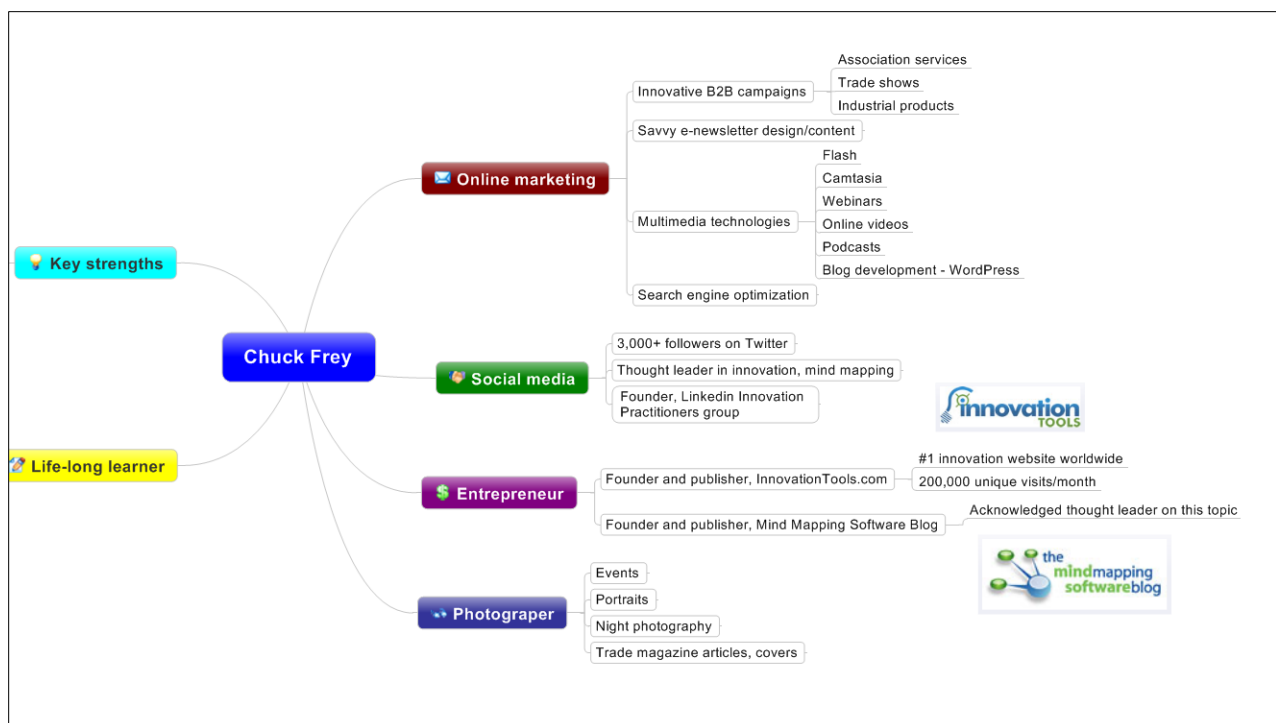




How to create a profile mind map

In 2010, I conducted a fascinating interview with Jamie Nast, the author of the excellent book, *Idea Mapping*, in which the topic of discussion was something called a profile mind map – a visual resume, in part, but something even more valuable. You see, a profile mind map doesn't just mindlessly translate the main points of your CV into visual form. Rather, it gives the savvy job seeker an opportunity to tell other aspects of their story in a compelling way – to highlight intangibles that don't fit nearly as well into the highly linear resume format.

In this report, we'll take a closer look at why you should consider creating a profile mind map, and we'll explore some aspects of how to create one – including the types of information you can include in one, some great examples to inspire you and some critically important things to keep in mind when you build your own visual CV. We'll also look beyond mind mapping!



What is a profile mind map?

One of the major challenges faced by every job seeker is differentiating yourself – making your experience and unique qualities stand out to the organization that is looking to hire someone. A typical resume or CV is highly structured, black-and-white and – let's call it what it is – boring! A profile mind map tells your story visually, in a highly engaging, whole-brained fashion that incorporates words and images. Most importantly, it gets attention and sends the prospective employer a very important message about the way in which you think, organize information and solve problems.



A profile mind map can be nothing more than a visual version of your resume, with your education, job history and other relevant information grouped into appropriate topics and subtopics. But where it really stands out is when you go beyond your experience and work history, to highlight the aspects of who you are that make you truly unique – **your key strengths, ancillary experiences and the themes of your work life that you want your prospective employer to take notice of.**

The benefits of a profile mind map

Consider your resume from the perspective of a human resources manager in a large company, who has the assignment of filling a manager's position. He or she places an ad for the position in the local newspaper, and the resumes start to arrive. Within a week, there's a large pile of them – perhaps 100 or more. Sad but true, but in today's global recession, many people are desperate to find a job, or to move to a better job opportunity. So they're applying for any opening, regardless of the degree of fit. This makes it harder for you to stand out!

How does a hiring manager sort through them and narrow this big pile of CVs down to a manageable small group of candidates? First of all, they look for people with relevant experience.

Next, they look for what's different – what makes people stand out. That's where the profile mind map literally **commands attention**. Ideally, it is both colorful and informative, and sets you apart from the horde of job seekers. It promotes your “unique selling proposition” in a compelling way that hopefully makes the hiring manager think, “I've got to learn more about this person – they seem to be really interesting!”

Perhaps the biggest benefit of the profile mind map is that it implies something very positive about the way in which you think and approach projects – from a more systemic point of view. It implies something about your ability to be an effective thinker and problem solver – critical skills in today's increasingly whole-brained world, where, as author Dan Pink points out, organizations are seeking people who can not only handle the basic tasks of the job, but also bring a certain creative magic to it as well.

Ideas are the currency of the 21st century. If you can show that you're adept at creating, organizing and presenting them, that's very attractive to a prospective. The profile mind map is the perfect format to do a little “show and tell” – the medium IS the message!

What can you include in a profile mind map?

You can include many of the elements of a traditional resume, such as your job history, education and continuing education. But you can also include the following types of unique information that will help to tell your story in a highly visual way:

- Links to relevant articles you've written about your profession or industry in a blog, industry or professional journal or other website.
- A summary of your unique strengths – tailored, of course, to the job opening
- The general “themes” of your background and experience. This will require you to take a step back to look at your higher education, job history and extracurricular activities and to ask yourself, “What do these have in common?”
- An attractive image of yourself, especially if it communicates vibrancy and professionalism
- Logos of the companies for which you have worked
- A summary of courses, conferences and other continuing education in which you have invested. This shows that you're a life-long learner, committed to growing intellectually and keeping up with the latest information in your profession or industry.

- Any relevant avocations. For example, my background is in public relations and online marketing. My avocation as a semi-professional photographer is very relevant to many of the positions for which I may be applying.
- Any state, provincial or local certifications or licenses you have (if you're a financial planner, for example) – which documents where you're authorized to do business
- Awards you have received
- “Soft skills,” such as team-building, conflict resolution, building and maintaining client relationships or leadership abilities
- Volunteer work, especially if you have taken on leadership roles, such as the chairperson or vice-chair of a group.
- Professional references, including their names, job titles, phone numbers and e-mail addresses
- Links to your online presence – especially valuable if you write a blog that does a good job of commenting on and educating others about your industry or profession. If you can demonstrate that you're a thought leader, by all means do so in your profile map!

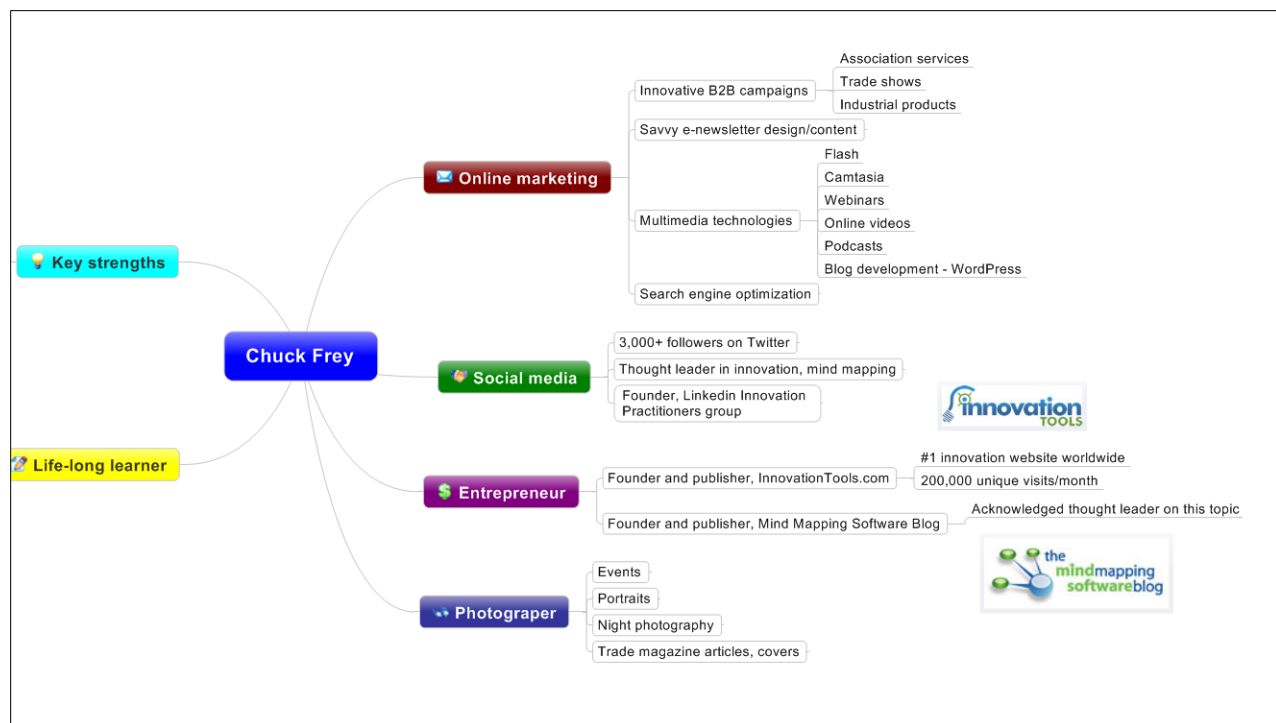
How to build your profile mind map

1. Start by doing a “brain dump” of all of your relevant work history and experience. At this early stage, don't be too concerned about structure. Just record it in a mind map, creating first-level topics for the major themes of your CV – education, work history, key strengths, certifications, continuing education, etc.
2. Walk away from your mind map for a few days. Don't think about it. Meanwhile, it will continue to percolate in your subconscious mind.
3. Return to it a few days later, and think about it from a higher-level perspective. How can it be better organized? Move topics and subtopics around until it makes sense. Ideally, the information in your map should have a logical “flow” to it that is intuitive and easy to follow. Like any other well-designed mind map, it should “help” the person viewing it, in terms of what should I look at first? What's next?
4. Think about: What other information should you include that would do an excellent job of selling you to a prospective employer? What is relevant to the type of position for which you're applying? Add these items to your mind map.

5. Gather images to support your visual story. Images and color are what will transform your mind map into a compelling story. Without them, all you have is a resume that is presented in a slightly different format. What kinds of images should you include in your profile map? The logos of the companies for which you have worked, a dynamic, high-quality image of you or appropriate stock photos that reinforce your profile mind map's main message. I use [iStockPhoto](#) extensively to find images to use with my blog posts; it's affordable and contains thousands of business-related images and illustrations. A small image, appropriate for use in a profile mind map, costs an average of US\$2.00 to \$5.00. Add them to your mind map, then size them and adjust their placement to meet your needs.
6. Think about ways in which you can draw attention to the most important elements of your profile mind map. For example, you could use a boundary with a light-colored background to draw attention to one key topic and its subtopics.
7. When you think you're "done" with your profile mind map, send it to several people whose opinions you trust, who aren't afraid to give you constructive criticism and ask them to review it – preferably people who aren't avid mind mappers. Ask them, "Does this diagram do a clear and cohesive job of telling my story? Is it easy to understand? If not, where is it confusing?" Your goal is to refine your profile map so that it makes sense to a hiring manager or any other left-brained, linear-thinking manager.

A brief look at my profile mind map

I've been working on my profile mind map during the last month or so. It's still a work in progress, but I wanted to bring several things to your attention, to help inspire you as you work on yours:



Life-long learner: This yellow topic on the left side of the map draws attention to one of my favorite qualities that is quite relevant to prospective employers in today's world of accelerating change and innovation. I'm committed to "pushing" myself to learn new things, via books, conferences and extensive reading online.

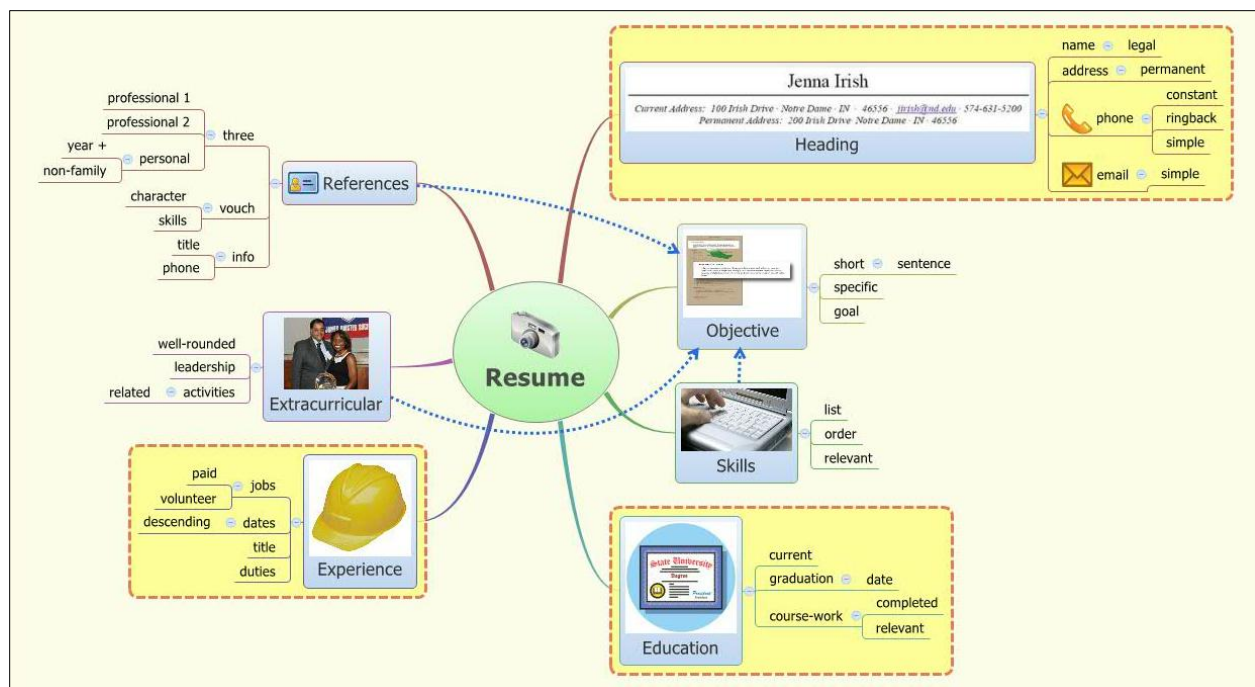
Key strengths: The light blue topic above "life-long learner" is one that you should seriously consider incorporating into your profile map. It does a marvelous job of summarizing who you are in just a few words. It's your opportunity to frame the major "themes" of your career in a way that enables prospective employers to quickly understand who you are and why you're potentially a good fit with their needs.

Entrepreneur: I live two lives. I am employed full-time as a marketing manager with a small safety training firm. But in my spare time, I run two very successful websites that are thought leaders in their niches. I have framed these under the topic of "entrepreneur," to draw attention to the fact that I have talents as a builder of businesses. My entrepreneurial mindset, which I have used to grow my online business, is a major benefit to anyone who may want to hire me for a full-time position. Many employers today are hungry for people who are creative, who can effectively solve problems and see new opportunities. So I have decided to make this one of the main themes of my profile map.

Online marketing: I've done a lot in this area over the years, both for my full-time jobs and for my two websites. This topic cuts across my 30+ years of work experience and draws together a concise visual summary of the types of online marketing I've done in my career.

Other examples of profile mind maps

Here are several more examples of profile mind maps/visual resumes, which may inspire you as you create yours. In each case, I've added some notes to share with you what I think is most notable about each one.



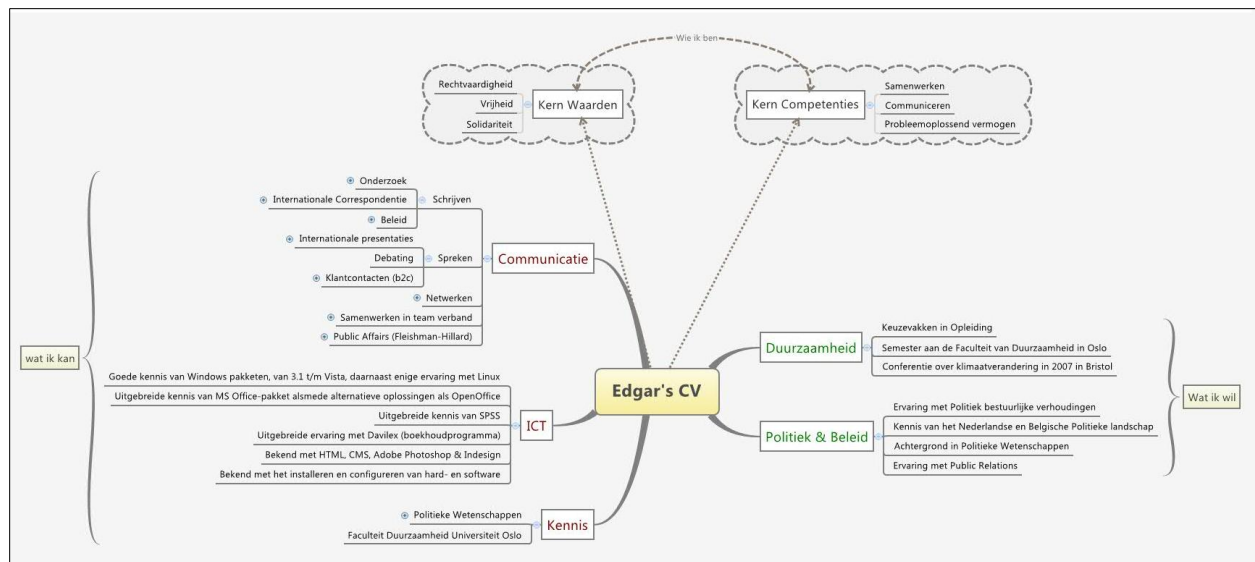
I love the way this mind map utilizes images and color to make it very visually interesting. Note the “objective” topic, which can be customized for each job opportunity. The “skills” topic is another valuable one, because it can be used to provide a concise summary of your unique set of skills and experience. As the relationship line implies, your skills ought to be very closely related to your objectives.

Also worthy of your attention is the topic enclosed in the rectangular border in the upper right corner of the mind map. This is where the job seeker’s contact information goes. If this was my mind map, I would place this information in a floating topic at the bottom right or left corner of

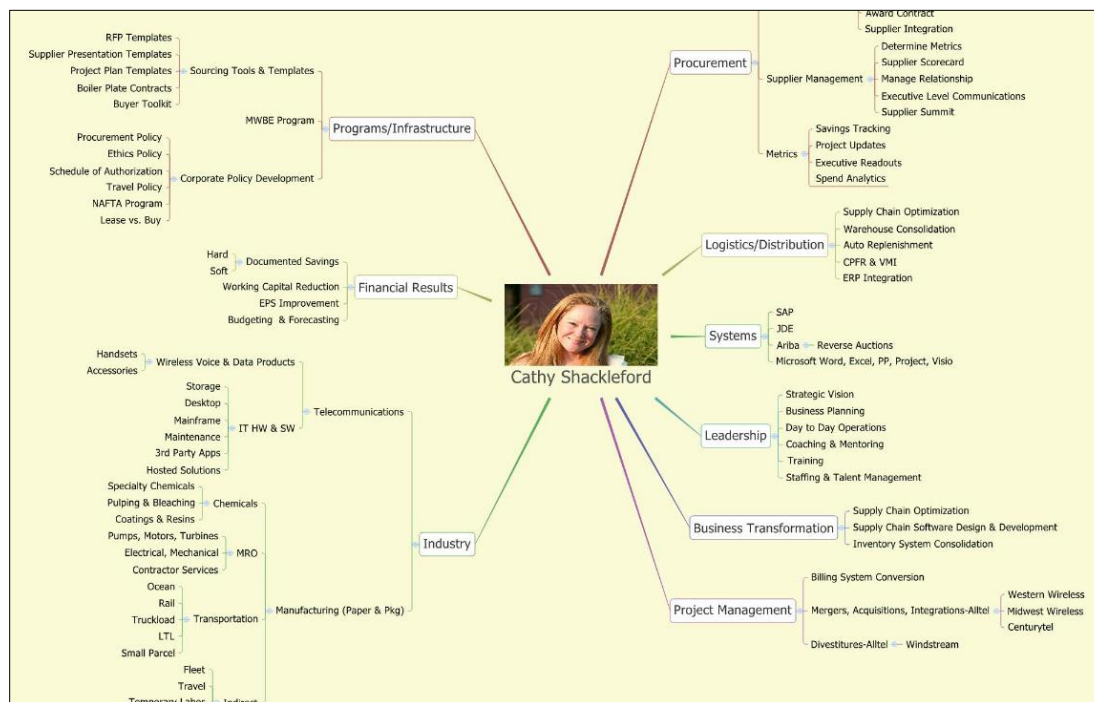
the mind map. In its present position, it's too dominant. Sell your skills and experience first. Your contact information should be a supporting element, not a main one. A final point: Your conventional resume may get separated from your profile map – so it makes a lot of sense to include your contact information in this visual summary. That way, a prospective employer always knows how to contact you.

Finally, I'm not quite sure what the relationship lines between the extracurricular, objective and skills topics are supposed to signify. If it's unclear, eliminate it from your mind map. If a hiring manager can't understand or interpret the major points of your mind map in 30 seconds, you've wasted your time and theirs.

Otherwise, this is an excellent profile mind map!



This mind map, “Edgar’s CV,” isn’t as colorful as the first example, but is nonetheless attractive and well organized. I like the use of brackets at the far right and left sides of the map, which presumably add more meaning and context to the topics to which they point. Also, this map author uses boundaries sparingly, to add a visual highlight to two key topics at the top center. Since we tend to read documents top to bottom and left to right, this is a great place to put the most important information in the mind map.

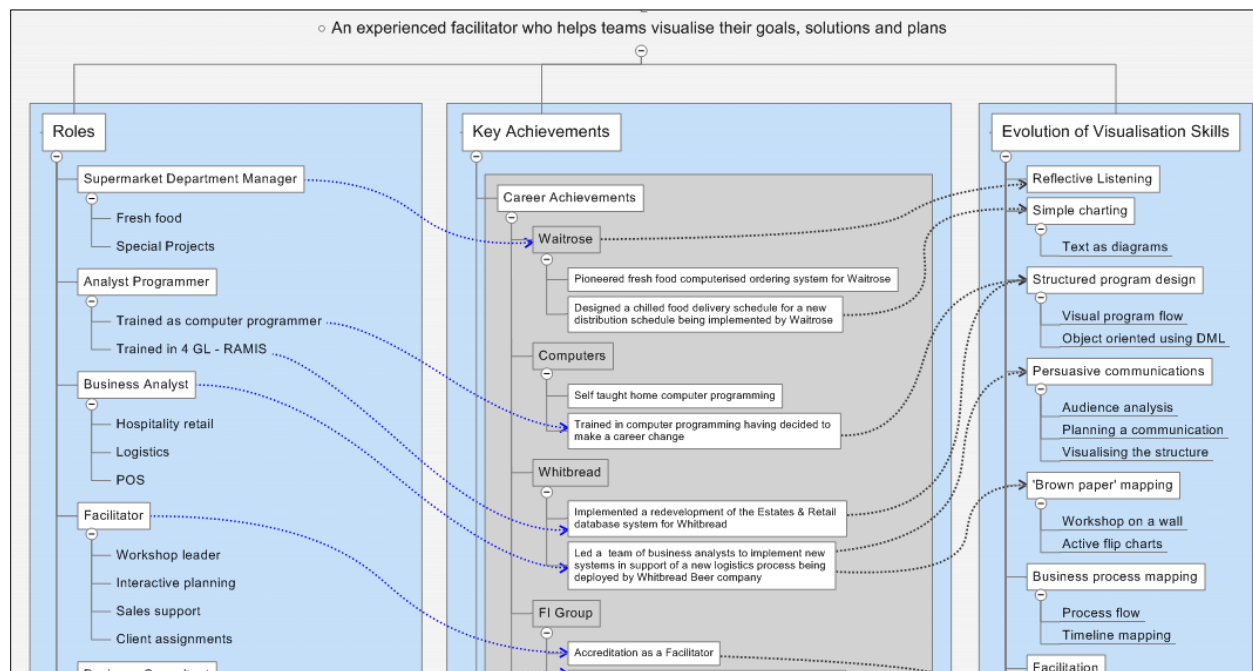


This is an attractive mind map, which focuses on Cindy's key strengths – such as procurement, leadership, business transformation and project management. Also note the “industry” topic in the lower left corner of this map, which drills the reader down through the industries she has worked in, the functional areas in which she was deployed at the types of technologies and projects she worked on. Very effective!

Some things to keep in mind

More is not necessarily better: Your profile mind map should be a visual summary of who you are as a job candidate, not an exhaustive compilation of everything you've ever done and every minute skill you've ever developed.

The mind map on the following page is a case in point:



This is only about half of this person's CV, which appeared several years ago on the Mindjet Blog. There is such a wealth of information here, with so many relationship lines, that I'm a bit concerned that the average hiring manager's eyes will glaze over when they look at it (sorry, but that's just my highly subjective opinion – it isn't meant to be a criticism of the map's author). A project manager or other highly technical person may look at this mind map and say, "Wow! Very cool!" and immediately "get" it. My point is that you must be mindful of your target audience, and their comfort level with visual, non-linear information like mind maps. When dealing with conventional thinkers, simpler maps are better.

Does your profile map pass the 30-second test? If you're trying to use a profile mind map to help you get an interview and, ideally, get hired, then remember that your resume, visual or not, has an average lifespan of approximately 30 seconds to one minute. Your mind map must communicate a concise, compelling message within that time frame. I don't believe this mind map meets that criterion. It's a very good, very comprehensive mind map and its author obviously has a prodigious collection of talents. But what is this mind map trying to "sell me" or convince me of? Frankly, I'm not sure.

The bottom line is that you must keep in mind the core message of your profile mind map. What do you want a manager to take away from viewing your profile map in a minute or less? Tweak your mind map until it passes this test.

Profile mind maps are not just for job seekers: Profile maps aren't just for job seekers.

Jamie Nast's husband, who is a financial planner, created one because he wanted a concise way to answer his clients' recurring questions about where he is licensed and certified to sell certain financial products. Another excellent example is utilizing a profile mind map in an advertising or other service agency to provide a new client with a visual outline of the team who will be working on their projects. This visual approach can help set the tone for the relationship by positioning your firm in their minds as creative thinkers and problem solvers.

Think about the bigger picture: Ultimately, your resume and profile map have one job – to get you in the door for a job interview. I urge you to strongly consider using a mind map to help you prepare for your job interviews. Map potential questions and your answers, grouped by categories such as “technical skills,” “project management skills,” “leadership capabilities,” “problem-solving skills,” and so forth. Populate your interview map with a list of the most common questions in those categories, and add some brief notes and keywords for the answers. Then use your interview map as a tool to rehearse for your next interview. One final step: Look at the topics that are in your interview mind map with an eye toward pulling any relevant items into your profile mind map. But be careful: Don't get carried away with adding too much detail in your profile map, which must function as a concise sales tool for you.

For best results, send prospective employers a resume and your profile mind map: In my interview with Jamie Nast, I discussed the issue of what to send to a prospective employer. In other words, if you send only the profile map, don't you risk turning off a hiring manager who may be a linear thinker, who may think that visually representing information in this way is frivolous? Yes, she agreed – it's a significant risk. As visual thinking has become more popular in the last few years, mind maps have lost some of their stigma. But there are still some die-hards in many businesses who just don't like them. Never will. That means for best results, you should probably send both a conventional resume and your profile mind map in response to any job openings and to executives with whom you'd like to network.

Use your profile map as a networking tool: As you network with your peers and with companies in your profession or industry, your profile mind map can be an excellent conversation starter. Don't be afraid to attach it to e-mails to people with whom you'd like to

network. But be sure it's relevant. It's the "story of you" – why not use it to tell colleagues about who you are and why they should stay in contact with you? It can be a fantastic conversation starter!

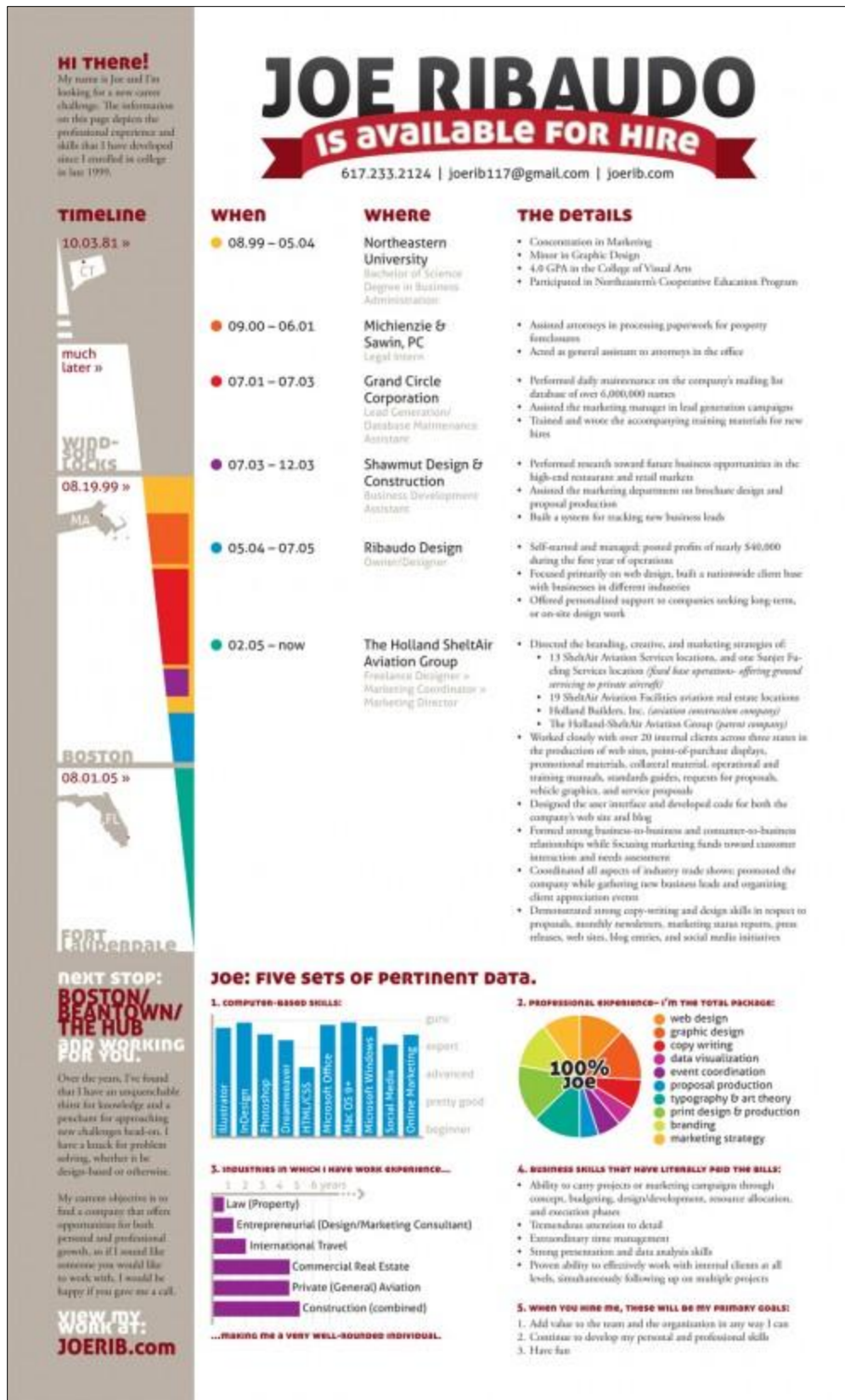
How will you share your profile mind map? If you're planning to send out resumes and profile maps to prospective employers or executives with whom you're networking, then it makes sense to output your profile map as a PDF file. It's compact and convenient. But it's not your only option. If you operate a blog or other website, you may want to export your mind map as an image file, with links to your web properties embedded in it, and then post it to your blog. Those links will be clickable, enabling prospective employers to click through to read your blog and any other online ruminations.

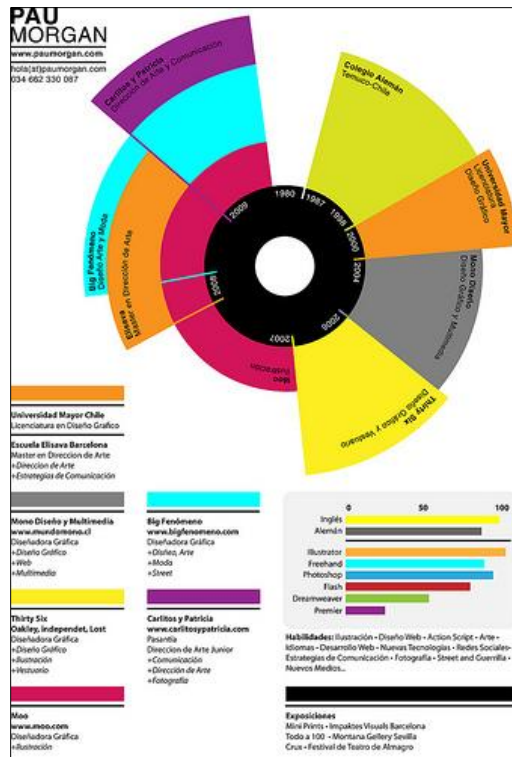
Beyond mind maps

As you've probably already figured out, mind maps are not the only visual format you can utilize to present your skills and experience visually. While conducting research for this report, I stumbled across a fantastic website called [VizualResume](#) that is devoted to compiling and sharing resumes that are formatted in unique and creative ways. There are some amazing designs here, including the examples at right and on the next several pages.

VizualResumes also offers a number of infographic resume templates, which you can download as Adobe Illustrator files. Clearly, this site is designed with graphic artists in mind, but you may find some inspiring ideas here that you may be able to adapt to your needs – like I did!







Amazing, aren't they? The message is clear: There are many ways to grab the attention of a prospective employer. Your resume or CV does NOT have to be boring and monochromatic!

Conclusion

As Jamie Nast pointed out in my interview with her, “the sky’s the limit” in terms of what you can include in your profile mind map. In other words, it’s only limited by your imagination and what you’re trying to “sell” about yourself. Have fun creating your own profile mind map!

Questions?

Please contact Chuck Frey at 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.

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