emphasises the importance of "getting the balance right between the White Hat of financial governance and the Green Hat of dreams and visions".