

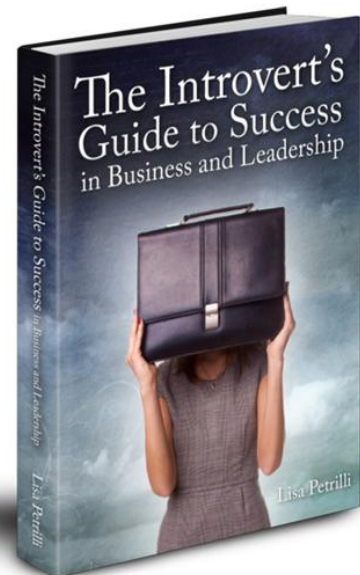


## The introvert's guide to mind mapping software

*By Chuck Frey, The Mind Mapping Software Blog*

As the world of business continues to evolve, introverts have a number of unique advantages that can help them to become very successful leaders. So says leadership expert Lisa Petrilli in her fascinating e-book, [\*The Introvert's Guide to Success in Business and Leadership\*](#).

Introverts get their energy from dealing with ideas, pictures, memories and reactions that are inside their head, in their inner world. It's not that they don't like working with people. Rather, their style of thinking tends to favor deep thinking and introspection. These are the people you want on your team right now, because they will help you to identify opportunities for growth, potential new business models and will think through the implications of business decisions you're thinking about making.



**I suspect that many users of mind mapping software are introverts, because they enjoy exploring ideas and their implications. It enables them to expose their thinking visually, on screen, and manipulate ideas and knowledge to an extraordinary degree.**

At the same time, Petrilli warns that introverts are so focused on deep thinking that they don't; spend as much time as they should cultivating relationships with people who can help them in their careers- or working at making their ideas heard within their organizations. If they focus upon relationship building, they can actually develop really deep connections with a small circle of people. It's only in large groups that they tend to founder.

Introverts tend to listen well; Petrilli counsels the readers of *The Introvert's Guide* to always ask, **“How can I help you?”** to help draw out the other person's needs – and to mark yourself as a unique, valuable individual who truly cares about them.

Petrilli contends that the unique personality traits of the introvert are actually the perfect recipe for effective leadership. That's because they can utilize their deep thinking skills to translate the organization's mission and goals into reality, through persuasive storytelling and their ability to anticipate change.

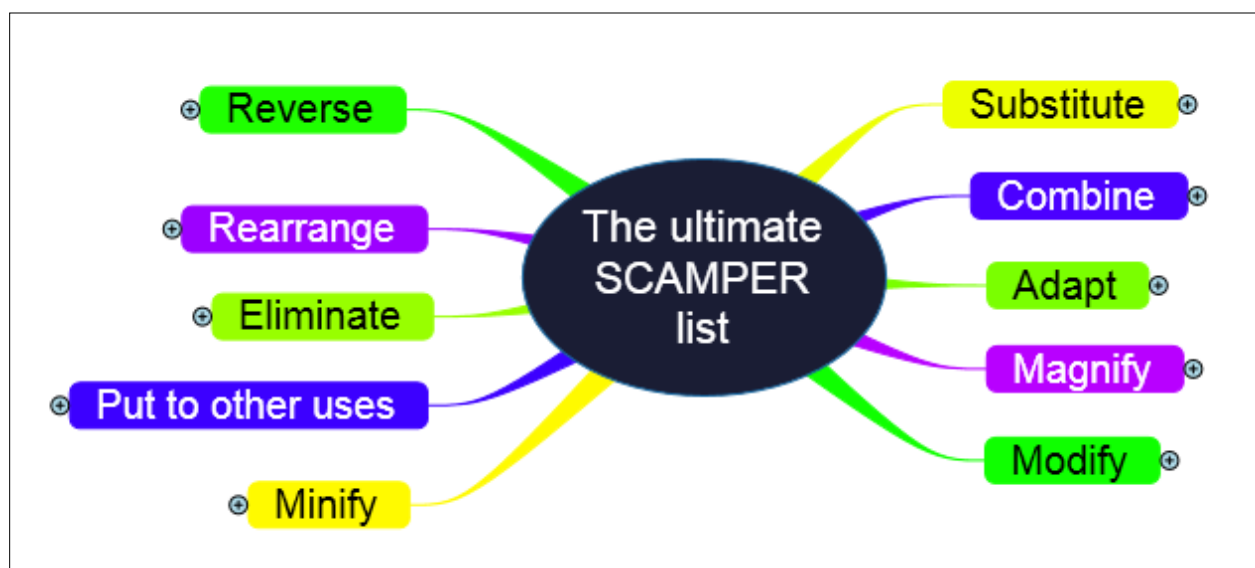
I believe that mind mapping software can help introverts on both sides of the equation:

- **Internally**, within their minds, to develop ideas and plans, and
- **Externally**, to help them manage their relationships and the stories they share with the people who follow them. In addition, it can also be used – sparingly – as a medium to present their ideas.

With this perspective in mind, **here are 9 ways introverts can use mind mapping software to help them manage their thinking and their work more effectively**, based upon the principles Petrilli outlines in the excellent *Introvert's Guide to Business and Leadership*:

### 1. Mind mapping software helps introverts think deeply about new ideas and opportunities

Mind mapping software is an incredibly flexible palette upon which they can write their ideas, explore them in detail, record any questions they must answer, people from whom they must seek additional information and much more. It is a powerful tool for transmuting their ideas into tangible form, where they can be manipulated, expanded upon and evaluated.

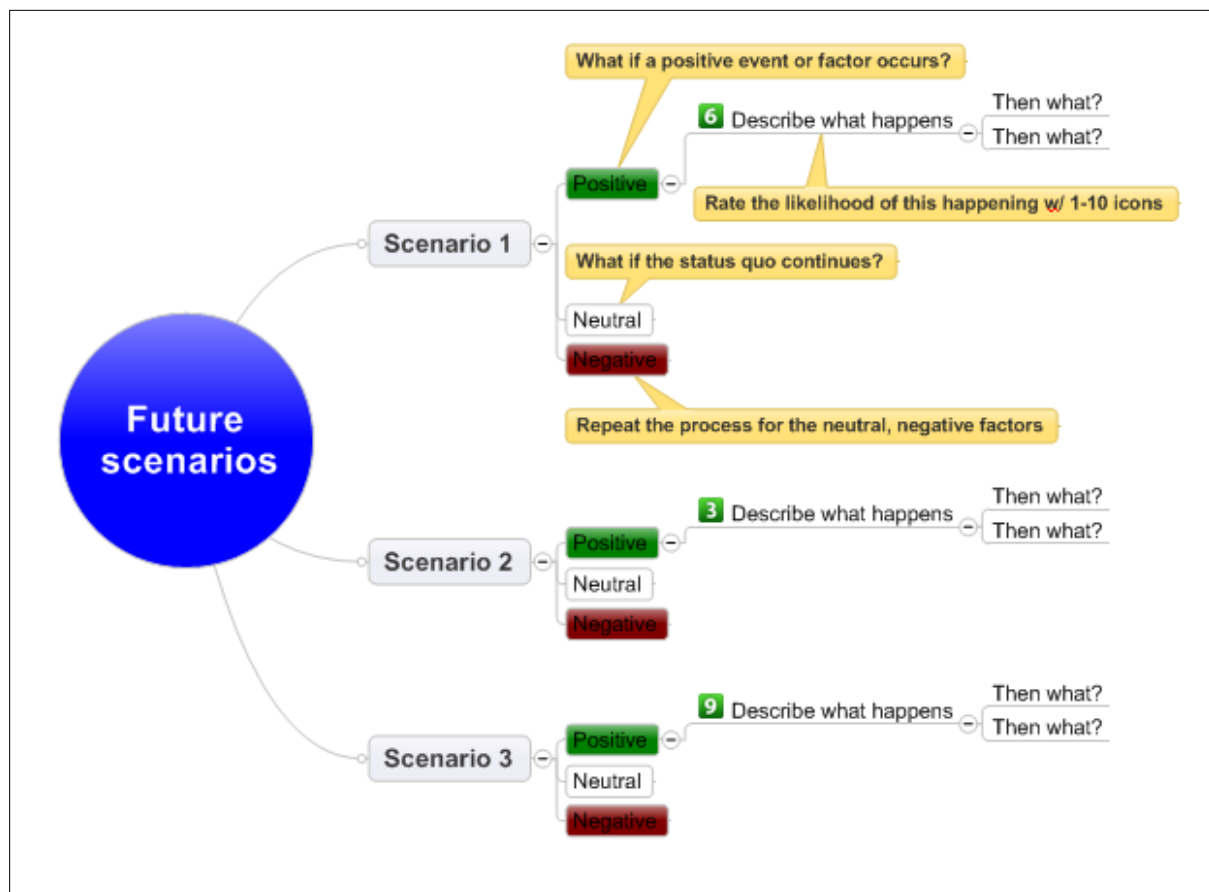


One example of this principle in action is the ultimate SCAMPER map, [which you can access here](#). SCAMPER is one of many powerful brainstorming techniques you can use to generate ideas – which you can then organize and evaluate in the framework of a mind map. It's available for download in 7 different map formats for popular programs. Just make sure you're logged in when you visit this page, so you can see the download links.

## 2. It enables them to think through all of the implications of possible business decisions

Mind mapping software is a powerful tool for developing and working through future scenarios and the implications of multiple decision paths.

Most business decisions today are not black-and-white, yes-or-no, on-or-off. They usually involve a lot of shades of gray – a high percentage of uncertainty and ambiguity. What's an executive to do? The traditional approach of brainstorming and taking notes – either electronically in a Word document or on flipcharts – doesn't help us much, because it's hard to connect the dots and see which potential decisions are most advantageous and which are not. Plus, there's a level of complexity here that just doesn't lend itself to traditional linear analysis.



A mind map enables us to visualize potential future courses of action as “flowing” forth from a central point – where we are now. We can play “what if” and explore the implications of changing conditions – say, for example, if things got significantly worse, or if a positive event suddenly occurred. We can attach notes and files, rate each scenario using numeric icons and show relationships between the elements of our scenario, such as things that will remain the same no matter what the actual future course of the economy is.

[Click here to download an Insider report](#) on using mind mapping software to develop future scenarios.

### 3. Mind mapping software enables introverts to network effectively at conferences, events and within corporations

In her book, Petrilli explains that introverts often get overwhelmed by attending conferences, trade shows and other events – because the number of people whom they don't know is simply overwhelming. The antidote she suggests is taking a targeted approach: Review the list of attendees and presenters prior to the conference, make a list of the people you would most like to meet, and then conduct online research prior to the event to learn as much as you can about their background, interests and the projects they're currently working on. This narrows the field to a more manageable handful of people with whom you can cultivate productive discussions based upon what you've learned about their background and interests.

The same goes for networking within your company. Identify the key executives one or two levels above you or in other divisions whom you would like to meet. Do similar research on them, and then ask them out for a cup of coffee.



In both cases, you can use a mind map to gather and organize information about each of these key contacts, their areas of expertise and experience, questions you'd like to ask of them and how they can help you. [Click here to download my network intelligence mind map report](#), which includes templates you can use to organize your networking efforts.

### 4. Mind mapping software enables them to build strong, one-on-one relationships with key executives

In her book, Petrilli describes how introverts are most comfortable in one-on-one and small group settings. She recommends that you use this tendency to your advantage to develop deep

relationships with your team members (if you are a leader) and other key people in your organization. Make a genuine effort to get to know these people better.

Petrilli emphasizes that cultivating these key relationships has several important functions in your career: First, they provide a valuable advisory function. These trusted individuals can provide critical input on decisions you need to make. They can warn you of any factors you may not have thought about. And they can help you to gather the information and knowledge you need to make better-informed business decisions. They are also great sounding boards for discussing and building support for ideas.

One way a mind map can help you to cultivate these key relationships is to maintain dossiers about each person, including information about them such as:

- The name of their spouse or significant other
- Names and ages of children
- What they like to do for fun outside of work
- Any hobbies or special interests they may have
- Any volunteer work they do
- Any recent significant events in their lives (travel, landmark birthday, purchase of a house, birth of a child, etc.)
- Other relevant information

This isn't meant to sound cold and clinical, like you're a government agent, gathering intelligence on a bad guy. For most of us, our brains are so full of ideas, to-dos and plans that it's hard to remember this type of mundane information. We hear it, but we don't retain it. Why not capture it, so you can ask intelligent, caring questions about your key contacts and their lives (the parts they have chosen to reveal to you)?

## **5. Mind mapping software enables them to make their ideas more visible within the organization**

One of the areas where introverts are challenged in organizations is making their ideas visible to higher management. Many corporate cultures abhor new ideas in favor of the status quo, so selling your ideas within your organization is almost always challenging, even for extroverts!

Selling your ideas forces introverts to step out of their comfort zones. They may have to present their ideas to larger groups of important people, and their ideas will inevitably be subjected to deep questioning and criticism. Your ideas may be threatening to certain people, because what you're proposing may affect their operational areas. Your ideas may pose resource allocation

issues – a big factor in our current economic malaise (How can you fund a new initiative when the company is barely surviving now? Should we fund new growth or invest in our cash cows?).

### **Mind mapping software can help introverts in two key areas:**

1. **Organizing your thinking and anticipating potential objections:** In this scenario, you would create a mind map that lays out the key issues that your idea addresses, why it should be implemented now, who would implement it, investment and staffing required and how the company will benefit from your idea. You then present your thinking using conventional means (verbally, with or without a PowerPoint deck).
2. **Use it as the presentation medium:** In this scenario, you not only use your software to organize your thinking, you present it in this medium. This is potentially more risky, because some executives may feel uncomfortable viewing information in a non-linear format. But it may be worth the risk, because it will bring a “wow” factor to your ideas and will differentiate you as someone who is a savvy strategic thinker and planner.

### **Mind mapping software helps introverts organize for frequent communication with local and remote teams, via blogs and other media**

Leaders must be excellent communicators. They must also be persuasive – not in the sense of a high-powered salesman who is manipulating a prospect, but someone who has the interests of his or her people at heart, and is trying to inspire and motivate them. To be an effective leader, you must communicate frequently and with great clarity. Petrilli views this as one of the key strengths of the introvert:

*“Visionaries are only truly great leaders when they are able to clearly communicate their vision to their followers in a way that inspires and motivates. You have a unique ability to do this. Spend time in your role thinking about the root purpose of it. Develop a clear vision of what it will look like when you are successful in your purpose, and create clear strategies to bring that vision to life.*

*“Then spend time thinking about how you can help others see the very same picture you see when you think about your vision. Maybe pictures or sound will help. Don’t be afraid to get creative!”*

A mind map can help you to ensure that your messaging is consistent over time, and that it is aligned with your organization’s mission and goals. It can help you to organize your communication – whether you’re doing so in a speech, a small group meeting, a blog post on

the company intranet or a column for the company newsletter – and help you to ensure that it is clear, inspiring and persuasive.

## **7. Mind mapping software can help introverts to define, refine and live out a bigger purpose that inspires others and positions them well for leadership**

Many executives are so busy doing day-to-day work that they seldom step back to think about what their larger purpose in life and their job is, or what their goals should be. Mind mapping software is a powerful tool that can help you to drill down from your major life roles to your key goals within each role, and from there to specific action steps that you need to accomplish in order to reach those goals. It's also an excellent tool for stepping back from the palette of your life to determine if your life roles are well-balanced.

As deep thinkers, introverts have a keen sense of who they are and how they contribute to the organization. This gives them a distinct advantage, because it empowers them and helps them to cultivate a mindset that is ideally suited to leadership.

[Click here to read a special report](#) where I describe how to create your own roles and goals mind map.

## **8. Mind mapping software helps introverts organize and practice their stories for job interviews, either within their current organization or other external opportunities**

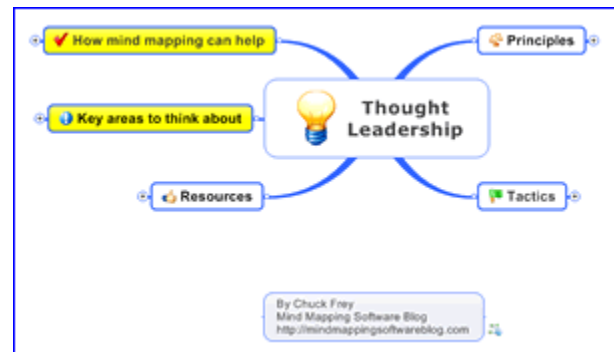
Effective leaders (and those who want to become leaders) are great story tellers. Not people who can tell jokes or richly imagined tales, but stories that can inspire and motivate others to support our position, cause or objectives. When you communicate facts and information in writing or verbally, people's eyes will often glaze over. It's just more "stuff," streaming at them, with little context to help them understand why they should care. But transform this information into a story, and people pay attention. Our brains are wired to prefer stories.

*"As an introvert, this is where your ability to lead from within you becomes your Herculean strength. You are naturally energized by your vision and by your illuminating ideas for bringing it to life. Additionally, because introverts are so comfortable with the world of ideas and images, they make great storytellers. When you tap into your extroversion to communicate your vision and ideas, you will be fueled by your inner energy for them. And stories will help you take your employees on an emotional journey with you to understand and embrace your vision," Petrilli explains.*

As you would expect, mind mapping software offers a flexible palette upon which you can define, refine and grow the stories you will use as a leader.

## 9. Mind mapping software helps introverts cultivate thought leadership, both internally and externally

Thought leadership is all about thinking differently – about having a distinct vision about your organization, your customers, your industry or profession and the forces that are shaping it. You need to communicate a unique perspective – and I'm convinced that mind mapping is a powerful tool that can help you to develop a deep, well-thought out position on issues that matter to the people you're trying to influence.



Mind mapping software is a powerful, flexible canvas for exploring your thinking and recording, manipulating, distilling and converting your insights into reports, blog posts, presentations and other forms of content. No other type of productivity software gives you this level of flexibility and creativity. That's why it's an excellent tool for introverts to cultivate thought leadership.

### Conclusion

If you haven't already figured this out, I'm a big fan of Lisa Petrilli's [Introvert's Guide to Business and Leadership](#). No matter what your persuasion – introvert or extrovert – it contains valuable insights into effective leadership that you can benefit from. I highly recommend that you download it to your Kindle (it's only US\$10) and give it a thorough read. Make some notes. Decide how to apply what you've learned. This is important stuff that could have a big impact on your career and your leadership abilities.

## Questions?

Please contact Chuck Frey at [chuck@innovationtools.com](mailto:chuck@innovationtools.com).

Please [visit the Mind Mapping Software Blog](#) for all of the latest news, trends and resources related to visual mapping.

You can also [follow Chuck Frey on Twitter](#) for even more insights and ideas.