



MIND MAPPING FOR LEADERS & MANAGERS

9 Common Types of Mind Maps That Managers & Leaders Should be Using

Updated November 29, 2011 with map templates

Managers and leaders, because of the variety and importance of the duties they perform, are more subject to information overload and lack of clarity than most people. That means they can benefit the most from incorporating mind mapping software into their work styles. Here are 9 ways in which managers and leaders can utilize it to be more effective.

Strategic planning

Strategic planning is a major application of mind mapping software for managers and leaders. It provides an organization with a situational overview, an analysis of its marketplace and competitive stature, and sets forth a clear direction forward for the company. Gathering, distilling, building consensus around and communicating this plan are all things that can be easily done using mind mapping software. In fact, because a mind map is such a highly visible communication vehicle, it may be the preferred method for sharing the finished product of your planning process – the strategic plan itself.

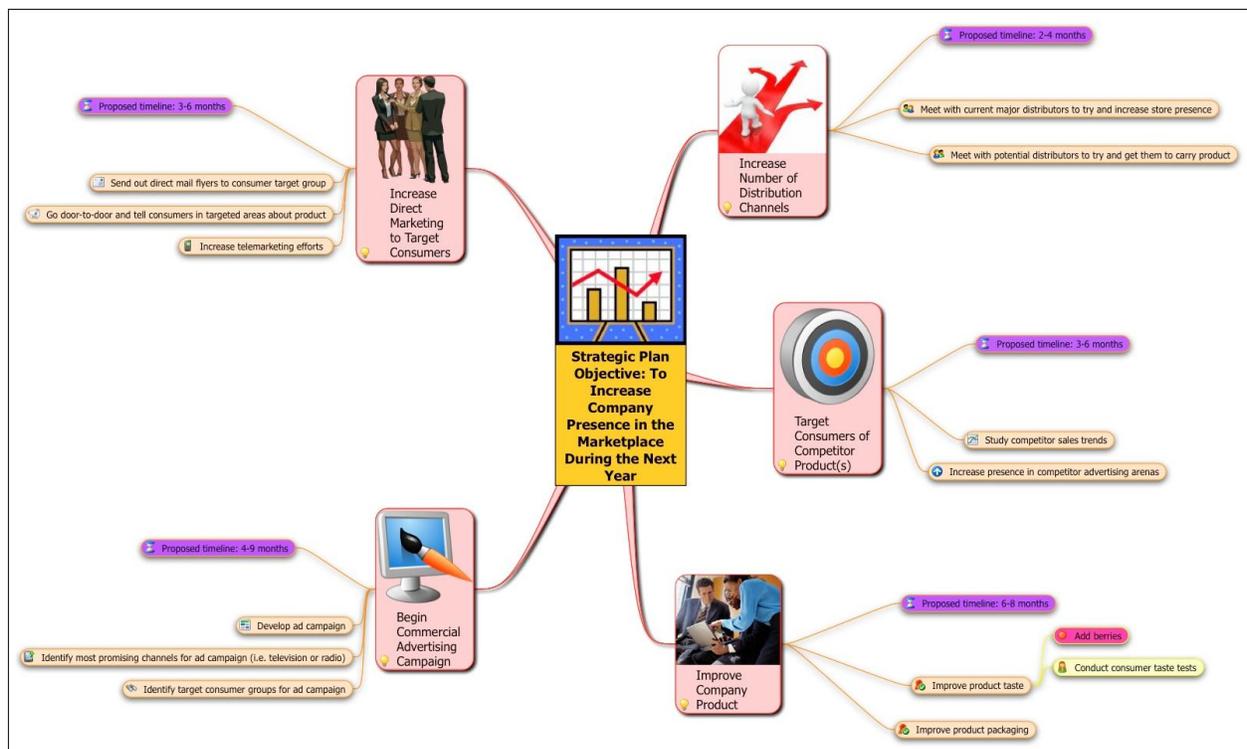
Often, the raw materials for a strategic plan come from two places:

1. Research on the company's customers, markets, technology trends and other sources.
2. Brainstorming sessions conducted by your company's internal strategic planning team, or from meetings with an external consultant. The mind map can be used to capture ideas during the actual brainstorming sessions, or to organize and share them after the meetings.

A software-produced mind map can be used to conceptualize, refine, compile, organize and share these ideas among the senior-level managers of the organization.

Mind mapping software also gives you the unique ability to “drill down” into greater detail in separate, linked maps. If something stands out as potentially valuable and worthy of further exploration, make it the center topic of a new map and start the process all over again.

Keep in mind that you can use mind mapping to capture the data you collect during any risk assessment – which seeks to identify the biggest threats to the organization, prioritize them and develop plans to help prevent them.



Once you have gathered enough data, it's time to write the plan. Your strategic plan mind map should include elements such as:

1. Overall objectives
2. Situation analysis for each of the organization's major business units or divisions
3. Long term goals for each business unit or division

4. Strategies for the next year (short term goals) that each business unit or division will accomplish in the next year and their relative priorities. Use numerical symbols or icons to designate the relative importance of each action step.

Strategic plans using a mind map provide great situational overviews. Circulate them to get the word out, and everyone will be able to move in unison in the same direction, which can significantly improve your results.

Templates

MindManager - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/1iTLE0rN/strategic-planning>

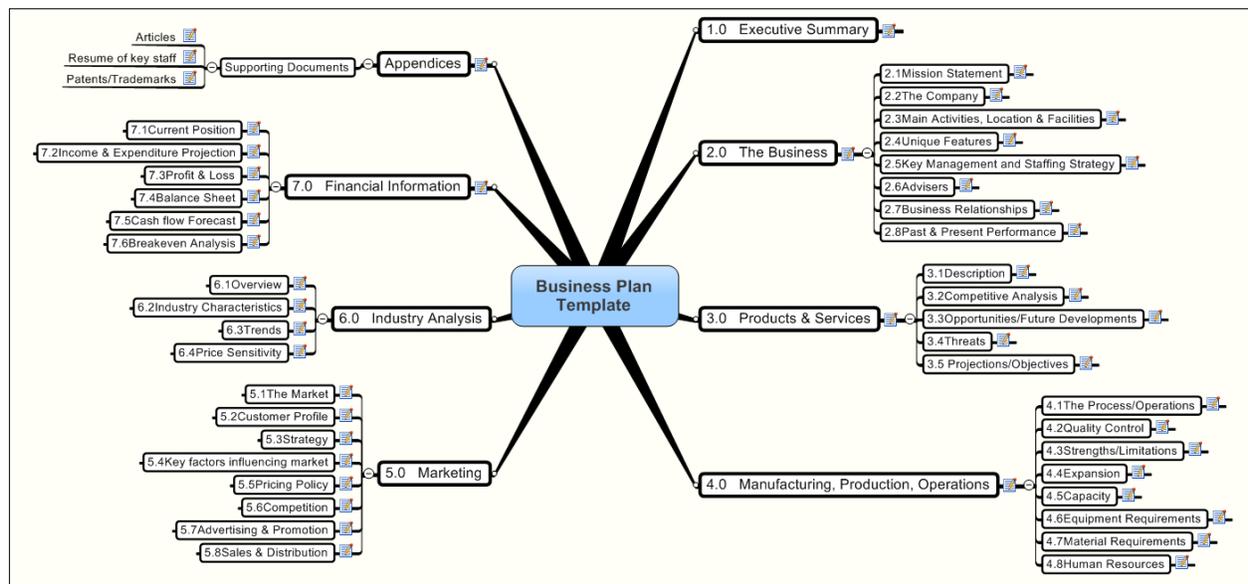
MindGenius - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/VCoXmdRw/mind-map-template-business-planning>

NovaMind - <http://www.novamind.com/gallery/strategic-planning-using-novamind-mind-maps-3/>

XMind - <http://www.xmind.net/share/luisric/-strategic-intelligence-strategic-planning/>

Business plans

Another common use of mind mapping software by managers and leaders is a business plan. Like a strategic plan, this document is used to lay out the company’s focus and direction, but it’s meant to be shared with external audiences, such as potential institutional investors, venture capitalists, bankers or potential business partners.



For example, if you have an idea to start up a company and need seed capital to finance its launch, product development and early operations, you must have a well-prepared business plan.

Note the main topics of the example map above – they are, for the most part, externally facing. They tell someone who has never seen the company before how it is structured, who it serves and how it makes money. Ideally, it gives an outside investor the confidence that your firm is a worthwhile place to put their funds, and that they have a realistic possibility of making their money back plus an attractive return on investment.

One other notable thing about our example map above: It only contains a few levels of topics. That's because it's meant to be an overview, an executive summary. Too much detail would make it confusing. Each bottom-level topic contains attached notes; that's because this is a MindManager template, and the notes help people who have downloaded it how to utilize it. But you could easily attach supporting documentation to each topic, making it easy for a prospective investor to “drill down” and view supporting information – such as a spreadsheet that provides more information on the company's financials.

Templates

MindManager - <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=36>

XMind - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/aFW7UiUt/business-plan-checklist>

NovaMind - <http://www.novamind.com/gallery/business-planning-using-mind-maps-3/>

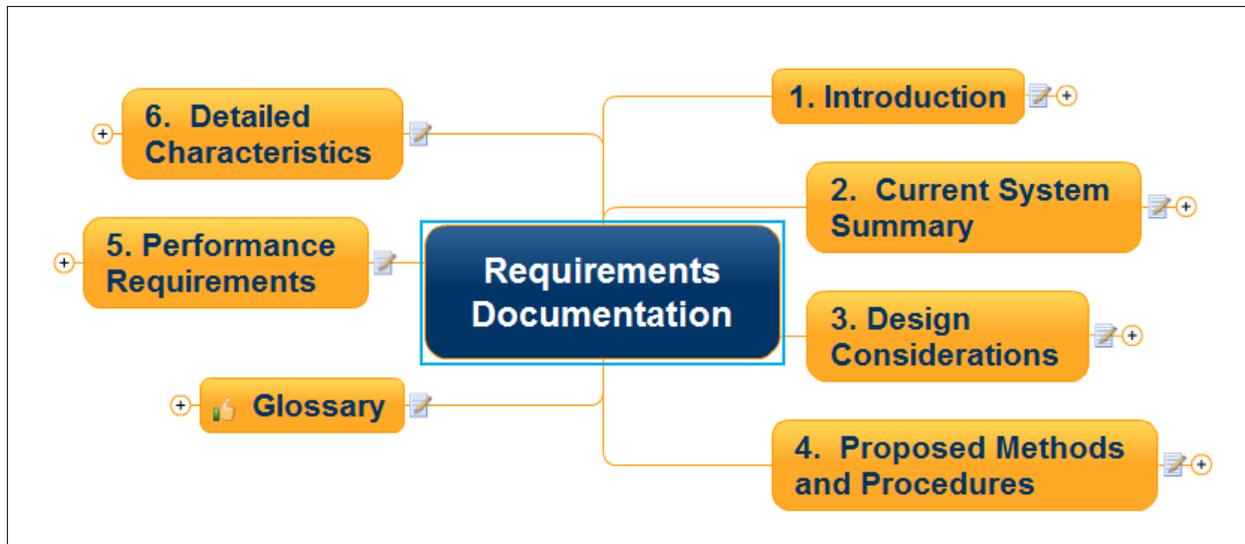
iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/0BnBdK8u/business-plan-outline>

New business development

New business development is the lifeblood of any company or organization. A new business map can be used to capture the output of brainstorming sessions, as you develop new ideas for products and services that would surprise and delight your customers.

New business development also involves conducting research, to determine if some of your best ideas are practical or if they address real needs that customers are willing to pay to have solved. It may also involve scouting for potential technologies your company can license, or firms with complementary products and services with whom you can form strategic alliances.

Mind maps can be used to capture, organize and manipulate the data you have gathered during these research efforts.



Mind mapping is also an ideal tool for identifying “white space” opportunities – ideas that fall in between existing products, services, or ideas. They may exist between two existing business units, divisions or departments. Because both groups are so busy trying to keep up with their existing tasks and responsibilities, they tend to give little time or thought to the unmet customer needs or untapped possibilities that reside between existing products, services and businesses. Mind mapping software is a perfect tool for exploring white space opportunities, because it leverages the brain’s powers of association.

When it comes to new product development, mind maps can also be used for:

1. Requirements gathering
2. Documenting the new product development process
3. Providing a visual overview of the company’s existing product portfolio, and where the proposed new product would fit in
4. Project definition, including potential risks and mitigation strategies

Often, new business development efforts require us to bring other people into the project, to contribute specific expertise or to manage a specific part of the process. At times like these, a mind map can be the perfect tool to bring the new guy or girl up to speed on your new product and service development efforts so far. It enables them to see the bigger picture, as well as to

drill down into the details. Best of all, because it's a highly visual medium, your new business mind map may help them to see new connections and possibilities that you missed.

Templates

iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/andvzjaT/business-model-template>

NovaMind - <http://www.novamind.com/gallery/mind-mapping-for-business-3/>

Marketing plan

This is one of my favorite applications of mind mapping software. Developing a marketing plan can be a complex exercise; it contains so much information that you need a visual tool like a mind map to gather and organize it all. I've found it's also a great tool for sharing a high-level outline of your plan with your boss; he or she can see how all of the elements will fit together – which tends to be hard to see in a traditional long-form document.

Here are some of the elements you should plan to include in your marketing plan mind map:



Objectives

- Company background/situation analysis
- Objectives of the plan
- Period it will cover

Customers

- All of the customer segments you currently serve
- Those into which you would like to expand
- Detailed descriptions/personas of each
- What needs do you serve or problems do you solve for each customer segment?

Competition

- Who are your direct and indirect competitors?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How will they react when you roll out this marketing plan?

Promotional tactics you plan to use

- Publicity/PR
- Direct marketing
- Advertising
- Personal selling
- Telemarketing
- Special events
- Online marketing

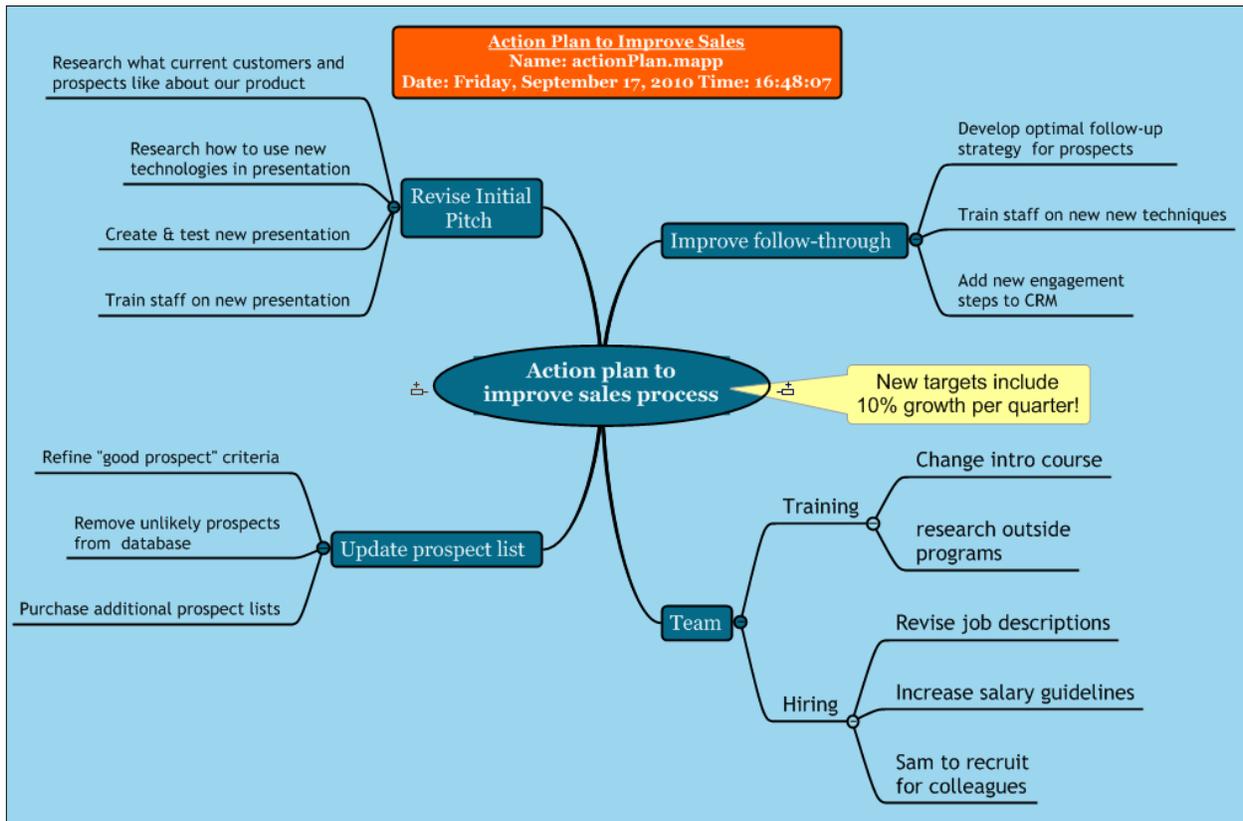
Templates

MindManager - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/a89184/marketing-plan-outline>

NovaMind - <http://www.novamind.com/gallery/marketing-plan-3/>

XMind - <http://www.xmind.net/share/fmohidin/xmind-906459/>

Sales Plan



At first glance, sales management and mind mapping wouldn't seem to have much in common. But in fact, it's an awesome tool to gather and organize a large quantity of data about"

- Your customers – their needs, contact information for the people involved in the decision-making process, contact history, company background information
- Competitors – their strengths and weaknesses, their key products and services
- Industry trends – good conversation pieces when meeting face-to-face with a customer

Mindjet believes the intersection between sales and mind mapping is so powerful that it has developed a Deal Navigator application for users of the salesforce.com CRM system. By applying Mindjet visualization to the data in salesforce.com, Deal Navigator helps sales teams see the whole picture when it comes to working a deal. It helps sales reps and managers see

the key decision makers and influencers in a prospect account and how each may impact the outcome of a sale. By automatically creating a visual organizational chart of the prospect account from Salesforce data, Deal Navigator lets sales teams immediately identify their champions and antagonists and analyze the best course of action for closing a deal.

(not a commercial for Deal Navigator – just thought you should know about it)

One of the most powerful ways in which managers can use mind maps to accelerate the sales process is during customer discovery meetings. In these sessions, you ask a structured series of questions designed to elicit their needs, challenges and “pain points.” As the customer shares his or her answers with you, you are recording them in a mind map. As you’re doing this, you’re also talking through any assumptions the two of you are making. At the close of the meeting, you can distribute a copy of the discovery map to them – an impressive take-away from several hours of work!

Mind mapping during customer discovery is a powerful consensus-building tool, and can help to prevent misunderstandings later when you present a proposal to the prospect. They can’t come back to you late in the sales cycle and say, “No, you didn’t quite understand my needs,” because they worked with you to define them in a mind map and build a shared understanding of their challenges.

Other ways in which mind mapping can be used to streamline sales management includes:

- Account planning
- Territory planning
- Problem solving
- Value creation – be clear on how your solution provides value to the customer

Templates

MindManager - <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=1993>

iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/F8tbSuXf/sales-plan>

Pitching ideas

In today's increasingly idea-centric world, effectively selling others on your ideas is becoming a critically important skill. Mind mapping software can help you to make your case.

The first thing you need to do is clearly spell out your objective. What do you want to accomplish? What do you want this person to do or think? What action do you want them to take? Create a first-level map topic entitled "objectives" to capture this information.

Next, clearly articulate the benefits to them for agreeing to adopt or support your idea. What's in it for them? How will they benefit? Remember, they're just as busy as you are. Attention is the scarcest resource and, human nature being what it is, they will filter out you and your great idea unless you make your case very compelling. Create a second top-level topic entitled "benefits" and add your insights to it.

As you're assembling your idea pitch mind map, take time to anticipate objections. What are the most likely reasons that your boss or colleagues may reject your idea? Create a top-level topic called "objections," list each one as sub-topics, and then invest some time thinking about how you will address each concern. Add those details to the appropriate branches of your mind map.



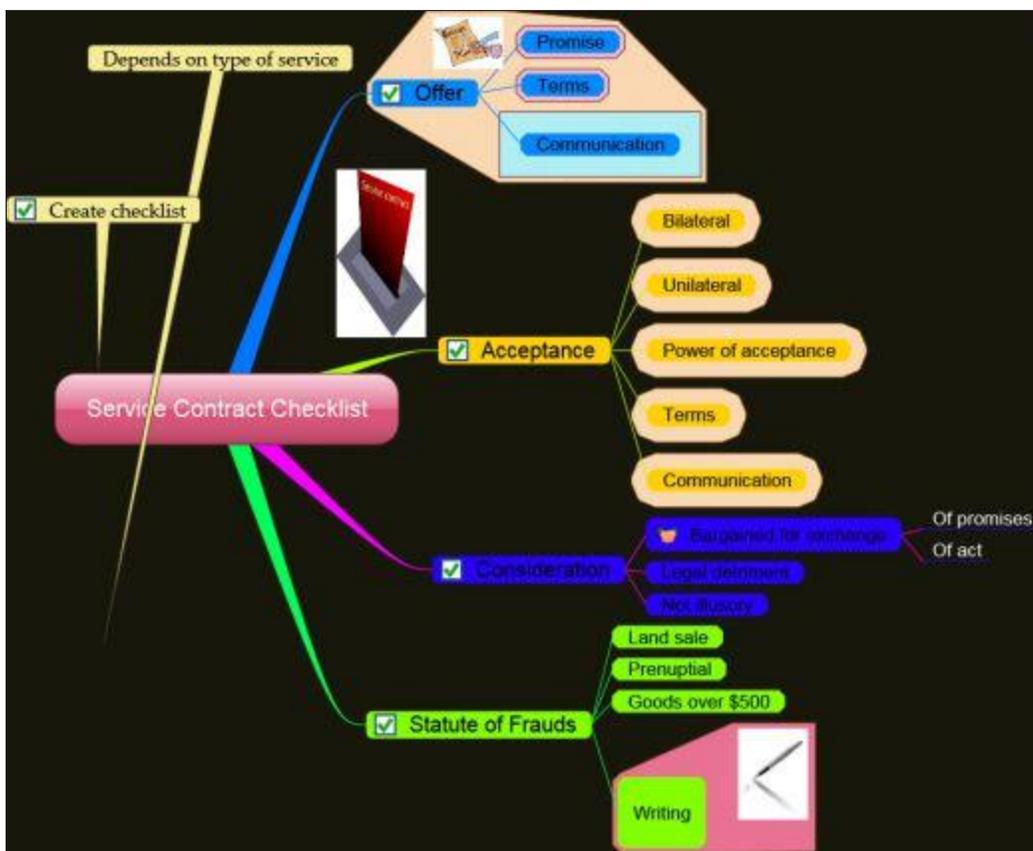
Once you've clearly spelled out the "what" and the "why," you need to back it up with additional details, such as timing, resource requirements, staffing and other factors. Add branches to your mind map to detail this information.

Finally, add a call to action to your mind map. This reinforces your objective, and reminds the other parties what it is that you want them to do. Then present your case to your boss or colleague, using your mind map as a compelling visual outline.

Templates

MindManager - <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=673>

Contract management



A contract is a complex document. There are many elements you must remember to include. That makes it a perfect application for mind mapping software. Use your program of choice to lay out all of the sections of the proposed contract and their subsections. Be sure to spell out the responsibilities of each party, and issues such as term and termination. What will be the milestone dates when both parties will reassess the contract? Will it be renewed automatically

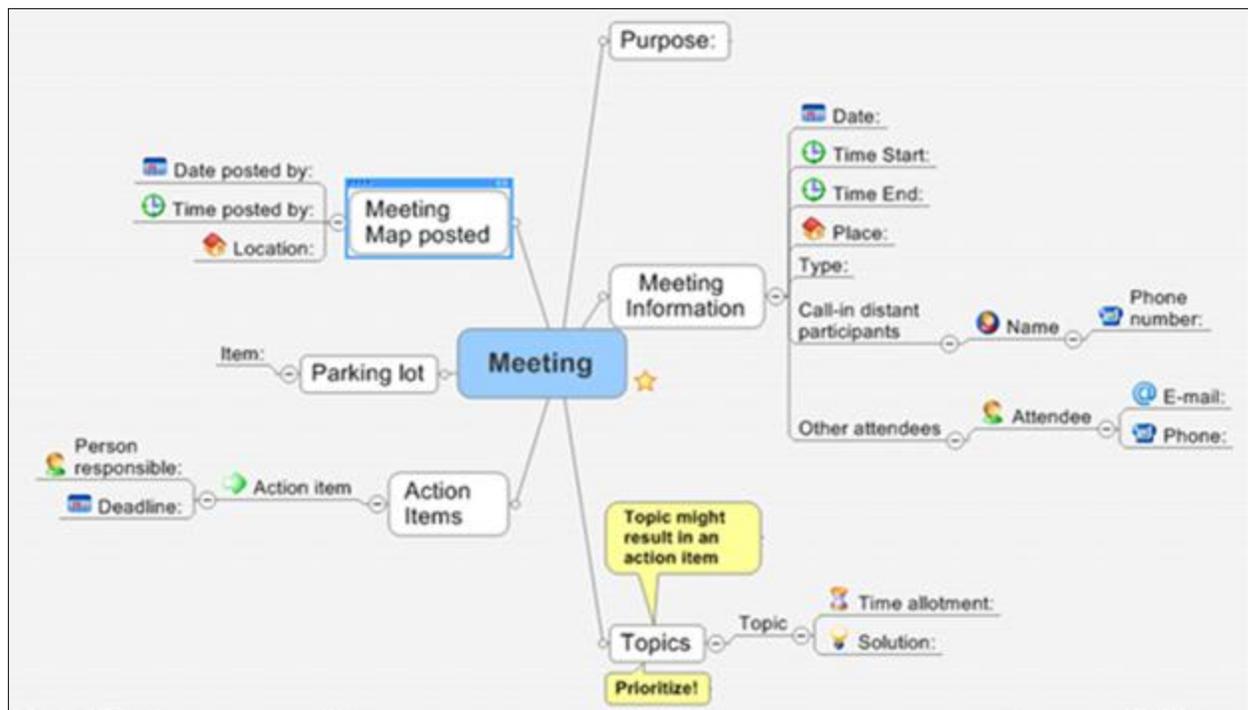
on an “evergreen” basis, or will it require a positive commitment from both parties in order to continue you it beyond the term of the contract?

Also, because a contract always involves multiple people within your organization and the one with whom you’re negotiating, be sure to use your mind map to solicit feedback from your corporate legal counsel and other key executives who need to have an opportunity to review it prior to signing a contract. You may also find it useful to share your mind map with the other party, as a gesture of good faith. It exposes your proposed terms and assumptions, and should give them a clear picture of what your intentions are in the proposed relationship. That may make the negotiation process with them go more smoothly.

Templates

XMind - <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=673>

Meeting planning



If you have an effective process for preparing for a major business meeting, the meeting itself is more likely to be successful. Preparing for a successful meeting is a special type of project: It requires you to set objectives, to solicit the participation of co-workers, partners and people

outside of your organization, to manage a myriad of room and facility details, and much more. Mind mapping software, with its powerful ability to gather and organize numerous bits and pieces of information, can help.

Here's how to utilize mind mapping software to plan your next meeting:

- **Define your objectives:** What is the purpose of this meeting? What do you hope to accomplish? What will a successful outcome look like? Place each objective on a separate branch in the “objectives” section of your map.
- **Determine who should attend the meeting:** Who needs to be there? Who has the information or input you need for the project? Which decision-makers should be involved in this meeting, if any? Which of your subordinates will be working on this project, who need to be part of this meeting? Are there any outside partners, consultants or other people outside your organization who should be involved? Record each person's name and pertinent contact information on a separate branch in the “attendee” section of your map.
- **Define agenda items:** Let the objectives you have defined help to drive the agenda for your meeting. List the topics to be discussed, and who will lead the discussion of each time segment. Place each agenda item on a separate branch in the “agenda” section of your map.
- **Determine your facility needs:** Next, create a new branch within your map to explore your needs for the meeting room. Will any participants be making PowerPoint presentations (or use mind mapping software to capture ideas generated during group brainstorming)? You can use your map to define audiovisual needs (such as an LCD projector and screen), support for teleconferencing, lunch arrangements and much more.

Templates

MindManager - <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=26>

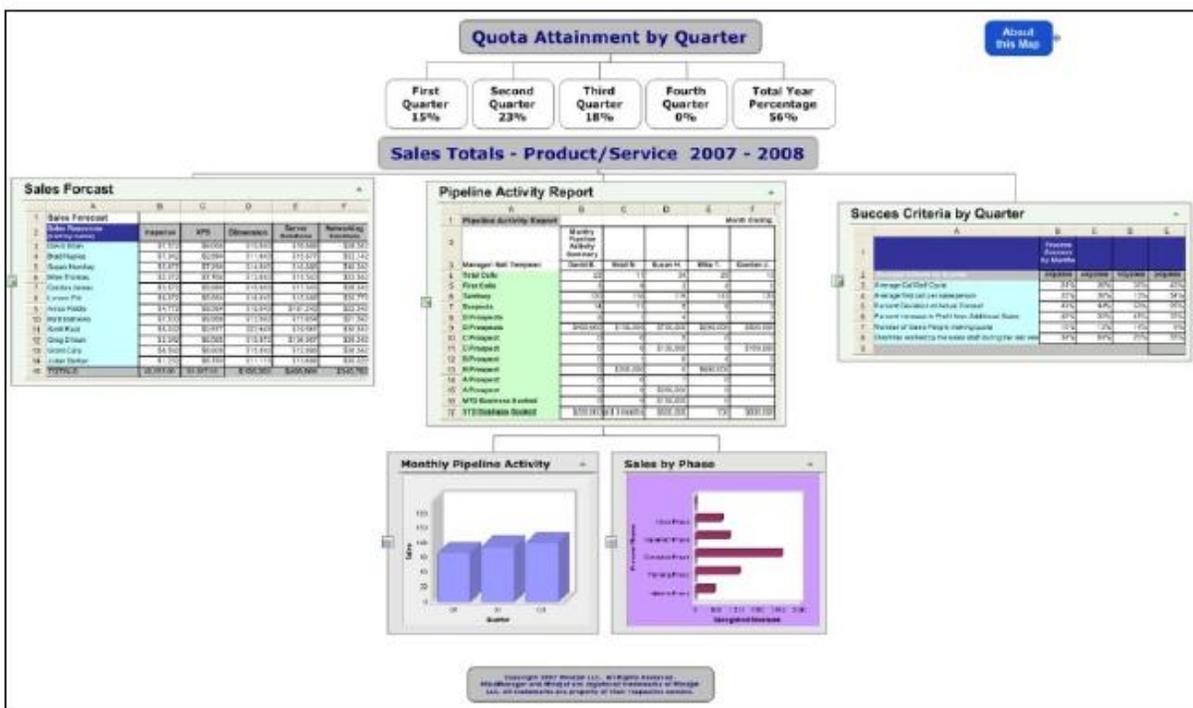
MindGenius - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/uZRcrMcM/5-steps-to-a-successful-meeting>

iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/3RQrYN6r/managing-meetings>

Management dashboards

One of the best ways to enjoy the productivity-enhancing benefits of mind mapping software is to employ it to create a dashboard map. In much the same way that the dashboard on your automobile consolidates all of the key data you need to operate it in one convenient location, a dashboard mind map gives you a similar at-a-glance view of the information and data that is most important to you.

Often, dashboards include links to important files and web pages, enabling you to access them with a single mouse click. As you can see, with some of the high-end mind mapping software program, you can pull ranges of Excel spreadsheet cells and graphs into your mind maps, enabling you to monitor key metrics without even leaving your dashboard.



What can you include in a dashboard map?

The sky's the limit, but here are some common elements you may want to consider as you think about what to include in your personal dashboard:

- Personal and work tasks

- Track the status of key projects
- Important meetings, appointments and reminders
- Your schedule
- Links to key documents and reports
- An “in-box” for capturing new items for later processing
- Account numbers, passwords and logins
- Reference materials
- Spreadsheets with key metrics for your business

If you're a manager in charge of multiple projects, you will benefit greatly by creating a dashboard mind map to help you manage your many duties.

Templates

MindManager – <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=769>

XMind - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/mtUejP1K/planning-dashboard-v1-timeline->

iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/kaiXGLZN/project-dashboard-freely-inspired-by-meri-williams->

Conclusion

This isn't meant to be an all-inclusive list. Obviously, the roles and duties of managers vary greatly. But its main purpose is to get you thinking about new ways in which you can utilize the powerful tool you have at your disposal – mind mapping software – to work more effectively!

Questions?

Got questions about managing your mind maps? Don't hesitate to contact me at chuck@innovationtools.com.