

Facilitator's Body of Knowledge Research Project

Edward de Bono

Background: Edward de Bono was born in Malta in 1933. He attended St Edward's College, Malta, during World War II and then the Royal University of Malta where he received an MD. During this period he skipped two class levels. He then went on as a Rhodes Scholar to Christ Church, Oxford, where he gained an honors degree in psychology and physiology. He also holds a Ph.D from Cambridge. He has held appointments at the universities of Oxford, London, Cambridge and Harvard.

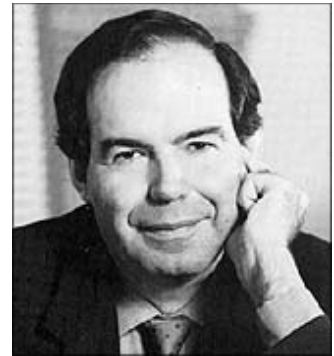
He has written 62 books with translations into 37 languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Bahasa, Urdu, Slovene, Turkish etc.

Edward de Bono is best known for his work in thinking and the creation of Lateral Thinking, Parallel Thinking and Six Thinking hats. His work is used in universities, secondary and primary schools all over the world. In some cases the use of his work has been legislated for schools. And Dr. de Bono's instruction in thinking has been sought by many of the largest corporations in USA, Canada, Europe, and the rest of the world.

From the article "How I Got There" we learn how de Bono got started in business. "Three things came together to kick off my work in the area of thinking: in medicine I was dealing with self-organizing systems such as the glands, kidneys, respiration, and circulation, and I started to ask myself what would happen if the same principles were applied to the brain. From psychology came an interest in thinking, and from computers an interest in the types of perceptual and creative thinking that computers couldn't do. The fusion of these elements led to his third book *The Mechanism of Mind* in 1969.

Originally there was no mention of business in my books, but business leaders came to me because they recognized the importance of what

I was talking about. Of all sectors in society, business is the most interested in thinking. It upsets people when I say business is more interested in thinking than universities, but it's true.



For a long time my work in the thinking field ran in parallel with my work in medicine, but it grew and grew and eventually I took early retirement from medicine to work exclusively on thinking."

In his book, *The Mechanism of Mind* he showed how the nerve networks in the brain formed asymmetric patterns as the basis of perception. The leading physicist in the world, Professor Murray Gell Mann, said of this book that it was ten years ahead of mathematicians dealing with chaos theory, non-linear and self-organizing systems.

From this basis, Edward de Bono developed the concept and tools of lateral thinking. What is so special is that instead of his work remaining hidden in academic texts he has made it practical and available to everyone, from five years olds to adults.

Major Contributions:

- **Lateral Thinking**

This term was introduced by Edward de Bono in 1967 and is now so much part of the language that it is used equally in a physics lecture and in a television comedy. It is currently defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as:

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lateral thinking, a way of thinking which seeks the solution to intractable problems through unorthodox methods, or elements which would normally be ignored by logical thinking. Dr Edward de Bono divides thinking into two methods. One he terms 'vertical thinking' - that is, using the processes of logic, the historic and traditional method. The other type he calls 'lateral thinking' which involves disrupting an apparent sequence and arriving at the solution from another angle. Lateral thinking leads to those simple ideas that are obvious only after they have been thought of.

Traditional thinking is the application of analysis, judgment and argument. In a stable world this is sufficient because it allow us to identify and apply standard situations. In a changing world standard solutions often no longer work. Major problems in the world may not be solved by identifying and removing the cause. There is a need to design a way forward even if the cause remains in place.

De Bono identifies four critical factors associated with lateral thinking:

- (1) recognize dominant ideas that polarize perception of a problem,
 - (2) searching for different ways of looking at things,
 - (3) relaxation of rigid control of thinking, and
 - (4) use of chance to encourage other ideas.
- This last factor has to do with the fact that lateral thinking involves low-probability ideas which are unlikely to occur in the normal course of events.

• Parallel Thinking

Traditional interaction includes discussion and argument. For the non-traditional changing world it is totally useless for solving and creating. Parallel Thinking enables each thinker to put forward their thoughts in parallel with others-not attacking the others ideas. The Six Thinking Hats method is a practical way of carrying out Parallel Thinking and provides a

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more constructive alternative to arguing or the more usual drifting discussion.

• Six-Thinking Hats

Often "we try to do too much at once. Emotions, information, logic, hope, and creativity all crowd in on us. It is like juggling with too many balls." The Six thinking hats helps unscramble the thinking process.

- **White Hat:** neutral and objective, concerned with facts and figures
- **Red Hat:** the emotional view
- **Black Hat:** gloomy and negative, the "devil's advocate" hat
- **Yellow Hat:** sunny and positive
- **Green Hat:** associated with fertile growth, creativity, and new ideas
- **Blue Hat:** cool, the color of the sky, above everything else-the organizing hat

Resources:

Edward de Bono's Website

<http://www.edwdebono.com/>

The deBono Group

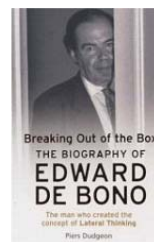
http://www.debonogroup.com/parallel_thinking.htm

How I got There – an Interview

<http://www.innovatraining.com/artsuccess.htm>

itvJapan.com Interview

http://www.itvjapan.com/mgmt_lead.asp?id=10



Breaking out of the Box

By Piers Dudgeon

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By Edward de Bono

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Concepts/Models: Pioneer