

2026
DEFENSE HEALTH INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY SYMPOSIUM

AUGUST 11-13, 2026
HYATT REGENCY NEW ORLEANS
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Leading IT Teams Effectively

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Agenda

1 EASE Framework

2 6 Thinking Hats

3 Scenario

Speaker Introduction



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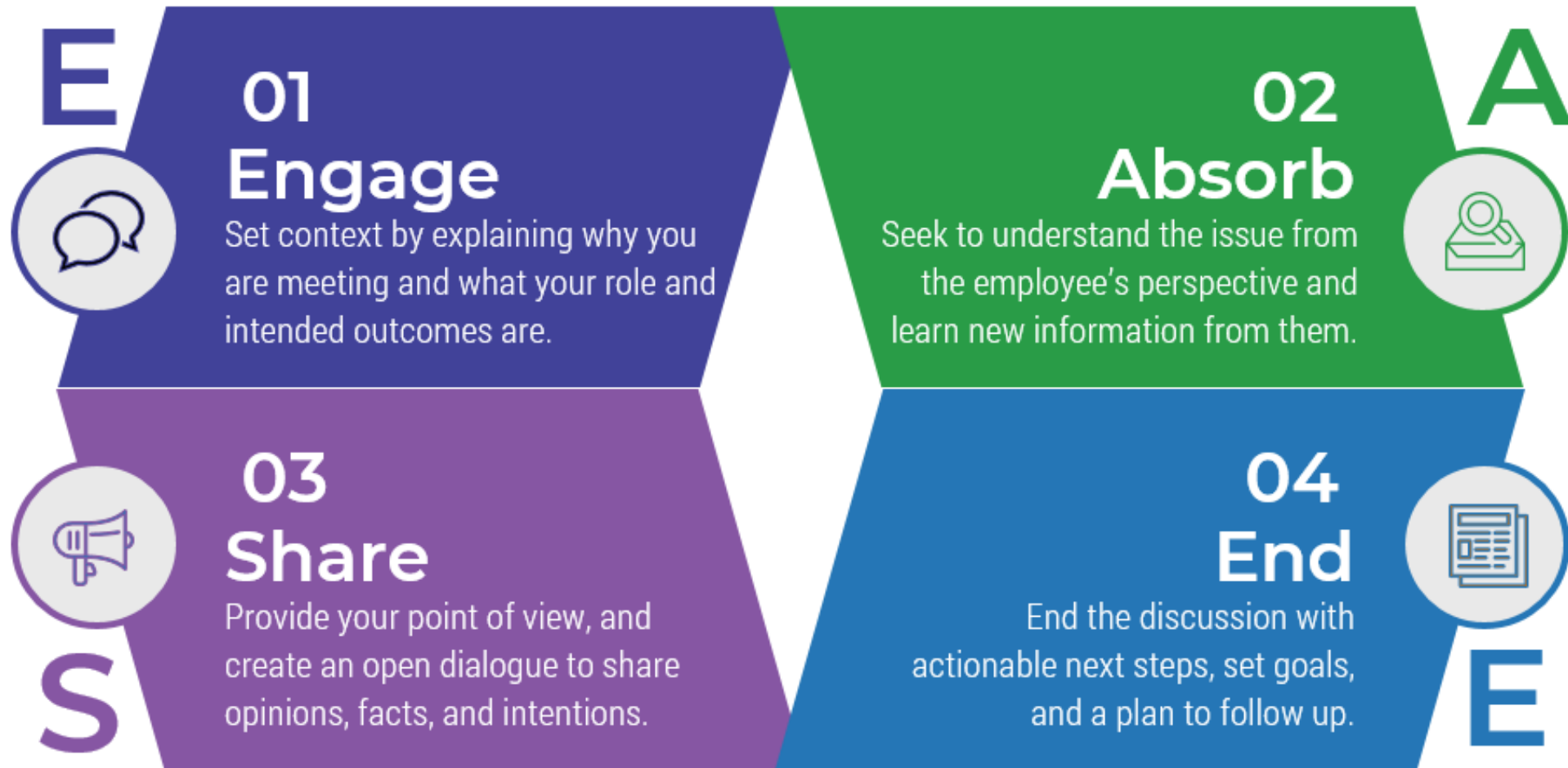
Tina Gustafson
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Learning Objectives

- 1** Understand how conflicts occur, conflict types and use the EASE Framework to resolve those conflicts
- 2** Provide tools, approaches, and methods to identify, assess, communicate and manage relationships with all stakeholders by using the 6 Thinking Hats to solve conflict
- 3** Practice How to Lead IT Teams Effectively Using the EASE Framework and 6 Thinking Hats

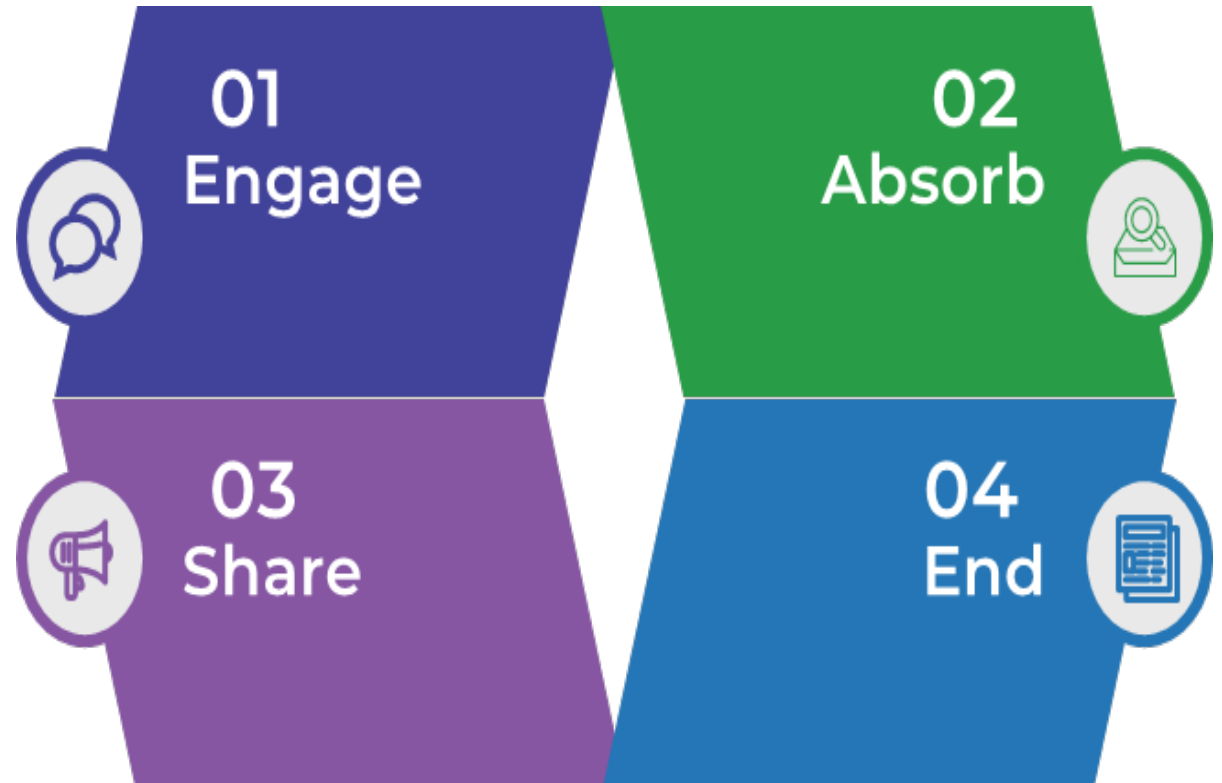
Navigate Difficult Conversations With EASE



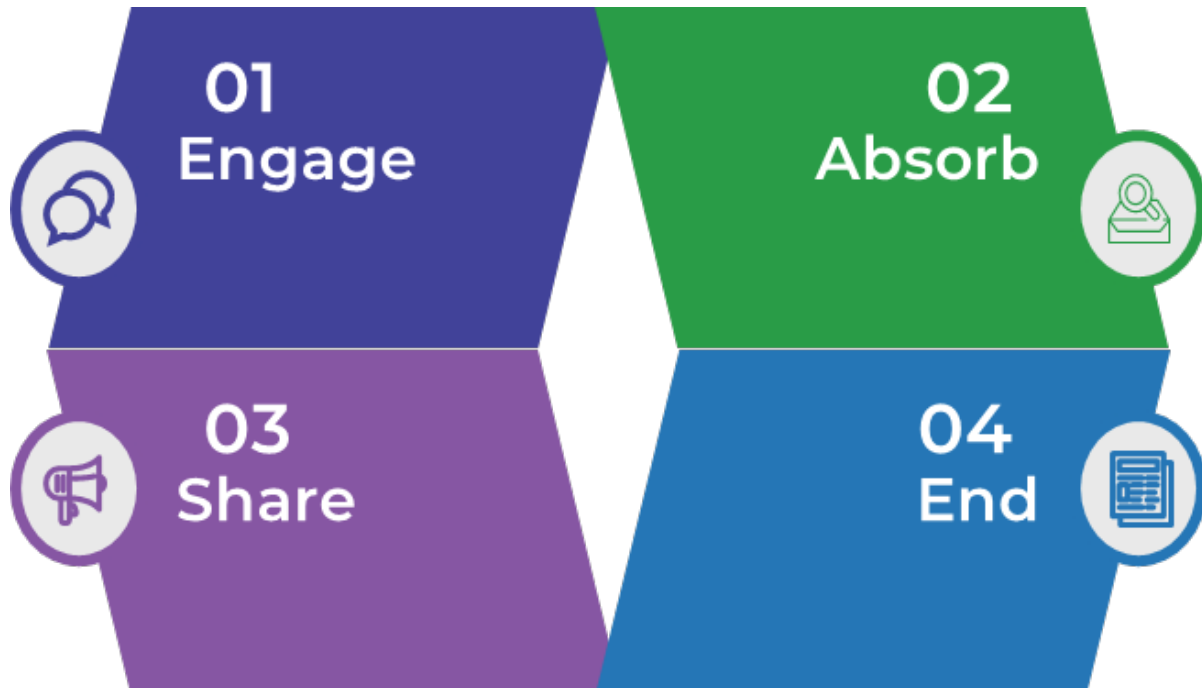
Navigate Difficult Conversations With EASE – 1. Engage

1. Engage

- Be sure to prepare before the conversation.
- Meet in a private setting.
- Adhere to confidentiality and discrimination policies.
- Speak in a calm and professional manner.
- Be concise.
- Focus on the behavior and not the assumed intent.



Navigate Difficult Conversations With EASE – 2. Absorb



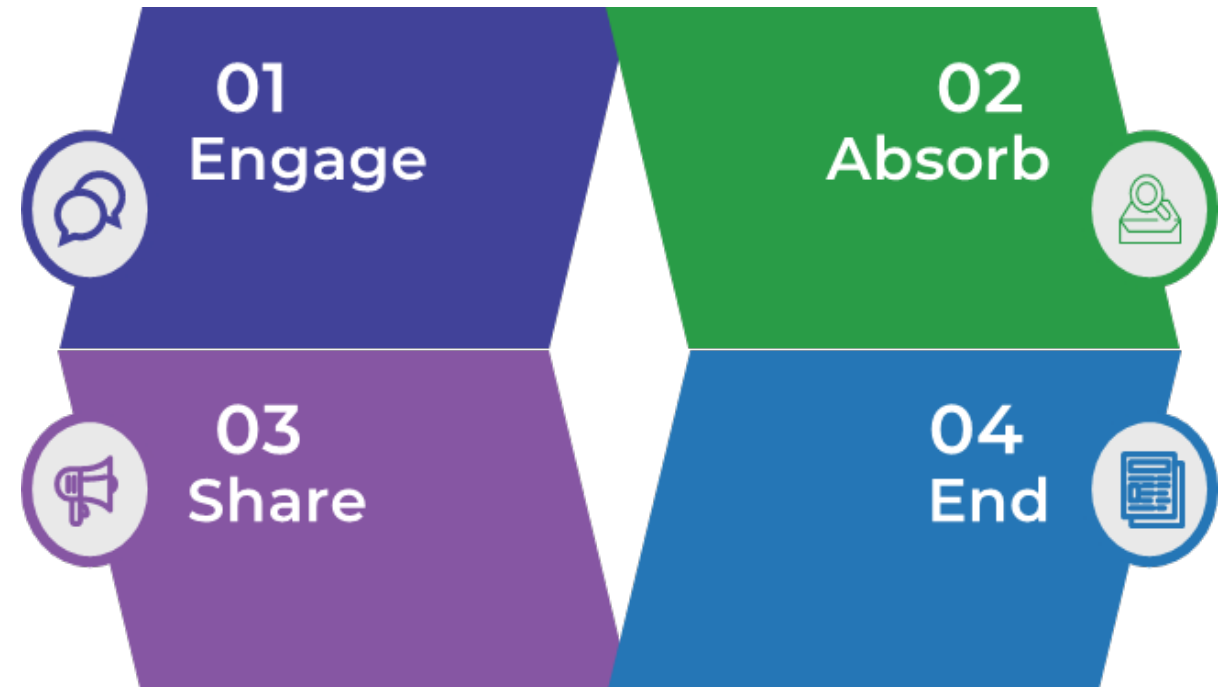
2. Absorb

- Let the employee speak; don't interrupt.
- Use active listening (full attention, paraphrase).
- Listen for commonalities.
- Ask powerful questions.
- Do not assume intent.

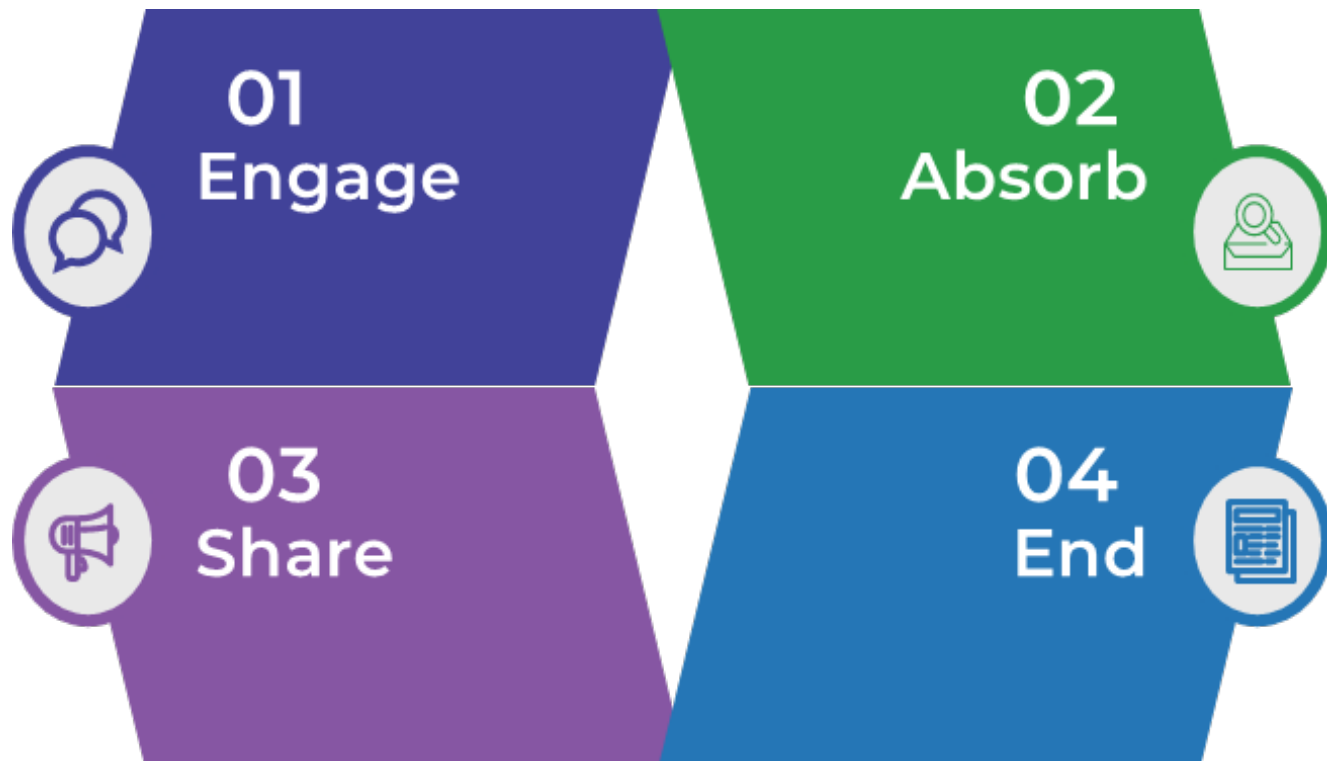
Navigate difficult conversations With EASE – 3. Share

3. Share

- Share the impact of the behavior.
- Adjust your response based on the employee's emotional state.
- Allow them to share their own reaction.
- Give time and space for responses.
- Use “I” statements when discussing emotions.



Navigate Difficult Conversations With EASE – 4. End



- Work with employee to develop solutions and alternatives.
- Ask employee to summarize the discussion and agreed-upon actions in their own words to ensure they understand.
- Book follow-up meetings after the conversation as needed.

Scenario 1

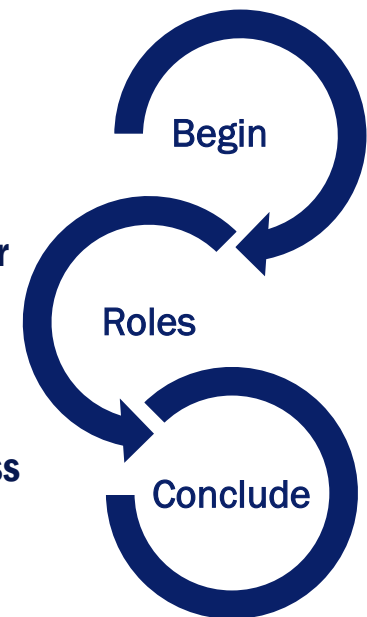
Review the scenario - Discuss & use the (Engage, Absorb, Share, and End (EASE) Framework to resolve the conflict.

- On a busy Wednesday, the hospital's IT team is alerted to a potential ransomware attack.
- You're the new chief information officer, eager to show leadership and demonstrate your skills. You immediately want to isolate the affected systems.
- However, a more experienced IT professional cautions that this could disrupt critical patient care systems and that a full impact assessment is needed first.
- The team is caught between the need for immediate action and the practical reality of maintaining patient safety during a potential system-wide outage.

Scenario 1 - Discussion

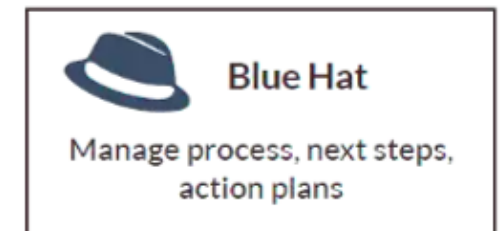
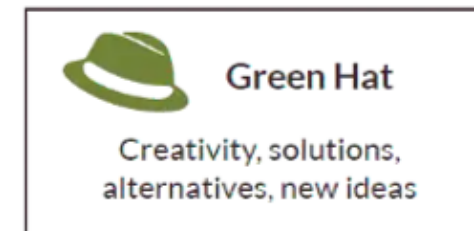
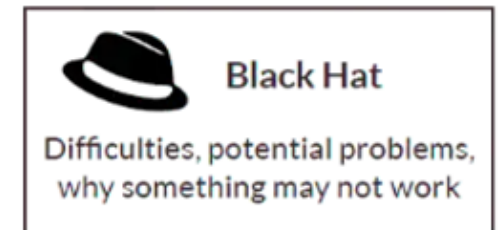
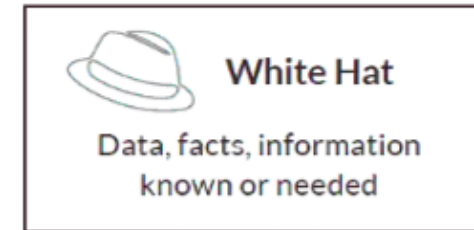
Solution: Your role in a cyber crisis using the EASE Framework provides a simple, memorable guide for actions to include - communication and actions to take:

- ⑩ **Engage:** Be prepared. Know your role in the hospital's IT disaster recovery plan. If you suspect a cyber incident (e.g., a suspicious email, a locked file), immediately engage with your designated IT security contact or help desk. Report the incident calmly and factually.
- ⑩ **Absorb:** Listen carefully to instructions from leadership and IT security personnel. Don't interrupt or act on your own. Absorb the information they provide, as it will be based on a broader view of the situation. Ask clarifying questions if you are unsure what to do.
- ⑩ **Share:** Share critical information accurately. If you are asked about the impact on your specific area, provide a clear and concise summary of the situation. Use "I" statements when appropriate (e.g., "I am unable to access patient records on this system"). Do not spread rumors or unconfirmed information.
- ⑩ **End:** Work with your team and leadership to find solutions and alternative workflows to ensure patient care continues. Once the immediate crisis is over, participate in follow-up discussions and after-action reports to help improve the hospital's response in the future.



Six Thinking Hats

- **White Hat**
 - White is neutral and objective
 - The white hat is concerned with objective facts and figures
- **Red Hat**
 - Red suggests intuition, frame of mind
 - The red hat gives the emotional view
- **Yellow Hat**
 - Yellow is sunny and positive
 - The yellow hat is optimistic and covers hope and positive thinker
- **Black Hat**
 - Black is somber and serious
 - The black hat is cautious and careful
 - It points out the weaknesses in an idea
- **Green Hat**
 - Green is grass, vegetation and abundant, fertile growth
 - Green hat indicates creativity and new ideas
- **Blue Hat**
 - Is cool and color of the sky, which is above everything else
 - The blue hat is concerned with control, the organization of the thinking process and use of the other hats.



Six Thinking Hats Breakdown

Hat Color	Core Focus	Mindset	Key Questions to Ask
 Blue Hat	Process & Control	The Conductor	What is our goal today? Which hat are we wearing next? Have we reached a decision?
 White Hat	Facts & Data	The Analyst	What information do we have? What data is missing? How can we get the missing facts?
 Red Hat	Feelings & Intuition	The Empath	How do I feel about this right now? What is my gut reaction? (No justification allowed).
 Black Hat	Risks & Caution	The Critic	What are the fatal flaws? What could go wrong? Does this align with our regulations?
 Yellow Hat	Benefits & Optimism	The Optimist	What are the best-case scenarios? Why will this idea work? What is the core value?
 Green Hat	Creativity & Alternatives	The Innovator	What are some fresh alternatives? How can we overcome the Black Hat's concerns?

Six Thinking Hats Ground Rules

No idea is a bad idea

Be Creative

Take Risks

No Criticism allowed

Work within the time limits

Stick to the hat (type of thinking) that is in current use

Contribute honestly and fully under each hat

Give Respect

Be Constructive

Self-Improvement

Effectiveness

Full Contribution

Show off by being a better thinker

Direction, not descriptions

Do not categorize people by hats - Everyone is to participate when a hat is used

Six Thinking Hats In A Nutshell



Reflective



Factual



Intuitive



Creative



Optimistic



Logical



Reflective



Scenario 2

Review the scenario - Discuss & Share Risks/ Issues, Obstacles, Solutions, and Opportunities in the Review.

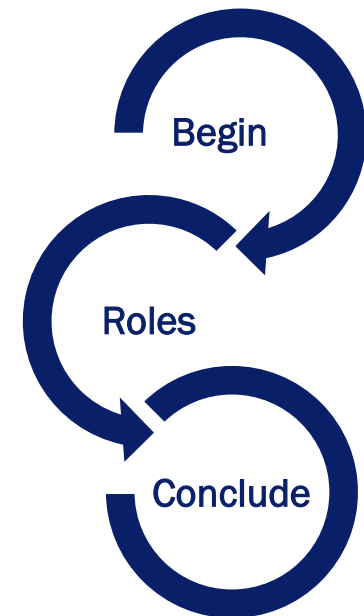
Your high-performing IT team is tasked with delivering a critical recommendation how to implement the Information Technology Disaster Recovery (ITDR) course.. This project is a make-or-break opportunity that will heavily influence future contract renewals and resource allocations. Furthermore, the J-6 Command is observing your team's performance to identify candidates for upcoming leadership promotions.

To protect the team's long-standing reputation for meticulous, flawless work, your team commits to a rigorous strategy: conducting the ITDR Course quarterly virtually by attaching the ITDR briefing to the CIO Lifeline Course (CLC). The CLC has 20-minute briefing slots, but the team will make an exception and open the window to have a 1-hour ITDR briefing at the end of the CLC. The Subject Matter Expert will be Mr. Guatham Ravichandran.

Scenario 2 - Discussion

Discuss in Breakout session & Share Risks, Obstacles, Issues, Solutions, Opportunities in Review:

- ☐ What pieces from the **Six Thinking Hats** were used?
- ☐ Was there something that could have been done differently?



Top Conflict Management Resources

Top Books & Guides

- *Six Thinking Hats* by Dr. Edward de Bono: Focuses on how to use the Six Thinking Hats in conflict resolution.
- *The Big Book of Conflict Resolution Games* by Mary Scannell: Offers quick, effective activities for team building and trust.

Frameworks & Methodologies

- *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)*: Identifies five key styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.
- *EASE Framework* by Info-Tech Research Group: Focuses on separating people from the problem and focusing on interests, not positions.

Workplace-Specific Resources

- *A Manager's Guide to Resolving Team Conflict*.
- *Coping With Stress in the Workplace Workbook* by Ester Leutenberg and John Liptak

Contact Speakers

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Thank You!

