



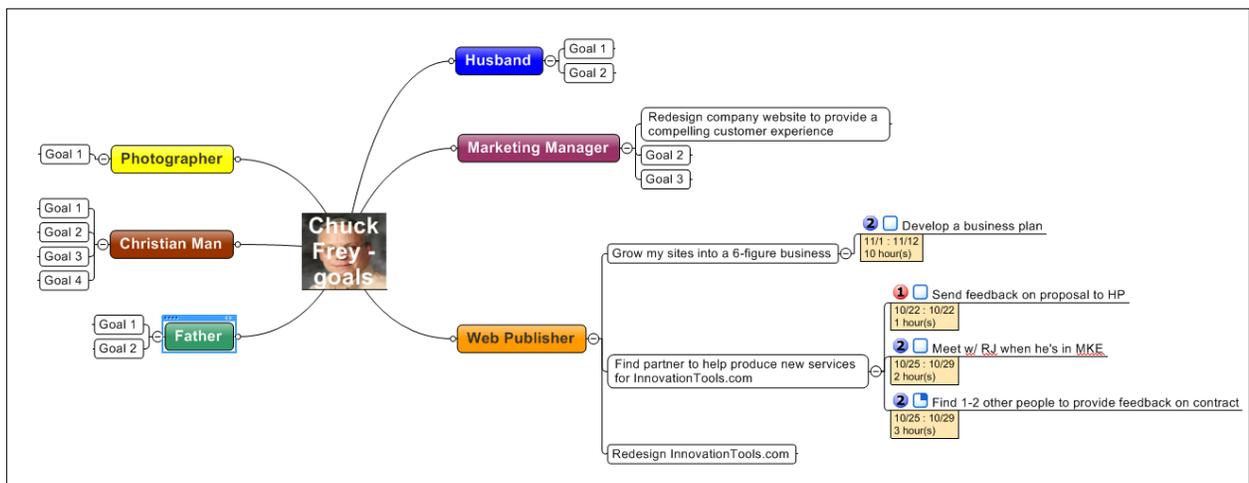
How to create a mind map to manage your life goals

Develop a practical life plan, based on roles and goals, to help you to achieve success and significance

Introduction

One useful application of mind mapping software is to visually map your goals. For this report we will use the model of roles and goals from the best-selling book, [The 7 Habits Highly Effective People](#) by Stephen Covey. In this life planning model, you start with a personal mission statement, define your major life roles and then develop goals for each role that are congruent with your personal mission statement.

Part of the reason Covey starts with life roles is to ensure that our lives are in balance. As human beings, we tend to focus on one aspect of our lives – such as our job and career – while neglecting other important roles, such as husband or father, in my case. Looking at your goals within the context of a set of your key life roles helps you to ensure a balanced, effective life. Mind mapping these roles and goals makes it very easy to see if you're in or out of balance.

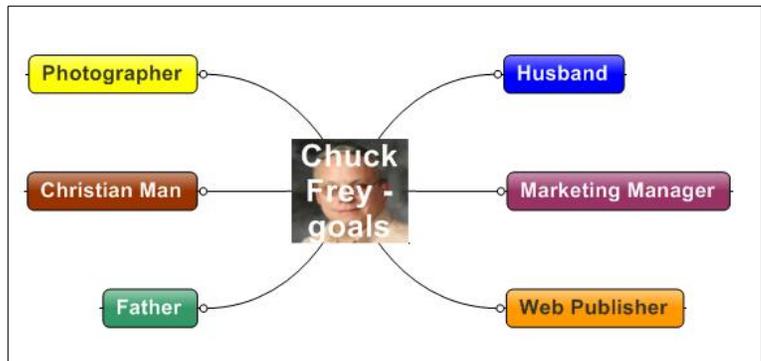


In this report I will explain how to create a roles and goals mind map. I will then share some ideas on how to personalize it to meet your needs. This mind map can serve as a living document to help you manage the direction of your life.

How to build this mind map

1. Start by creating first-level topics for your major life roles.

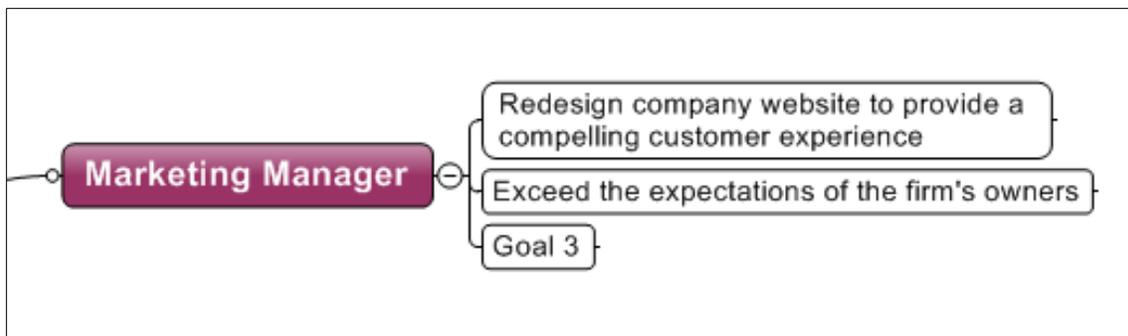
Take your time and carefully discern the major roles of your life. Some may be immediately obvious, others less so. These roles, ideally, should flow out of your personal mission statement. For more information on how to do this, I recommend that you read (or re-read) Covey's *7 Habits* book.



One simple technique that Covey recommends to identify your life mission, principle and roles is to picture your funeral. Imagine that you could hover over your funeral ceremony and listen to what others say about you. What principles and values would they emphasize that defined your life? What would they say you contributed to your family, your church, your community and other important groups of people? Remember, this is an ideal scenario. Let that mental picture drive the development of your life roles.

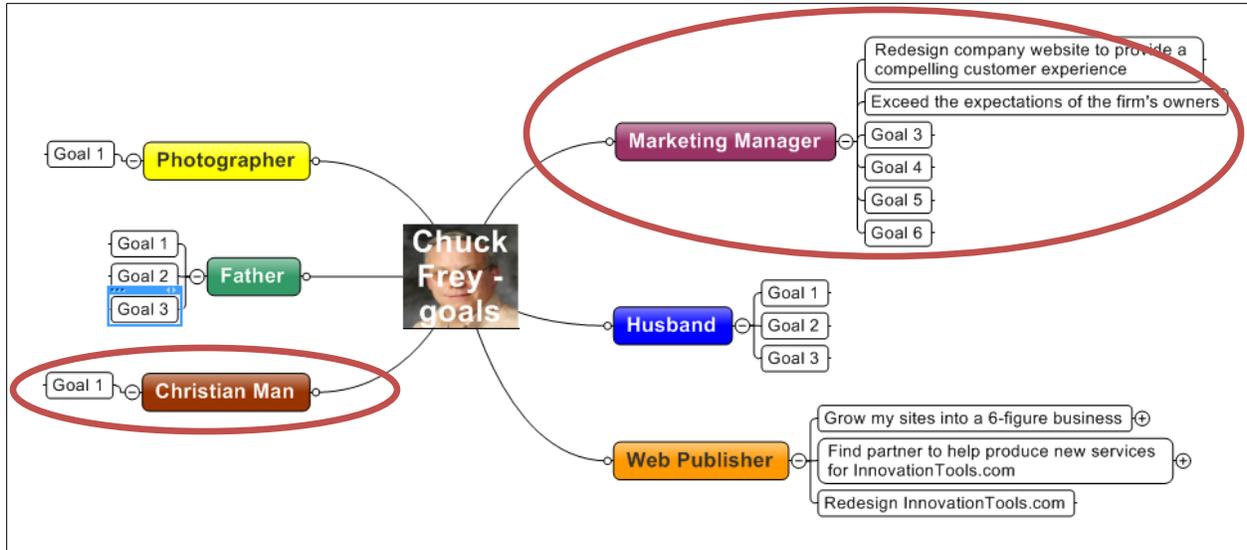
2. Add major goals to each life role

Think about major goals that will help you to contribute at a high level in each area of your life, and add them to each of the roles that you have defined. Don't add any more detail at this point



in time – just the high-level goals. We'll come back and fill in more details later.

3. Review your roles and goals – are they in balance?

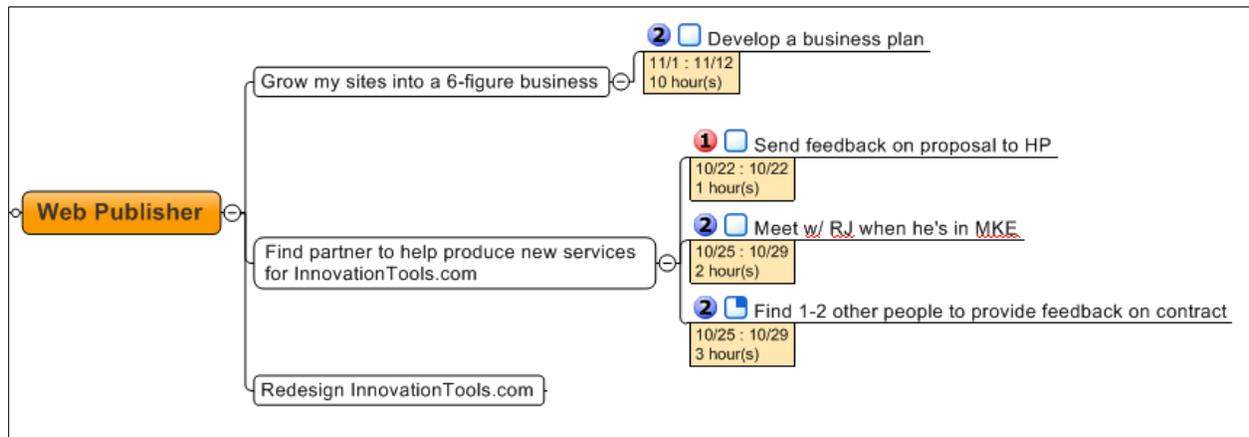


As you look at this mind map, displaying only roles and goals, does it appear to be in balance? Are there roughly an equal number of goals defined for each role? Where are there too many? Where are there too few? The object here is not to have exactly the same number of goals for each role, but to ensure that they are more or less in balance. Use your judgment here – it is your life, after all.

In the example above, the average number of goals is 3-4 per life role. It's easy to see that I don't have enough goals defined for my role as a Christian man, while I have too many goals defined for my marketing manager role. Maybe I'm too focused on my job. Maybe I need to back off and spend more time and attention on the other roles of my life. See how this works at a high-level view?

Before you proceed any further, invest the time to ensure that you have identified the most important goals for each life role, and that they are more or less in balance. You may want to add some goals to your map, then walk away from it for a few days. When you return to it, you will do so with a fresh perspective. Meanwhile, your subconscious mind will have had a day or two to mull over what you should be focusing on. Add these goals to your map.

4. Add appropriate action steps to each goal



Add the most important tasks to each role. Use action-oriented wording. Note what I have done with my goal to find potential partners who can help me to drive my website InnovationTools.com to the next level. Each task includes:

- A priority level
- A percentage complete indicator
- Start and end dates
- Approximate number of hours I need to complete each task

What else could I add to these action steps? Here are a few ideas for your consideration:

- **Document links:** If there is supporting documentation for a specific task, such as the third one under the InnovationTools partnership goal, then provide a link to any supporting documents that you want to keep close at hand.
- **Links to sub- maps:** My goal to build my web businesses to six figures is an ambitious one, and will require a detailed business plan. That is too complex to include in this roles and goals map. I can easily outline the elements of this business plan in a separate mind map, and then link to it to this task, so it will only be one click away.
- **Links to web pages or e-mails:** Anything that is related to your tasks could be linked here, including web pages and even individual e-mail messages. Don't overdo it; you want this to be a high-level action map. If you clutter it with too much supporting information, you may dilute its effectiveness. When in doubt, create a linked sub-map to contain all of the details.

Other thoughts for personalizing this mind map

This mind map is a highly personal tool that you can use to manage your life. Accordingly, it can be as colorful as you want to make it. Note how I inserted my picture into the central topic of this mind map. You can do the same, or use any image that symbolizes your life's over-arching purpose.



Another possibility is to add images to your major life roles, to help bring them to life for you visually. For example, if you're married, you could add a small picture of you and your spouse to the life role of husband (or wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, etc. You get the idea.). Use any image or symbol that brings that life role alive for you – whatever makes it meaningful and helps to create an emotional connection for you.

Use color in your life planning map. Note how I have added color to each of the first-level map topics. Your brain responds to color and images. Don't make your life map a drab, monochromatic affair. Your life is colorful, vibrant and full of possibilities. Make your life map reflect that!

Use a floating image to add further visual interest to your life planning map.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I encourage you to enjoy this process of life planning. I hope this type of mind map helps you to chart an exciting course for your life, so that when your funeral finally arrives, your family and friends will be able to say, "Here was a person of significance, who lived with integrity, contributed generously to others and made a difference in the world."

Questions?

Got questions about this report? Don't hesitate to contact me at chuck@innovationtools.com.