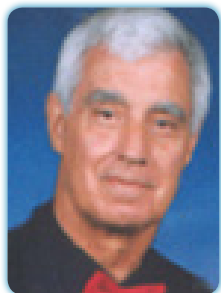


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The “Six Thinking Hats” method of removing bias from case review

A case review should occur prior to closing any major criminal investigation or taking a criminal case to trial. With no preconceived notions case review should consider all aspects of the investigation, all possible motives, subjects, interpretations of the evidence and ask if there are any investigation avenues that have not been pursued or pursued to a sufficient extent. Unfortunately, we have all had the experience at meetings where one or two individuals by the force of their rank, overbearing personalities, loud voices and strong, inflexible opinions dominate the discussion. These individuals remind me of my days in the military and the often-used entry in a fitness report: “This officer is often wrong, but is never in doubt”. Such situations are totally counterproductive as far as the desired goal of a thorough and completely unbiased case review and tend to skew the group’s objective assessment of sentinel events in the criminal justice system. There is a way of conducting meetings that prevent their domination by a few individuals, guarantee participation and insure the topic under discussion is considered in an unbiased manner. This method was introduced by Dr. Edward de Bono in his book, *Six Thinking Hats*. The “Six Hats” are visualization tools that help sidestep the ego and provide a path to non-judgmental decision making. The six “thinking hats” are different ways of looking at an issue that has to be decided. By giving each person a role (and each person eventually playing all of the roles), the method reduces the amount of personality-based conflict, encourages more participation and gives validation to many different ways to present the question. This presentation will provide a brief introduction of the visualization tools used in the book *Six Thinking Hats* and how their incorporation into the “Case Review” process can minimize the likelihood of Sentinel Events.

Biography

Robert D Blackledge has received his BS (Chemistry) degree from The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina, in 1960 and MS (Chemistry) from the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, in 1962. Before starting with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s Tallahassee Crime Lab in 1971, he has worked in forensic science for over thirty years. Breaks included eleven years with the US Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory-Europe and with “Aby’s” NCIS Lab from 1989 to 2006. He is the Author or Co-Author of over fifty journal articles and book chapters. He is the Editor of “*Forensic Analysis on the Cutting Edge: New Methods for Trace Evidence Analysis*”, Wiley-2007.

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