

Mind Mapping Software Trends Survey

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Executive summary

The nature of work has evolved during the last five years—becoming more complex, fast-paced and creative—and mind mapping software is uniquely positioned to help knowledge workers handle these changes. That’s the unmistakable message from this year’s Mind Mapping Software Trends survey.

During July 2011, 695 people took part in the latest survey from the Mind Mapping Software Blog, which was designed to determine:

- The benefits that mind mapping software provides to business users of it,
- The nature of work and how it is changing,
- How well mind mapping software meets the needs of knowledge workers today, and
- To what extent people are adopting mind mapping tools on mobile and tablet-sized platforms.

As with past surveys for this blog, this year’s Trends survey yielded some surprising results.

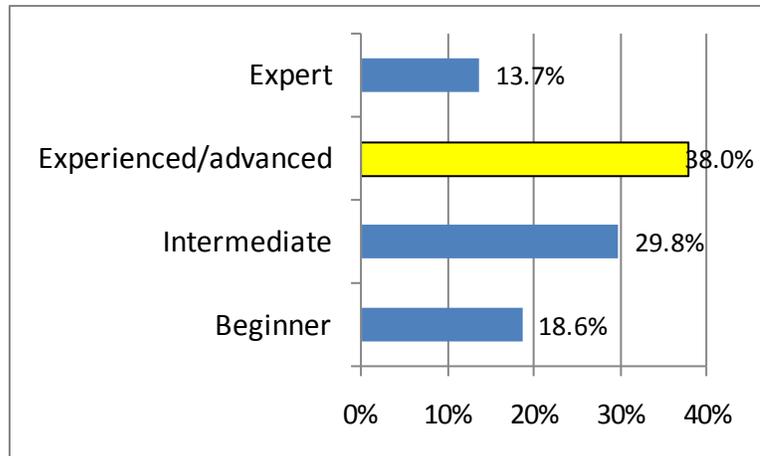
Here are several highlights:

- The majority of respondents said that their mind mapping software has helped them to increase their productivity by 30%.
- Nearly half of respondents (46.8%) said that mind mapping software has had a “significant effect” on the way in which they work.
- Over one-third of respondents (35.8%) said that their mind mapping software helps them to manage information overload “to a big extent.”
- Most surprisingly, over 59% of respondents indicated they would not be able to create the same quality of work if they didn’t have mind mapping software!

Demographics

1. What is your level of experience with mind mapping software?

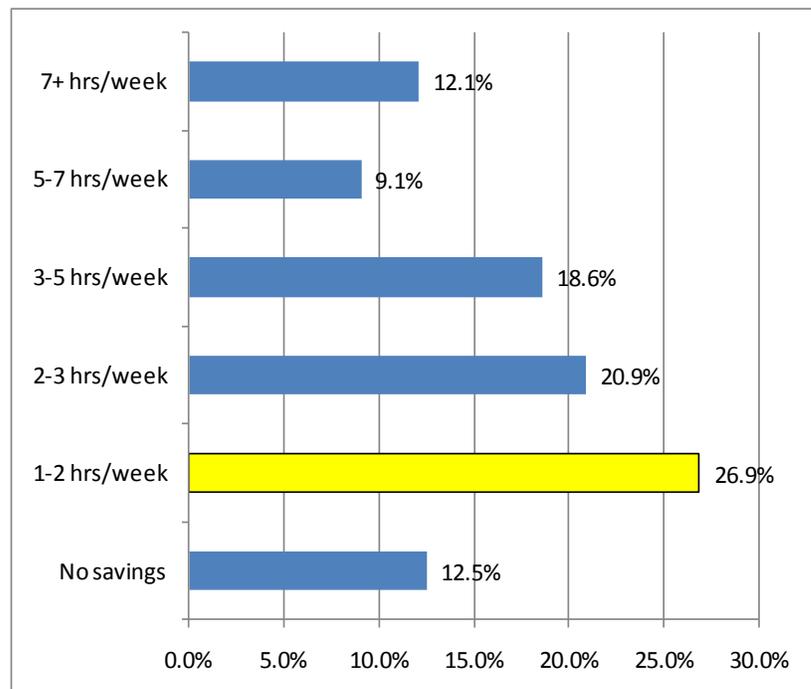
The respondents to this survey were heavily weighted toward experienced or advanced users of mind mapping software. Just over one-third (38%) described themselves in this way. Just under one-third (18.6%) described themselves as beginners.



Productivity

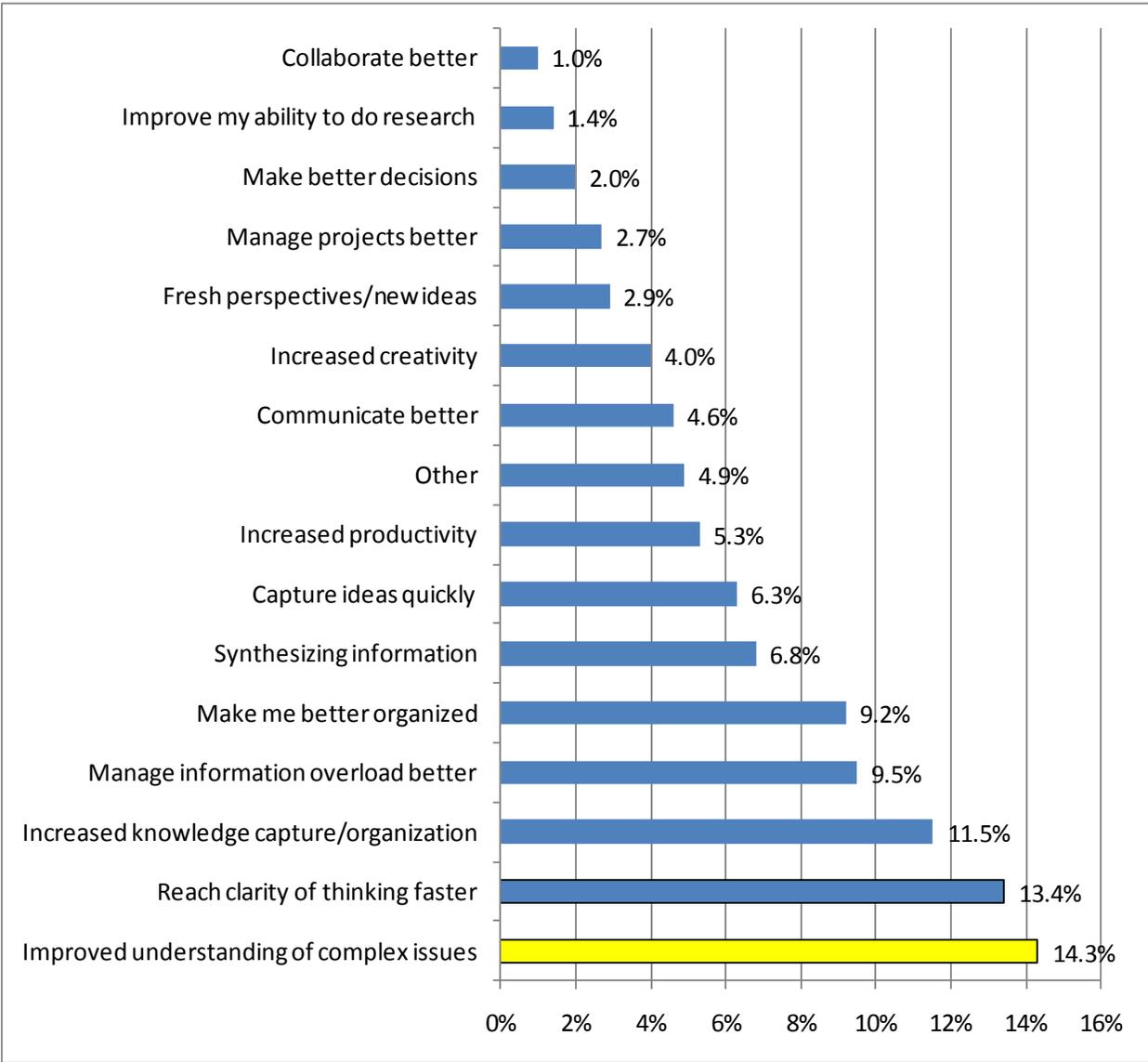
2. Approximately how much time per week does your mind mapping software save you?

Surprisingly, the largest percentage of survey respondents (26.9%) said that their mind mapping software only saves them 1-2 hours per week. This seems to fly in the face of their answers to question 4, where the largest group of respondents said that this type of productivity software gives them a 30% increase in productivity. Assuming a 40-hour work week, that would be the equivalent of gaining another 12-13 hours per week.



Perhaps the question wasn't completely clear, or it was hard for respondents to accurately estimate how many hours of work per week they are able to save by using mind mapping software.

3. What is the single biggest benefit you've experienced from using mind mapping software?



In past surveys, “clarity of thinking” was the top benefit cited by users of mind mapping software. This year, however, respondents declared a new top benefit: “Improved understanding of complex issues” (14.3%). This seems to be a sign of the times: Those of us still working are being called upon to do our own work plus that of our laid-off co-workers. Overall, the pace of business appears to be increasing, as does the complexity of the work we must perform (as we’ll see in your answers to some of the other questions in this survey).

Other top responses included (in descending order of popularity):

- Reach clarity of thinking faster (13.4%)
- Increased knowledge capture and organization (11.5%)
- Manage information overload better (9.5%)
- Make me better organized (9.2%)
- Synthesizing information (6.8%)

The significant spread of responses over the lengthy list of benefits in this question gives us a great picture of the diverse uses respondents have for their mind mapping software, and the corresponding benefits they experience from it.

Respondents had the opportunity to submit comments in response to this question. Here are some of the more interesting ones:

“I think the biggest benefit for me is just puts better structure into everything I do - writing reports; creating presentations; clarifying thoughts; creating better process; making meetings more productive.”

“(Mind mapping software is) the best way to translate ideas to others.”

“(It) clarifies my thinking by seeing all the information on 1 page – (a) Gestalt (view of it).”

“(It) stretch(es) my thinking beyond the initial thoughts, ideas and topics that are easily accessible.”

“You can't simply a complex application to a single benefit. It is actually a combination of the above depending on the problem that is being addressed. In some cases, it helps me define the project; other times, it helps me research a complex topic with multiple subtopics and links; other times it helps me view tasks and group them for increased efficiencies.”

“It helps enhance (the) speed and quality of outputs and outcomes.”

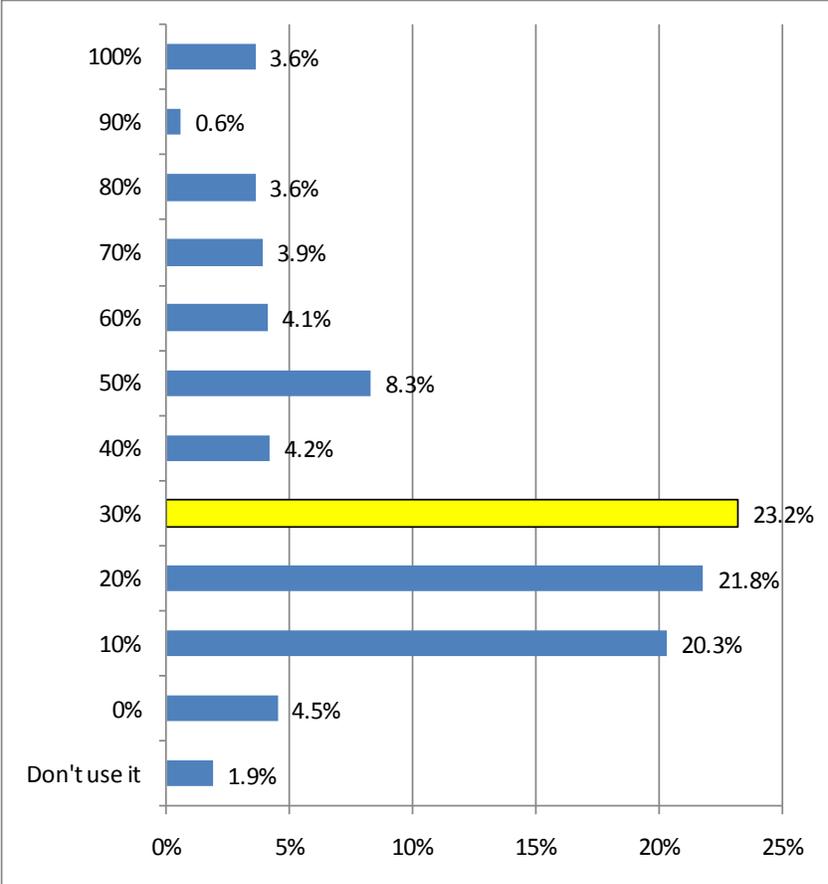
I especially like the comment about stretching your thinking. People have a tendency to stop with the first few dozen ideas they come up with. But that is the mental equivalent of the “low-hanging fruit” – they tend to be low-value ideas that may be fairly good, but if you invest more

time brainstorming and getting this initial batch of ideas out of your head and into a mind map, you'll make room for ideas that are potentially much more elegant and valuable. Based upon what this survey respondent is saying, then, mind mapping software plays an invaluable role in capturing the initial "brain dump" – as well as the breakthrough ideas that may follow.

4. How much of an overall productivity increase have you experienced from mind mapping software?

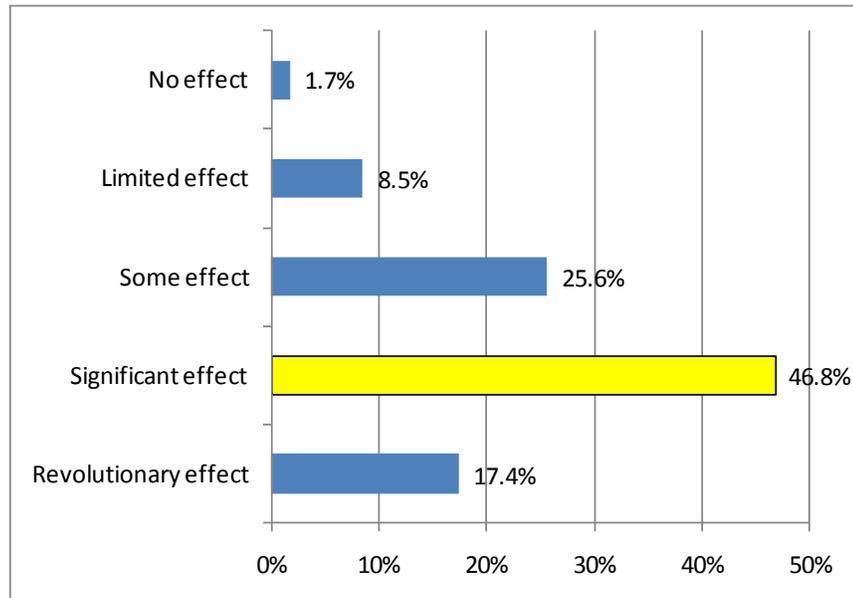
In past mind mapping software user surveys, respondents have said it increases their productivity by an average of 20%. In this year's survey, almost one-fourth of you (23.2%) said it increases your productivity by 30%. That's an increase of 10%. Considering the large quantity of experienced users, this isn't surprising. Experienced users of any type of software will tend to be more productive with it.

Another one-quarter of you (24.1%) said that mind mapping software increases your productivity by an astounding 50% or more (this was calculated by totaling the responses for the range of 50-100%).



5. To what extent has mind mapping software changed the overall way in which your work?

One of my main goals for this survey was to learn whether or not mind mapping software is just another tool in your arsenal, or if it has truly had an impact on the way in which you work. I'm happy to say that your responses told me overwhelmingly that it does provide a major impact to your work.



Close to half of the respondents to this survey (46.8%) said that mind mapping has had a “significant effect” on the way in which they work. Another 17% said it has had a “revolutionary” effect – very impressive!

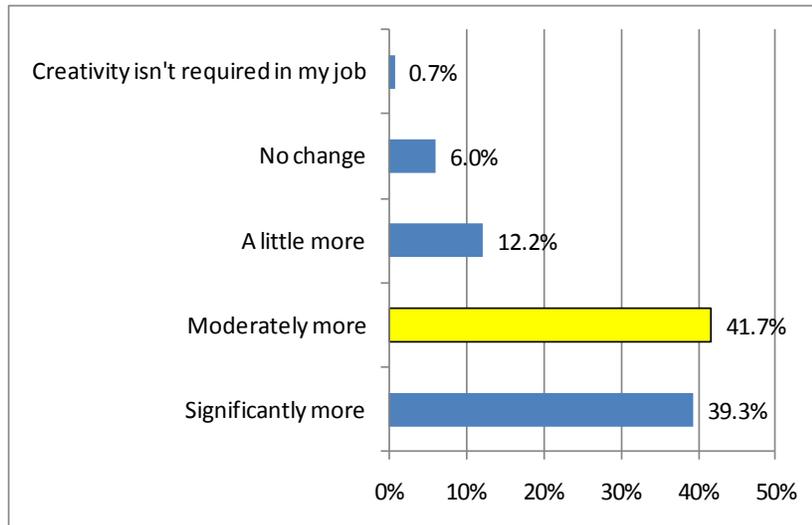
The changing nature of work

One of the burning issues that was on my mind as I prepared the questions for this survey is the nature of work, and how (if at all) it has changed. My gut feeling is that a revolution is taking place, and the global recession has accelerated the pace of it. So I decided to include several questions in this survey that would help us to frame the benefits of mind mapping software in terms of the work to which it's being applied.

In presenting these findings, I will first show you the responses to each of the work evolution questions. I will then combine some of the most compelling elements into a single chart that will help you to get a better sense of the scope and significance of these changes.

6. How has the level of creativity expected in your work changed in the last 5 years?

According to just over 40% survey respondents, the amount of creativity required in their jobs has increased “moderately” in the past half-decade. Nearly as many people (39.3%) said “significantly more” creativity is required of them today.

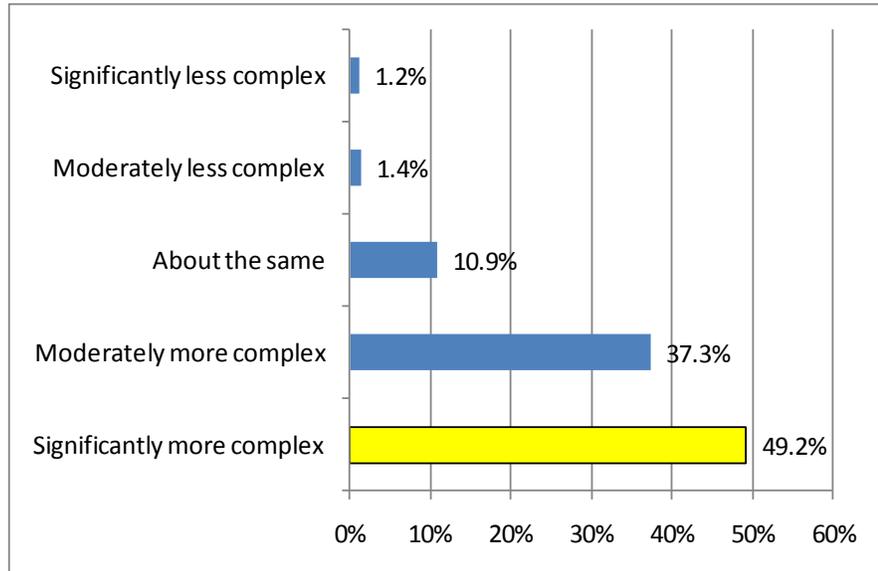


These findings are consistent with what I've been hearing lately – that creativity is no longer the exclusive province of secretive off-site “skunk works” teams or corporate R&D departments. As the world begins to slowly crawl out of a record recession, business leaders everywhere are desperate for their rank-and-file workers to contribute ideas to help them to jump-start growth. In addition, many companies are now adopting enterprise idea management tools and open innovation strategies, making them much more open to new ideas from non-traditional sources – whether they come from inside or outside the organization.

Significantly, less than 1% of respondents said that “creativity isn't required in my job.” In short, every job today contains some creative elements. Companies today are about as lean and re-engineered as they can possibly be. That leaves innovation as one of the few remaining levers that companies can move to drive future growth. Faced with the prospect that their competitors could get the jump on them, many companies are finally getting serious about innovation and creativity!

7. How has the level of COMPLEXITY of your work changed in the last 5 years?

The level of complexity of knowledge work appears to be increasing, according to the respondents of this survey. Nearly half of you (49.2%) said that your work has become “significantly more complex.” Another one-third (37.3%) said it has become “moderately more complex.”



Most business is now global in nature. In addition, as the pace of technology continues to accelerate, it’s harder for one company to have all of the expertise it needs within its four walls. That means organizations are increasingly seeking outside partners to help them innovate. These relationships also increase complexity. The respondents of this survey are simply feeling the effects of these changes.

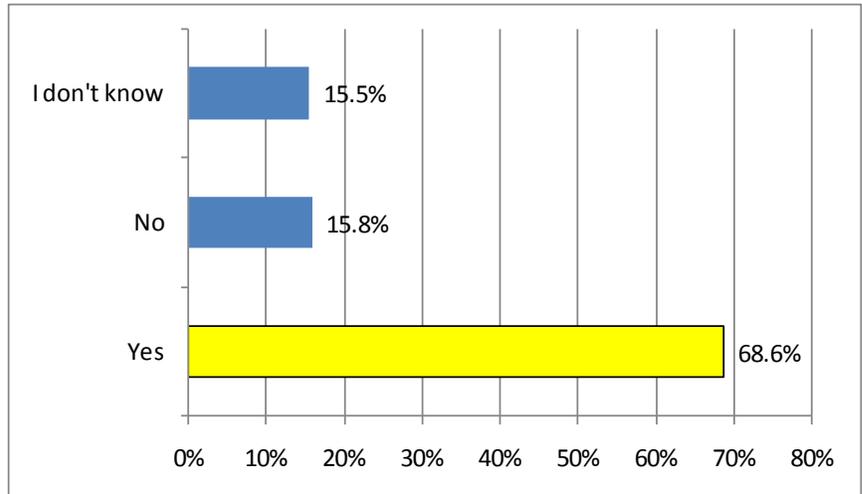
8. Does your mind mapping software enable you to tackle more complex tasks and projects that you would have previously avoided?

This question arose out of interviews I did with several very smart people during the last year, as part of the Mind Mapping Insider membership program. During the last year, both of these people told me – independently of each other – they believe that mind mapping software emboldens many of its users to take on complex challenges and projects that they would have previously avoided. They just didn’t have a tool that was up to the task.

But mind mapping software changed all that. It enables you to consider more pieces of information at one time and to take a systems-level view of challenges and situations and reach clarity on how to handle them faster.

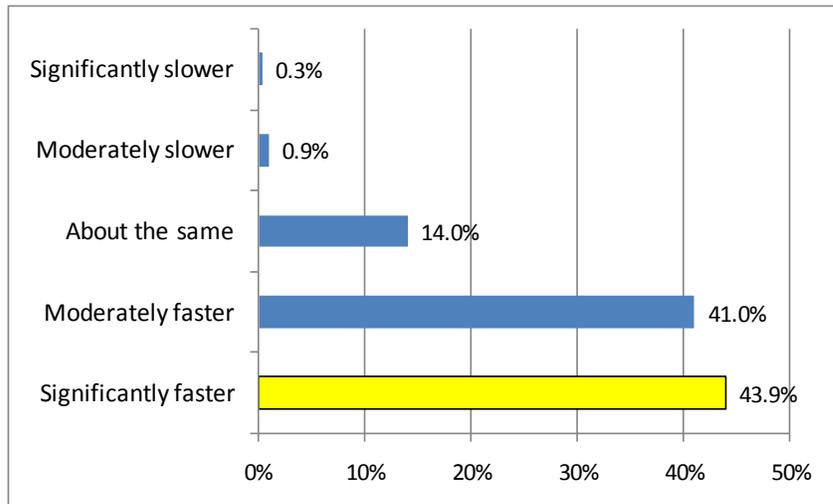
Almost 70% of respondents responded positively to this

question, which is conclusive evidence of the power of mind mapping software to empower and embolden its users to meet today's challenges head-on.



9. How has the PACE of your work environment changed in the last 5 years?

Part of the evolution of the workplace during the past 5 years is an acceleration of the pace of work. This trend was validated by the results of this question: Nearly half of you (43.9%) said that the pace of business today is “significantly faster” than it was a half-decade ago. Another 41% indicated that the pace of their work environment is “moderately faster.”

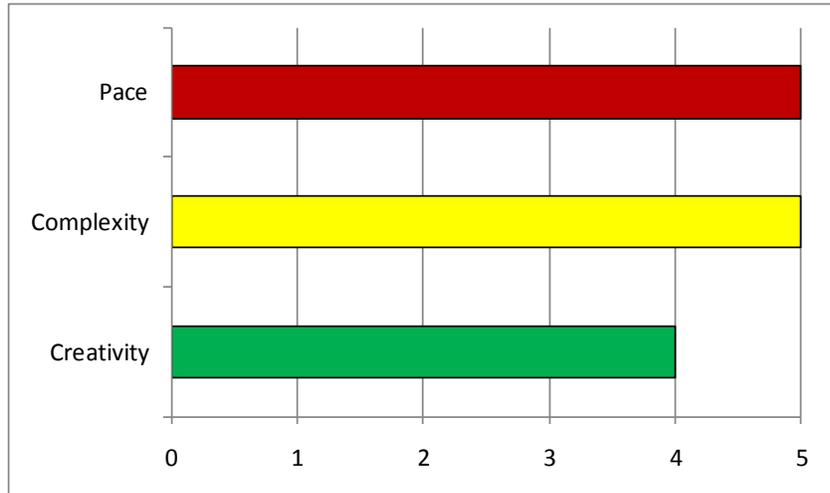


Consolidated results

To see the cumulative effect of the changes in the workplace, it's instructive to lay the trends of work pace, complexity and creativity side-by-side.

All three survey questions were in the format of 5 possible answers, representing a scale of 1 to 5

– where 1 is the least and 5 is the greatest impact. So, for example, in the questions about work complexity and pace, the majority of respondents said that their work was “significantly more complex” and “significantly faster” – the highest possible answers for this question. That means they would be rated a 5 on our scale. Creativity, on the other hand, was rated as “moderately more creative” – the second highest possible rating, which equates to a 4. Using this scale to lay these three trends side by side, we see the bar chart above right.

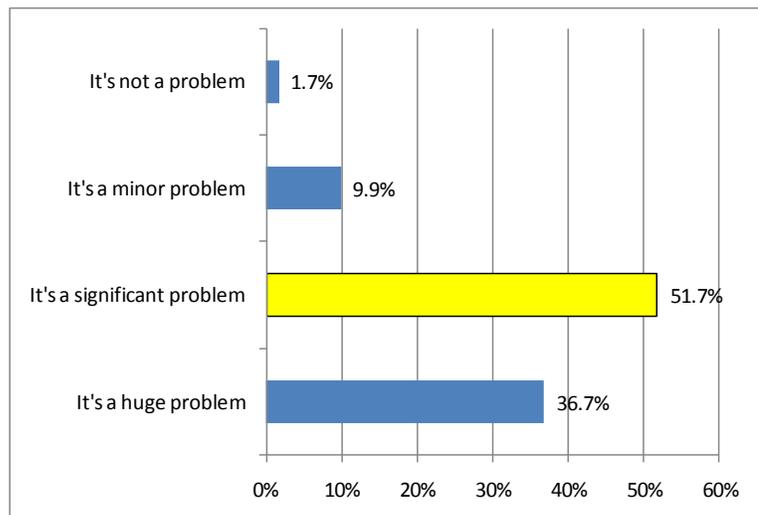


According to your responses to this survey, your workplace is experiencing the compound effects of these trends. It's a good thing you have mind mapping software to meet these challenges.

Managing Your Work Effectively

10. To what extent is information overload a challenge in your job?

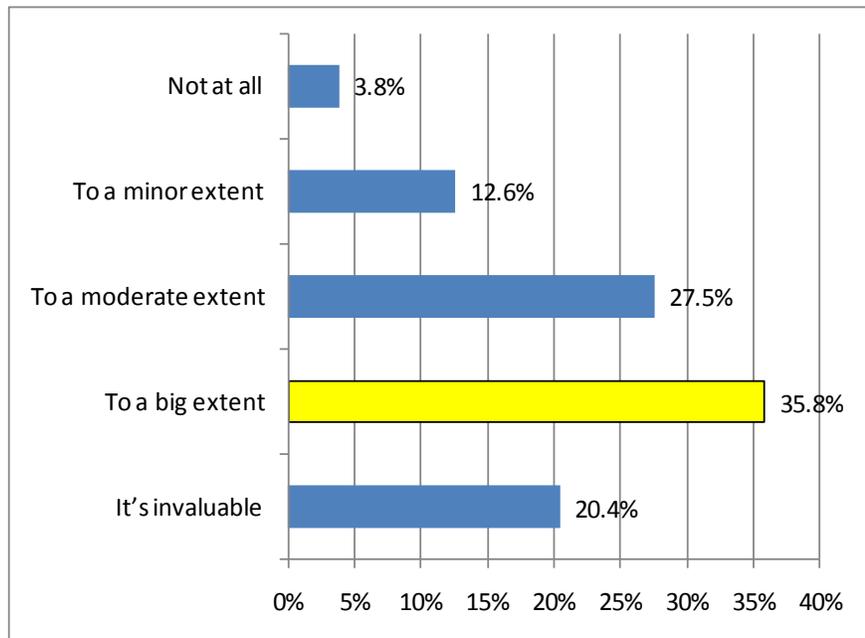
Information overload is widely cited as one of the biggest challenges facing today's knowledge workers. This is not surprising, because so much work is digital in nature today. Plus, many companies have gone through downsizings during the recession, which means the



workloads of the surviving people has increased as the responsibilities of their departed colleagues have been reassigned to them. Finally, the increasing complexity of work cited by respondents in question number 7 is undoubtedly another contributing factor. The majority of respondents (51.7%) believe that information overload is “a significant problem.” Another one-third (36.7%) characterize it as “a huge problem.”

11. To what extent does mind mapping software help you to manage information overload?

Mind mapping software is a very effective tool for helping you to tackle the problem of information overload. That’s what your responses to this survey question said: Just over one-third of you believe it has helped “to a big extent.” Another 20% believe it’s an “invaluable” tool, while another 27% said it only helped “to a moderate extent.”



Clearly, mind mapping software is not a panacea for information overload, but it is a tool that helps today’s knowledge workers to manage the ongoing torrent of incoming information, effectively analyzing, distilling and transforming it into useful insights.

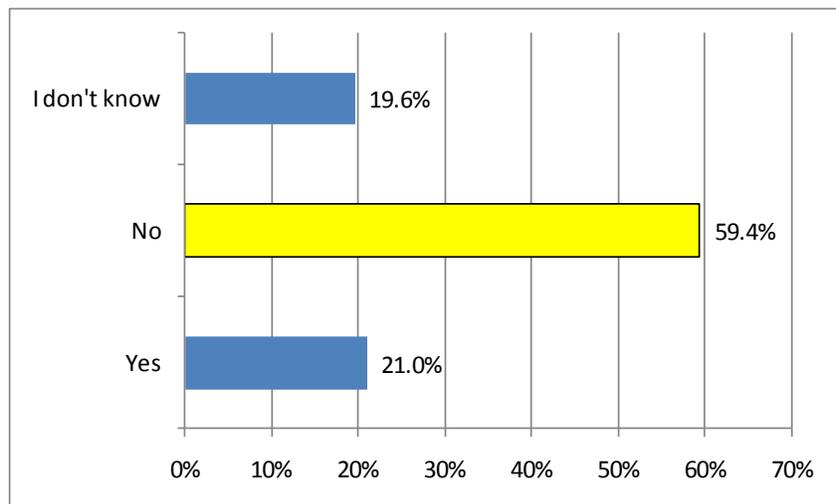
12. If you didn't have mind mapping software, would you be able to produce the same quality of work?

This is another question that arose out of my Mind Mapping Insider interviews during the last year. I was told by one expert that he would not be able to produce the same quality of work if he didn’t have this powerful productivity tool. This revelation kept bouncing around in my head all year. What kind of software would anyone say this about? I can’t ever remember anyone

telling me “Microsoft Word is an indispensable tool. I couldn’t live without it.” Or, “Excel is a real life-saver.” Seriously...

But I have heard these kinds of statements about mind mapping software. Users of it tend to get rather passionate, because it’s one of those rare pieces of software that does make a significant difference in the lives of its users. I’m not trying to overstate it or imply that its users are wild-eyed zealots who run around evangelizing it to anyone who will listen. At a practical level, mind mapping software appears to be the right tool for the times – a powerful, flexible platform for making ideas and plans visible, and enabling you to manage and create great results.

So when I posed this question to the respondents of the survey, I didn’t want to focus on whether or not users of mind mapping software could live with it or not. Rather, it enables you to produce work output. So it made sense to focus on the quality of that output. Simple, pragmatic – and ultimately,

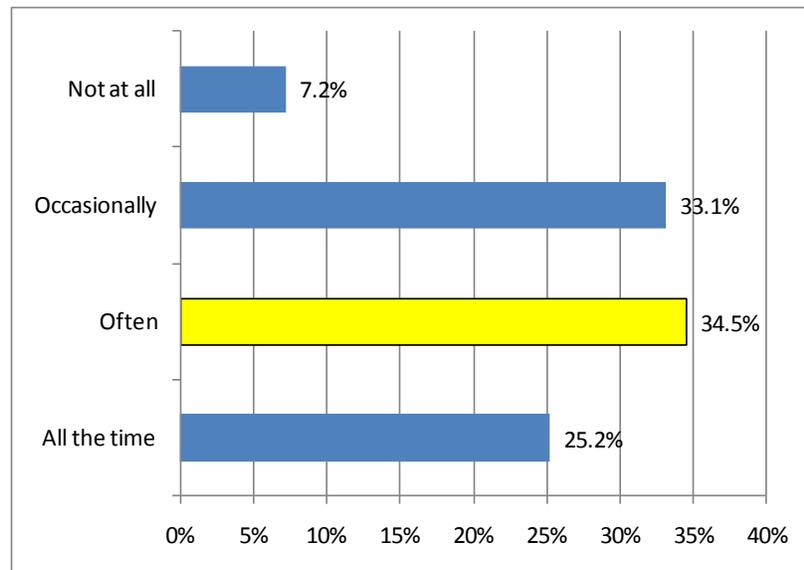


what you care about. After all, why would you use a software program that doesn’t enable you to work more productively and produce higher-quality results?

Not surprisingly, almost two-thirds of you (59.6%) said you would not be able to produce the same quality of work if you didn’t have this type of software in your arsenal. That’s quite significant!

13. How frequently do you use your mind mapping software for light-weight project management?

Project management is frequently touted as a common application of mind mapping software. Armed with task management and simple project management tools (Gantt views, for example), higher-end mind mapping programs are quite useful for handling small to medium-sized projects, without having to resort to complex, dedicated PM tools like Microsoft Project.



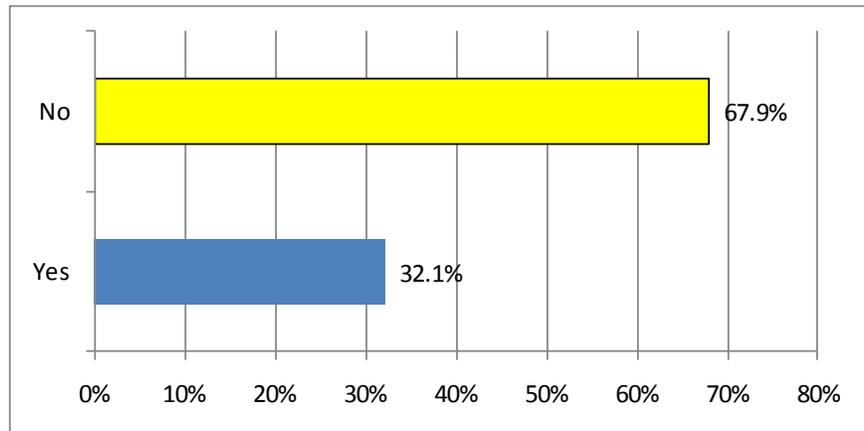
But what was unclear is just how much you are actually utilizing your software in this role. Just over one-third of you (34.5%) said you “often” use your mind mapping software for light-weight project management; another third (33.1%) use it “occasionally.” And almost another third (25.2%) utilize it in this role “all the time.” So this appears to be a diverse group of respondents. Not all of us are tasked with managing projects. But for those who are, mind mapping software appears to be a tool of choice.

Mobile Mind Mapping Trends

One of the fastest growing segments of the world of visual thinking is mind mapping on mobile platforms, such as smart phones and tablets. Because of the meteoric success of Apple’s iPhone and iPad, it has become a popular platform for developers to create mind mapping “apps” to run on them. But how many of you are actually using them today, or are planning to do so in the near future? That’s what this final section of the survey aims to find out.

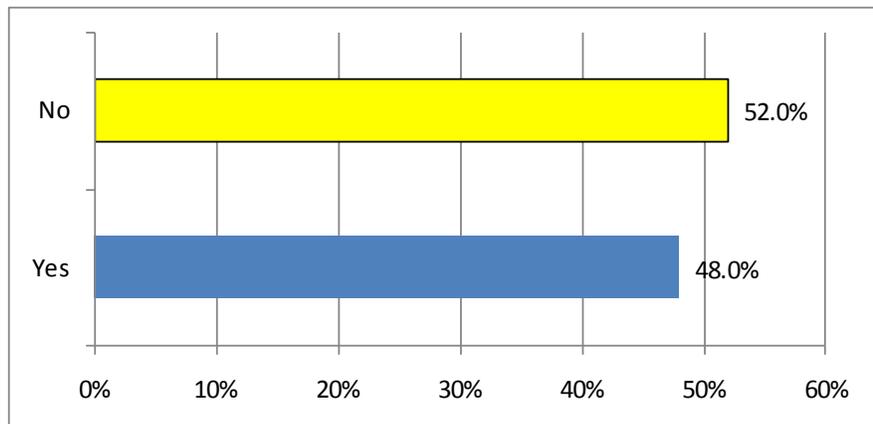
14. Are you currently using any mind mapping apps on a smart phone?

Not surprisingly, over two-thirds of you (67.9%) aren't using any of these apps yet. They're still fairly new, and perhaps some of you aren't convinced that you can mind map effectively on such a diminutive screen.



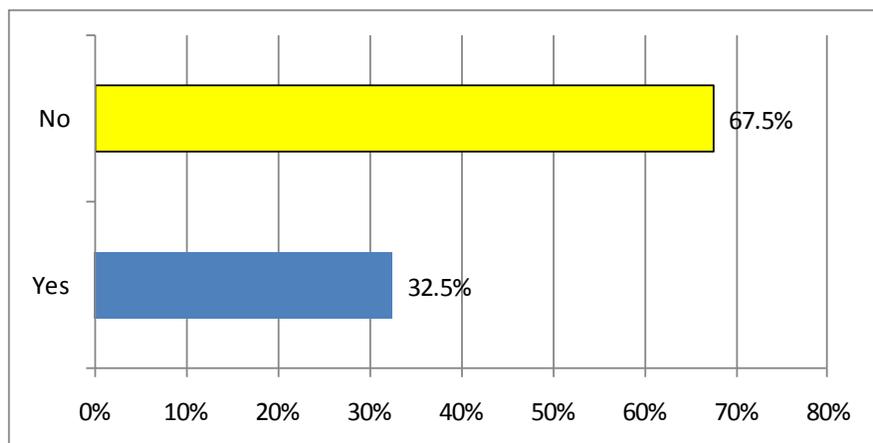
15. If not, is this something you plan to explore in the next 12 months?

Responses to this question were almost equally split, with 52% stating they would not be exploring this technology in the next 12 months, while the other 48% said they would be checking it out.



16. Are you currently using any mind mapping apps on a tablet device?

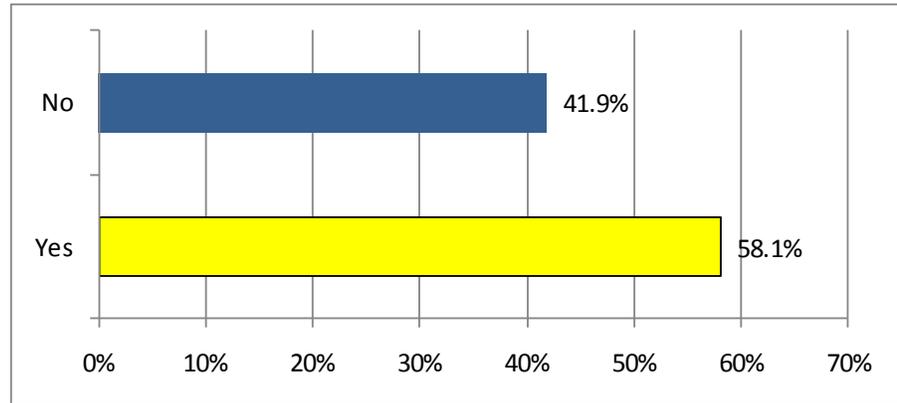
The responses for this question are within less than 1% of the responses for the smart phone question. Over two-thirds of respondents (67.5%) say they're not currently using mind mapping apps on a tablet-sized



computing device (iPad or similar). This isn't too surprising, because many people have smart phones today, but not that many have invested in tablets yet.

17. If not, is this something you plan to explore in the next 12 months?

Over half (58.1%) of those who answered “no” to the previous question said that they do plan to explore mind mapping on the tablet form factor within the next year. This is very encouraging,



considering that tablets are an awesome platform for mind mapping. Their screen is significantly larger than a smart phone, and the tactile interface makes mind mapping on them a pleasure.

Questions?

Please contact:

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