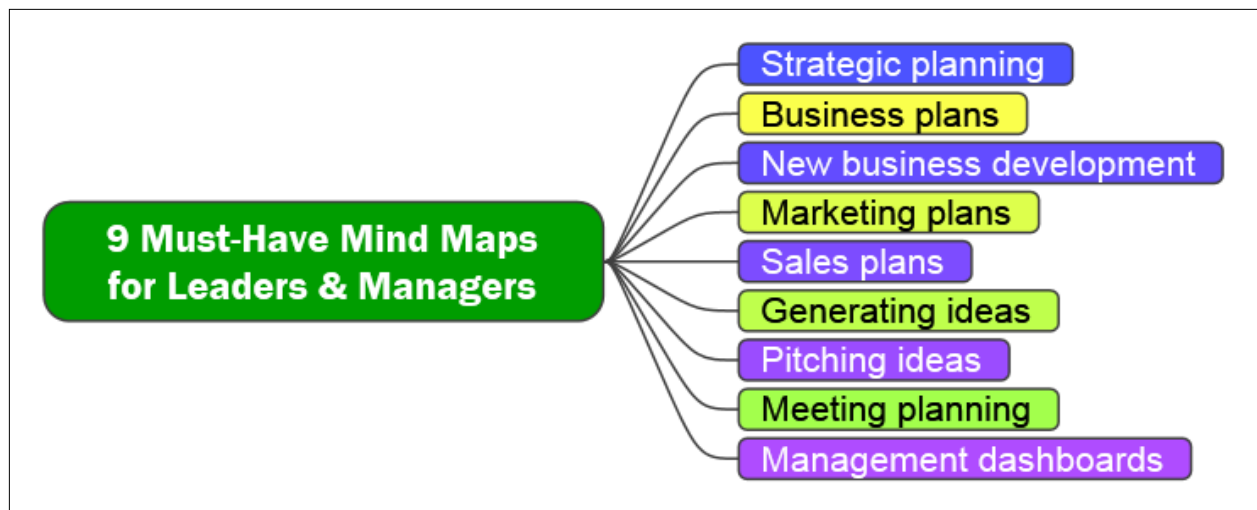


MUST-HAVE MIND MAPS FOR LEADERS & MANAGERS

9 Common Types of Mind Maps Managers & Leaders Ought to Use

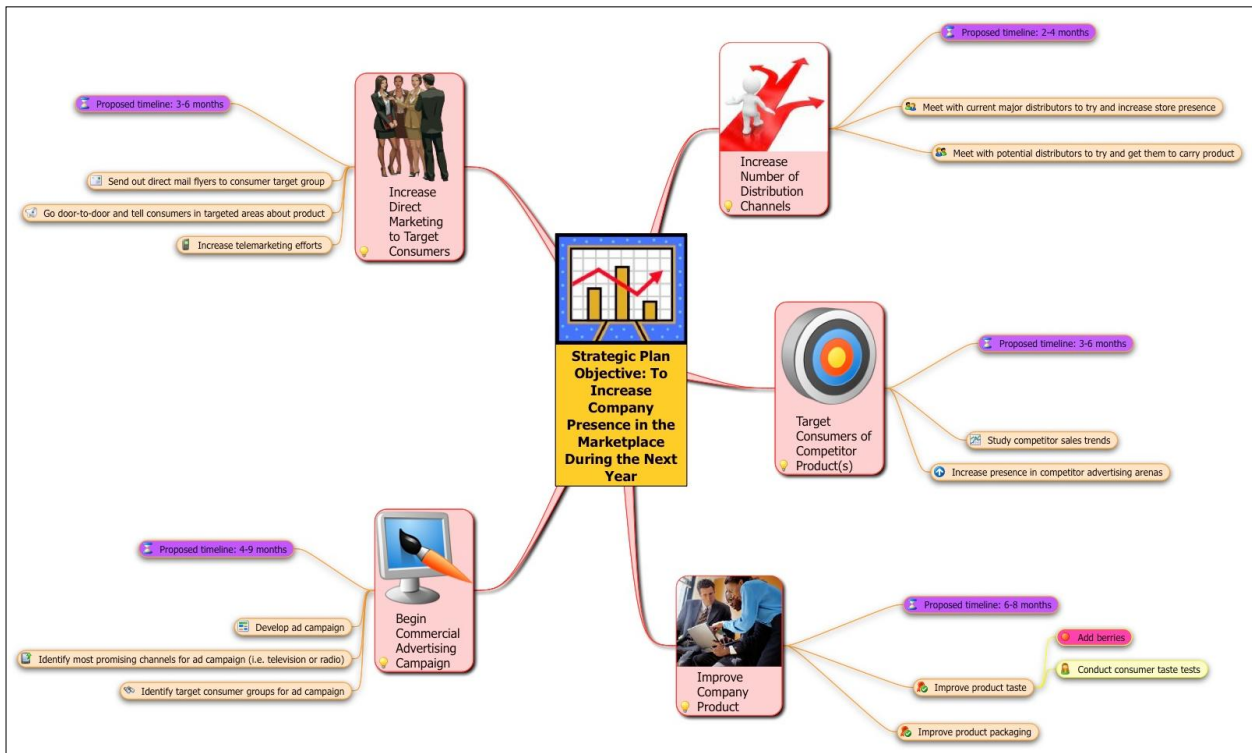


Managers and leaders, because of the variety and importance of the duties they perform, are more subject to information overload and lack of clarity than most people. That means they can benefit the most from incorporating mind mapping software into their work styles. Here are 9 ways in which managers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

Additional resources

- [Using Mind Maps for Strategic Planning](#) (NovaMind.com)
- [5 Ways To Boost Strategic Planning With Mind Mapping](#) (HubPages.com)

Templates

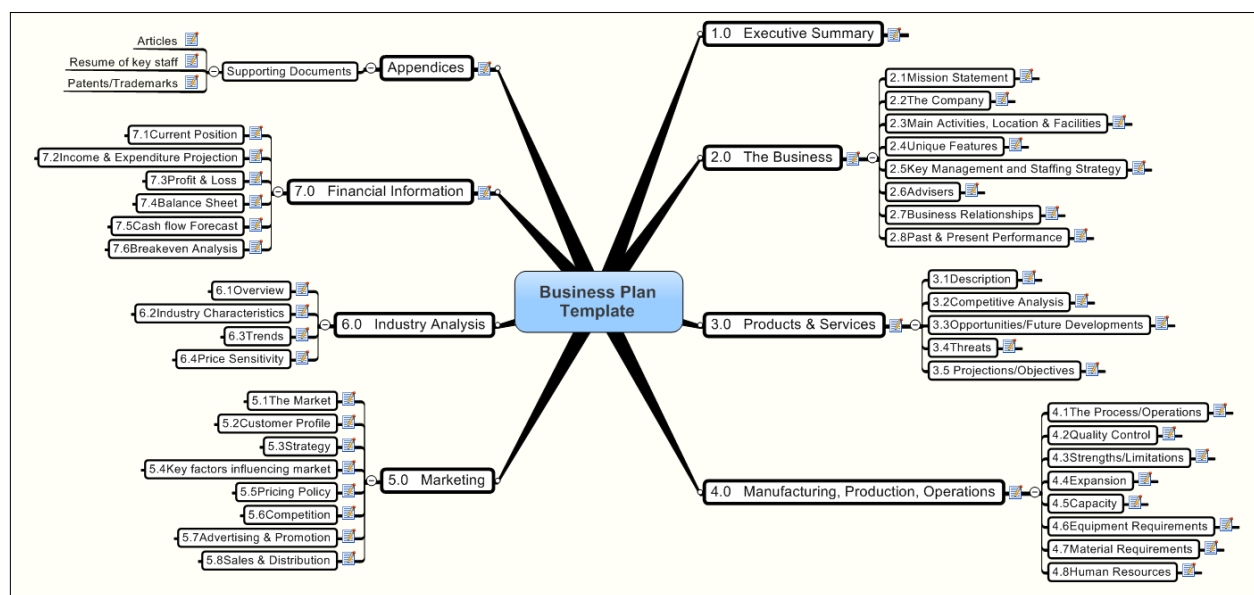
- MindManager - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/1iTLE0rN/strategic-planning>
- MindGenius - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/VCoXmdRw/mind-map-template-business-planning>
- NovaMind - <http://www.novamind.com/gallery/strategic-planning-using-novamind-mind-maps-3/>
- XMind - <http://www.xmind.net/share/luisric/-strategic-intelligence-strategic-planning/>

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

often meant to be shared with external audiences, such as potential institutional investors, venture capitalists, bankers and other stakeholders. It can also be used to run your business.

Business plans are often lengthy, multi-faceted documents that require a large amount of information and detail. A mind map is the perfect way to outline the purpose of your business, who it serves, the products or services it offers, how it will make money and what makes it unique. Once you have a clear picture of your business plan in outline form, you can utilize the mind map as a guide for writing it. You can also share the mind map with potential investors along with the full business plan as a colorful, visual executive summary of it.



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, helping you to speed the writing process of your business plan. You can also add links to related documents and web pages as needed, giving you one-click access to all of the information that backs up your plan.

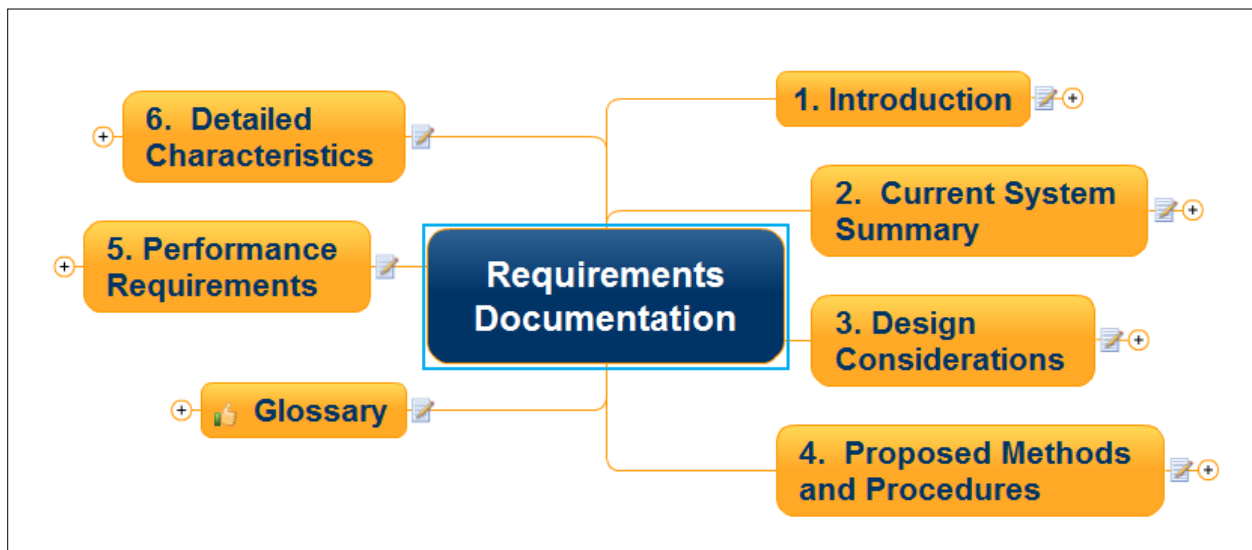
Resources

- [Using Mind Map Business Plans for a holistic plan of your business](#) (UsingMindMaps.com)
- [Write Effective Business Plans](#) (Matchware)
- [Beginning a Business Plan](#) (CX Blog)

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

Beyond project definition, your mind map can become a living project document, defining tasks and assigning them to your team members. Relatively simple projects can be managed within your mapping program. For more complex projects, many mind mapping programs enable you to export your map to a project management tool like Microsoft Project for more detailed implementation.

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.

Resource

- [Mind Mapping for New Business Development](#) (NovaMind)

Templates

- iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/andvzjaT/business-model-template>
- NovaMind - <http://www.novamind.com/gallery/mind-mapping-for-business-3/>

Marketing plans

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

Resources

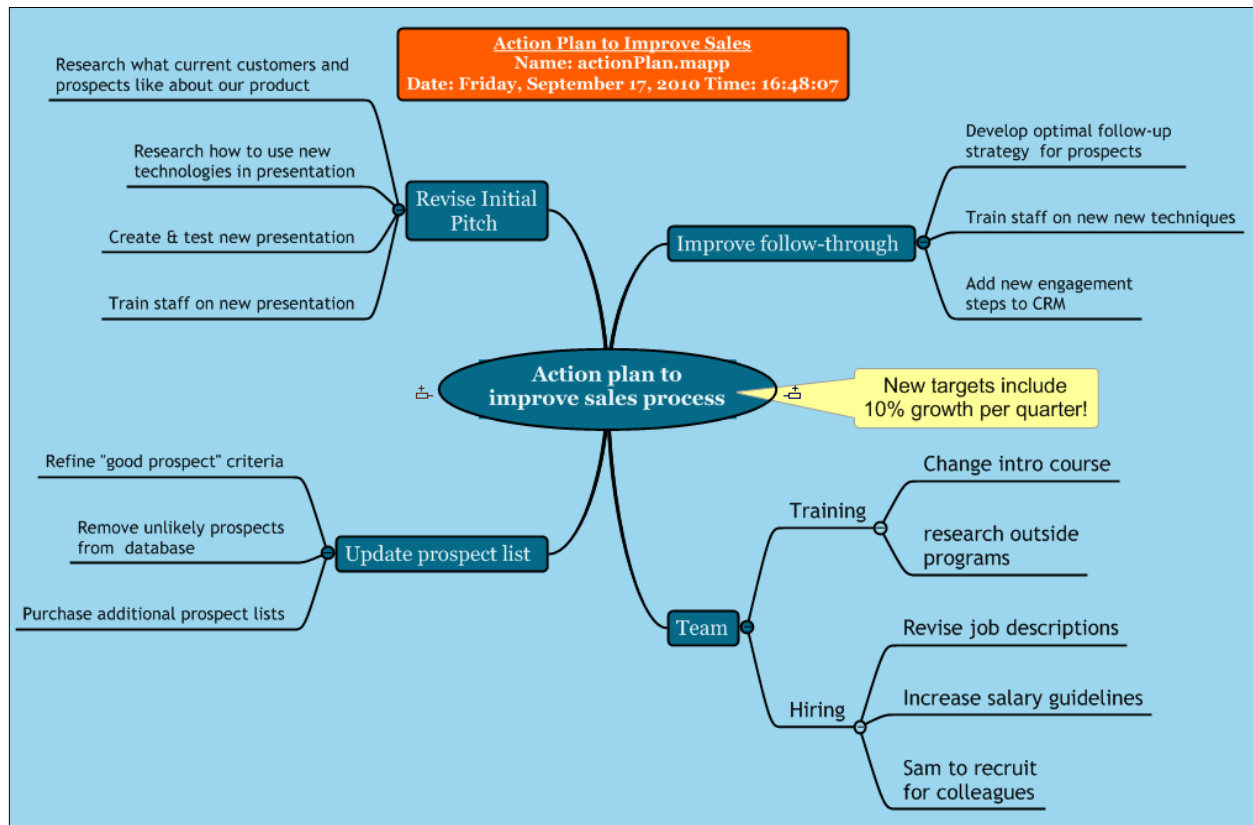
- [Create A Visual Marketing Plan Using A Mind Map](#) (OpenForum.com)
- [Using a Mind Map Marketing Plan to get your desired market share](#) (UsingMindMaps.com)

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 Plans



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

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: Use a mind map to gather everything your company knows about a particular customer. Often, this information may reside in multiple silos. Team members can contribute to the map, if it's stored in a shared network directory, or during a group meeting. By creating a shared repository of customer information, teams can plan the best strategies to approach each key account. Files and web links can be attached to provide the team with additional background information. Topics can be turned into tasks, which can then be assigned to team members.

Territory planning: Create first-level map branches for each of your sales regions or territories. Add key accounts to the appropriate branches, and then sub-topics that contain key account information and tasks that represent the next follow-ups with each one. One of the nice things about mind mapping software is that you can start by creating a high-level strategic view of each territory, and then drill down into the tactical details as needed.

Value creation: Be clear on how your solution provides value to the customer, and what makes you the best possible solution for their needs.

On-boarding maps: Develop a process for bringing new sales people on board in the form of a mind map. What do they need to know? Who do they need to meet? What reports do they need to fill out? Who will be their key customers? What sales support materials will they have access to? You can use your mind mapping software to build up a procedure for getting them up to speed quickly and smoothly.

Resources

- [The Sales Landscape's Changing, so how do you Paint the Perfect Picture?](#) (Mindjet Conspire Blog)
- [How to Mind Map Your Offer and Craft Your Sales Copy Flow](#) (Applied Marketing Group)

Templates

- MindManager - <https://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=1993>
- iMindMap - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/F8tbSuXf/sales-plan>

Generating ideas

You've probably heard that mind mapping software can be a marvelous brainstorming tool. That's true, in the sense that it's a powerful, flexible tool for capturing your ideas and then organizing them and manipulating them with complete freedom. But what you may not know is that this type of productivity software is also useful for generating ideas. What's needed are some techniques to help you do that. In this report, I will share with you four techniques for generating ideas, adapted from the book that I consider to be the best book of ideation techniques ever written: [*Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Creative-Thinking Techniques*](#) by Michael Michalko.

Technique 1: Attribute listing



When you're faced with a creative challenge, it's helpful to think of it like a house with many rooms. In other words, if you're going to do some remodeling to your house, you don't think of the entire house. Rather, you consider what you'd like to do to a specific room within your house. In the same way, a creative challenge is usually best handled by dividing it into its attributes, and working on one attribute at a time. This technique helps to give each attribute

some mental “distance” from the others so you can think flexibly about it and generate fresh ideas and insights.

What attributes does your challenge contain? That’s up to you, and your perspectives on it. Simply think of the attributes as the components of your problem or challenge, and list them in your mind map. Don’t worry about whether or not they are correct at this time. One advantage of utilizing a mind map for listing attributes is its strength in the area of word association. As you record the attributes of your challenge, you’ll discover that your brain is generating other related keywords. Record those, too.

The mind map on the previous page represents five common ways to represent attributes. You can use it as a starting point, but don’t limit yourself to these categories or their attributes.

Once you have finished recording and organizing the attributes of your problem or challenge, think about each one separately, and think of ways to change or improve it. Michalko recommends that you ask yourself questions like these:

- How else can this be accomplished?
- Why does this have to be this way?

What’s nice about attribute listing as a brainstorming technique, from my experience, is that you can use it to think creatively about almost any kind of problem or challenge. Why not try it the next time you’re faced with one?

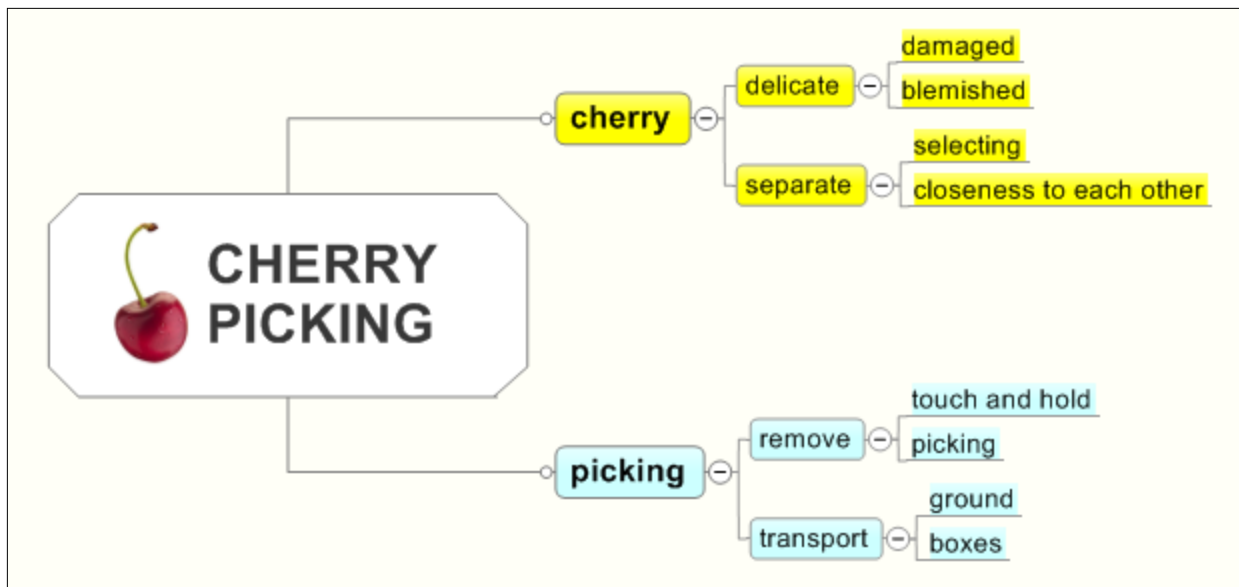
Technique 2: Cherry split

Another brainstorming technique that is well suited to visual thinking is called “cherry split.” Like carving a cherry in half with a knife, this technique works by dividing a challenge into separate blocks, which you can then reassemble in different ways to create new ideas.

Here’s how to do it:

1. State the essence of your challenge in two words. For example, if your creative challenge is, “In what ways might we improve the methodology of picking cherries?,” the two word phrase would be “picking cherries.”
2. Split the challenge into two separate units – “cherry” and “picking”
3. Split each attribute into two more attributes,
4. Continue splitting attributes until you think you have enough to work with.

5. Examine each attribute for ideas. As Michalko points out, *“The wonder of this method is that big ideas can dwell in the most insignificant attribute, just as the flavor of an entire ocean is contained in one drop.”*
6. Try reassembling attributes into different combinations. *“Splitting a challenge into several attributes is like removing a dividing panel between chambers of very hot air and very cold air. New forces rush together, creating new ideas.”*



Michalko recommends that you shouldn't get too hung up on identifying the "correct" attributes, or how to use or combine them. The goal of this technique, he explains is simply to *“add a few more ball bearings to your imagination.”*

Technique 3: SCAMPER

If you have read anything about creativity or brainstorming techniques, chances are you may have heard of SCAMPER. It's a mnemonic that stands for:

S = Substitute something

C = Combine it with something else

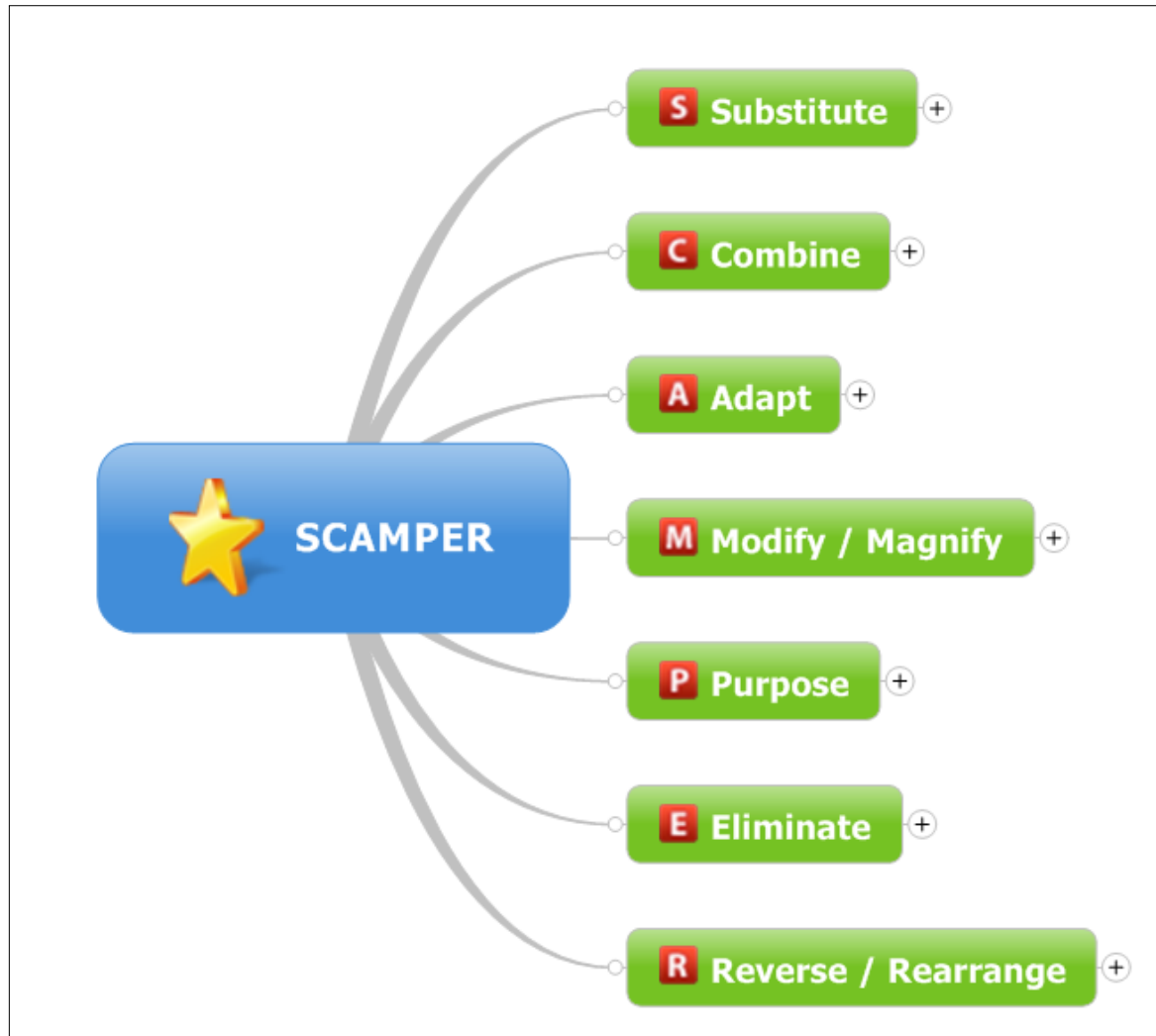
A = Adapt something to it

M = Modify or magnify it

P = Put it to some other use or purpose

E = Eliminate something

R = Reverse or rearrange it



You use each manipulation to suggest open-ended questions that will serve as catalysts for your ideas to come forth. For example, some questions suggested by SCAMPER would include:

- What procedure can I **substitute** for my present one?
- How can I **modify** or **alter** the way in which I prospect for new sales leads?
- What can I **eliminate** from the way in which I prospect?

A mind map gives us a visual framework to remember the elements of SCAMPER and sets of questions that you can use with each manipulation. It's also a great way to record the ideas that each question prompts in your mind.

Resources:

- [Creative Problem Solving with SCAMPER](#) (LiteMind)

Templates

- MindManager - http://blog.mindjet.com/wp-images/user_images/SCAMPER.mmap
- MindManager - <http://www.biggerplate.com/mindmaps/j448163/creative-problem-solving-with-scamper>

Why should you use SCAMPER to attack your next creative challenge? Because it is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to generate alternative solutions. It whacks your thinking out of its well-worn ruts and forces you to think about your challenge from a variety of different perspectives – one of the keys to creative thinking and problem solving!

Technique 4: Morphological analysis

This technique is another way of dividing your problem or challenge into its component parts, and then reassembling them into different combinations to generate new ideas. The typical way to do morphological analysis is to divide your challenge into parameters, such as:

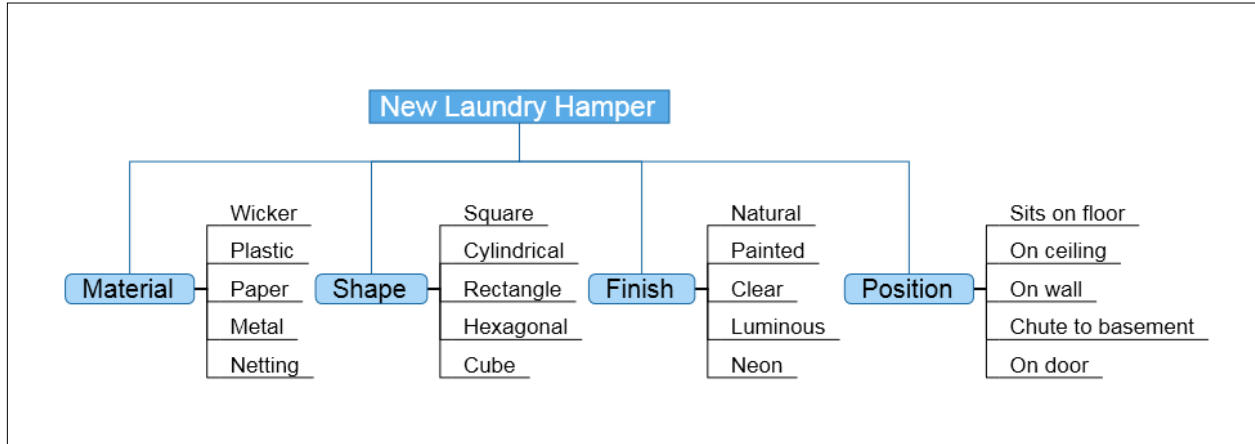
- Characteristics
- Factors
- Variables
- Aspects

Power Supply	Bulb Type	Light Intensity	Size	Style	Finish	Material
Battery	Halogen	Low	Very Large	Modern	Black	Metal
Mains	Bulb	Medium	Large	Antique	White	Ceramic
Solar	Daylight	High	Medium	Roman	Metallic	Concrete
Generator	Colored	Variable	Small	Art Nouveau	Terracotta	Bone
Crank			Hand held	Industrial	Enamel	Glass
Gas				Ethnic	Natural	Wood
Oil/Petrol					Fabric	Stone
Flame						Plastic

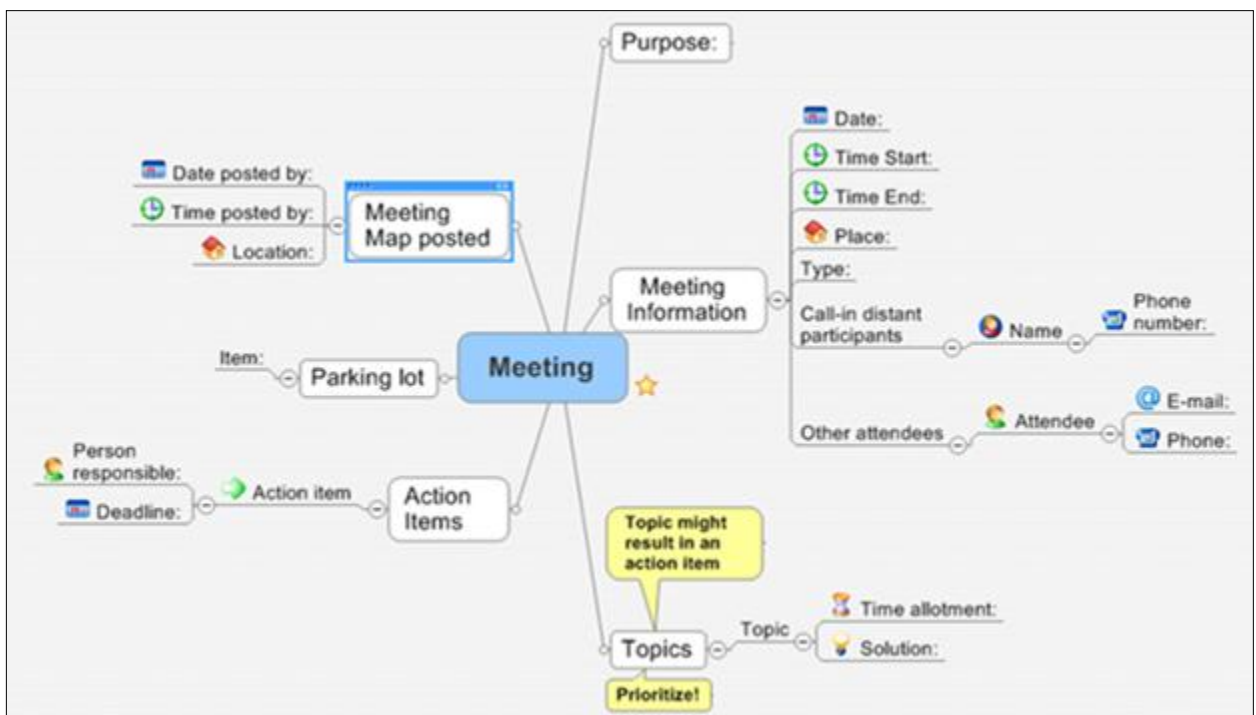
Then list as many potential variations of each parameter as possible, each in a separate column. Typically, this is done in a table or spreadsheet, like the one above right.

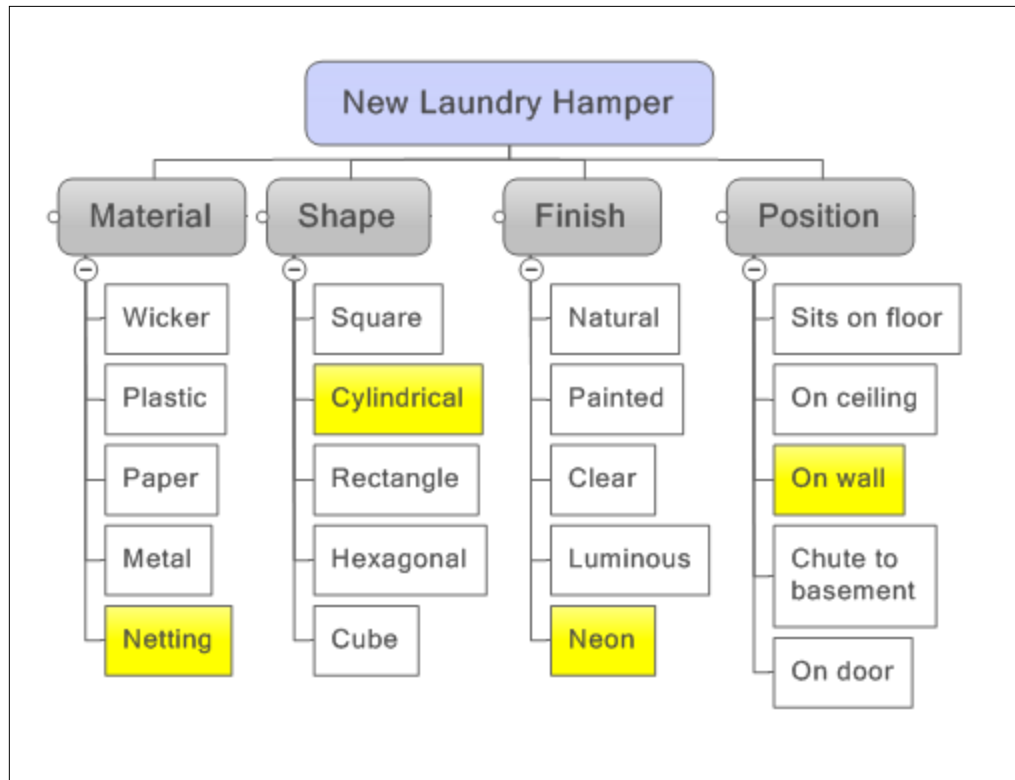
Re-creating this type of matrix in a mind map form is a bit more challenging than the other three techniques, simply because a number of developers of mind mapping software have moved away from supporting organizational chart type of maps – at least the type that we need in order to create this kind of matrix. In other words, you can list attributes horizontally, but then it becomes harder to vertically stack the variations below each attribute.

The mind map below was created using NovaMind 5. It gets us closer to where we want to be, but even with its more sophisticated topic layout options, there doesn't seem to be a way to arrange the subtopics to they appear below the main topics.



Once you have created your matrix of attributes and as many variations as you can think of, the object is to pick one or more items from each column and to make random combinations out of them. For example, selecting the items “netting,” “cylindrical,” “neon” and “on wall” (see highlighted mind map below) suggests a laundry hamper for a children’s bedroom that would consist of a brightly colored basketball hoop attached to the wall of the room with a laundry basket below it – making it fun for kids to throw their dirty clothes to wash.





The mind map above was created using MindManager, with the org chart template as the starting point.

Note that you can perform this technique with a radial mind map (with topics radiating in all directions) – but it just makes it easier if topics are arranged in more of a columnar format.

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.

Resource

- [Sell Your Ideas using Mind Maps](#) (NovaMind Blog)

Template

- MindManager - <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. For your own use, you could record why each person should be invited to the meeting, and what level of participation you expect from them.
- 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.
- Organize supporting documents and information needed for the meeting:** Use your mind mapping software's linking capability to keep supporting information close at hand.
- 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.

During the meeting, you can use your mind map to take notes and capture action items. Consider using colors or icons to visually differentiate information in your meeting map. For example, you could format facts in black, questions in blue and issues or action items in red. Or problems can be marked with red flag icons and important facts or ideas can be flagged with exclamation points, a gold star icon or green flags. The advantage of this approach is that some mind mapping programs enable you to filter the contents of your mind map based upon icons or symbols it contains. So, in other words, you could filter it to display only the problem items.

Here's another valuable tip: Create a topic named the "parking lot" or "tabled items" to capture any specific topics that your team decides to postpone for future discussion.

After the meeting, you can distribute your notes and send reminders to each participant about their assignments and deadlines.

Resources

- [Meeting management made simple](#) (Mind Mapping Software Blog – video)

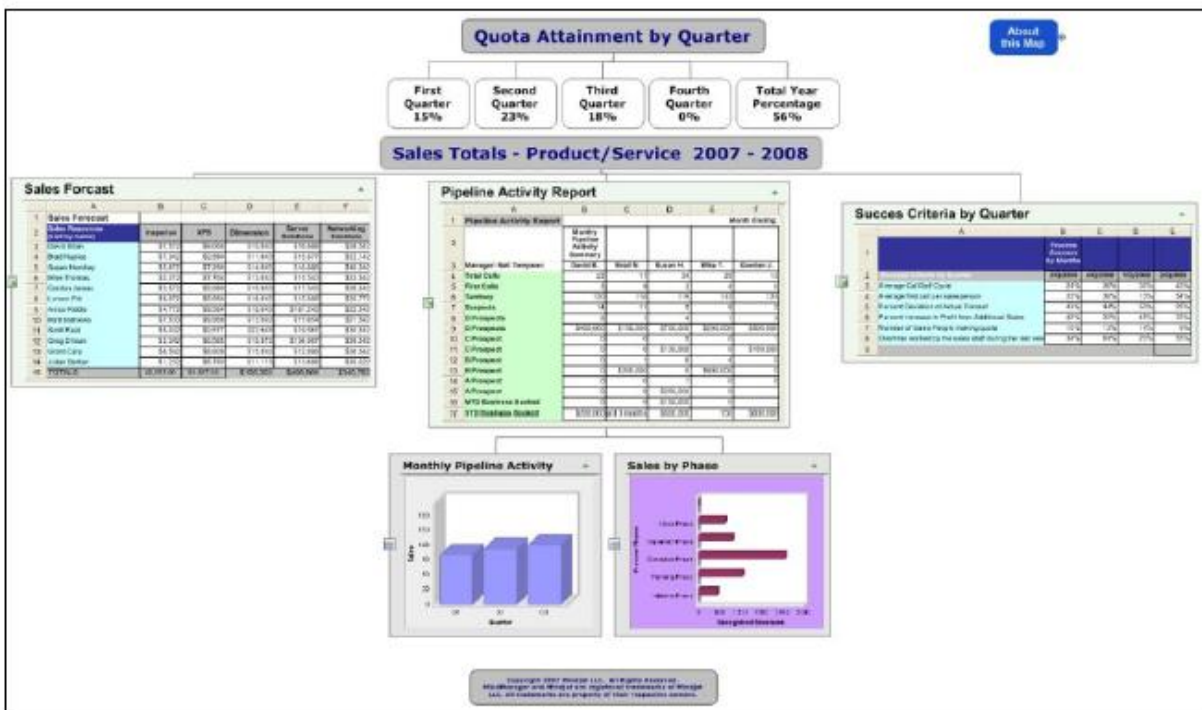
Templates

- 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.



- 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. Here are some tips on how to get the most out of them:

- Think broadly when creating your dashboard map. Don't just limit yourself to projects and their important priorities and deadlines. Remember that one of your mind mapping software's capabilities is its ability to link topics to files, messages, web pages and even executable program files. You can use your dashboard to quickly access files, folders, and websites, saving you valuable time each day.
- You can even use your program's linking capabilities to create an e-mail link. When you click it, it will open up an e-mail form already containing the e-mail address embedded in the link. That means you can create links to the people to whom you frequently send e-mail messages.
- Don't be afraid to use callouts, icons, colors and boundaries to draw attention to critical elements in your dashboard map.
- Some mind mapping programs enable you to embed spreadsheet cell ranges from Excel spreadsheets into your maps – or to create small spreadsheets from within the application. You can use this to keep track of sales figures and other data that is important to your business.
- When you start a new project or think of something you need to track – and you don't know where else to track it – add it to your dashboard. Create a section within it (or a sub-map) that you can use as a “parking lot” for new ideas and projects that you don't know what to do with.
- Remember that your dashboard map should be designed to be an at-a-glance tool that gives you fast access to your most important information. You should only have to give it a passing glance to see what goals and projects require your attention. This “bigger picture” view will enable you to spend minimal time assessing your progress and instead focus on identifying areas that need your attention.
- On a related note: If your dashboard map becomes too complex, don't be afraid to break it into several linked sub-maps. Remember: The details are still only a click away.

- You should probably schedule a comprehensive "sweep" of your dashboard map, once a week to determine what has become extraneous and can be eliminated from your dashboard, as well as new projects and top priorities that need to be added to it.
- Most important of all, don't conform to anyone's expectations of what your dashboard map "should" contain. It's yours, and because of that, it needs to provide you with fingertip access to the information that is most important to you!

Resources

- [Mind Maps as Personal Dashboards](#) (Eric Blue's Blog)
- [Integrate Your Work in Dashboards for Optimal Performance](#) (Mindjet Conspire Blog)

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@chuckfrey.com.

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