

McDonald's ROI Report

Read about how McDonald's in Japan boosted innovation and improved meetings.

How does the Six Thinking Hat Method boost innovation and improve meetings?

Early in 1999, McDonald's Senior Manager Mr. Kikuyama and Staff Development Department Manager Mr. Fukushima attended a Public Six Thinking Hats Seminar conducted by AMA, Int. They were looking for Six Hats' value to McDonald's internal operations, and they believed they found it.

McDonald's Japan had identified several key corporate issues for which Six Thinking Hats offered solutions:

- Environmental Change, such as IT development and rapid changes in business systems
- The need for employees to work cross-functionally, a campaign led by the slogan "Together for the best"
- A drive for improvement in productivity, necessitated by McDonald's Efficient Headquarters policy
- Fierce competition, not only from other fast food chains, but also from convenience stores

Meeting the challenges of all these issues required changing people's minds and working styles. Mr. Kikuyama and Mr. Fukushima saw Six Thinking Hats as a method for boosting creativity and improving the quality and efficiency of meetings - both key factors in accomplishing their corporate goals.

In August of 1999, a trial Six Hats course was conducted in McDonald's Japan's Human Resources Division. The internal trial course got positive reviews, and two months later, Mr. Fukushima and his colleague Mr. Taoka attended AMA's Six Thinking Hats Certification Course.

The Six Hats was launched internally at McDonald's Japan in January of 2000, beginning with an introduction course for all board members. The staff development program is divided into two types of courses: Internal Basic and Internal Public.

Six Hats was positioned as an Internal Public course, making participation in it voluntary, and it was expected that 120 staff members would elect to take it in the first year. The response, however, was overwhelming. During the first 10 months Six Hats was offered, 700 of the 800 internal and operations staff members participated in the course. By February 2001, all 800 will be trained in Six Thinking Hats.

Already, less than a year after implementation of Six Thinking Hats seminars, staff have identified these **results**:

1. Meeting times have been cut by about 25%.
2. The culture of the workplace has become more positive by reducing the proportion of Black Hat Thinking.
3. Open communication has been enhanced, due to every staff member's involvement in all types of thinking.

We who teach and use the Six Thinking Hats know their value and power to produce results. But raising that awareness in a community new to the Six Hats is another matter. What were the keys to the easy recognition of value and unexpectedly rapid response to this course at McDonald's Japan?

In addition to the initial effort by management to involve all layers of employees, opening the offering with the course for board members, these key factors for success were outlined by Mr. Nishino.

1. A practical approach to training

- Emphasis on the simple, easy-to-apply methodology
- Many application activity sessions in each course
- Application activities tailored to meet the needs of each participant-team

2. Immediate application of Six Thinking Hats in the workplace, facilitated by

- Whole teams signing up together to participate in the course
- Discussion of real work issues among team members during the course
- Emphasis on applying the methods in the workplace immediately after completing the seminar
- Word-of-mouth sharing on outcomes from the seminar with other teams in the workplace

3. Follow-up systems

- Job aids, such as Six Hats Cards, Six Hats Poster, Six Hats Seal, and creation of a Six Hats Intranet website provided to participating teams
- Follow-up interviews and observations with each team by instructors
- Questionnaire distributed to each participant three months after completing the seminar

All hats in the APTT Global network are off to Mr. Kikuyama, Mr. Fukushima, Mr. Taoka and all board, management, and staff at McDonald's Japan for their brilliant strategies for teaching and application of the Six Thinking Hats. And thank you to AMA International's Wolfgang Lux and Hiroki Nishino for their fine work in Japan and their time and effort in sharing this story with us.

Written by Victoria Carver, December 2000.