



Effective Mind Maps

Analyses of business mind maps by Chuck Frey, author of the Mind Mapping Software Blog

Type of map: Crisis planning mind map

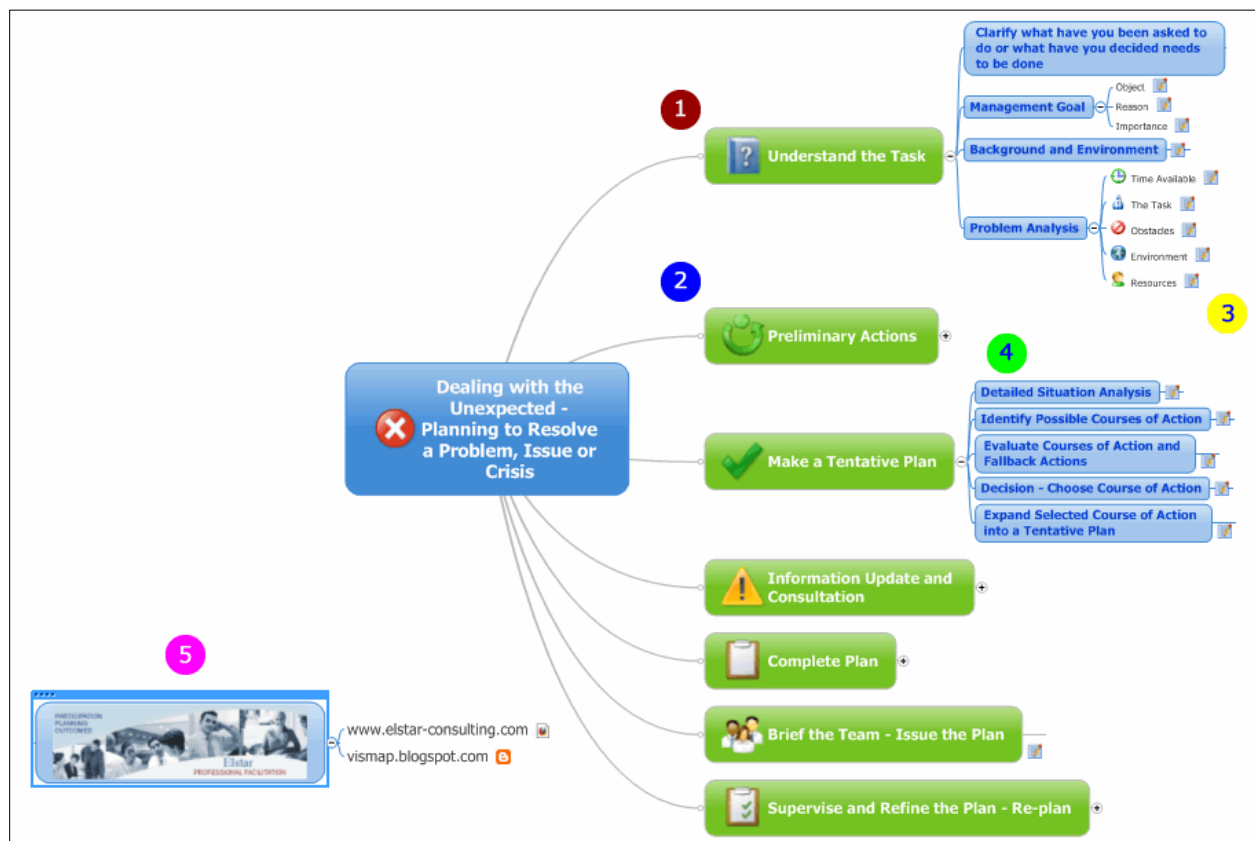
Software used to create: MindManager

Source: BiggerPlate map gallery

URL: <http://www.biggerplate.com/viewmap.asp?id=1084>

Overview

Almost every business can benefit from some form of crisis planning. What if your office was hit by fire or a natural disaster, such as flooding or a tornado? How would your business recover and continue operations, until services can be restored at your existing office or a new one? This well-designed mind map by blogger Steve Rothwell does an excellent job of laying out a typical crisis plan – in visual form. It does a lot of things right, which we'll explore in this report. I will also recommend several ways in which it could be improved. So let's dig into it.



1 Process Orientation

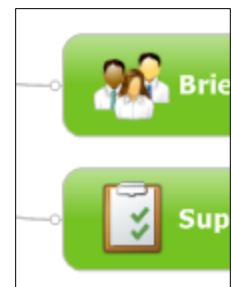
One of the factors that makes this mind map particularly effective, in my opinion, is its clear emphasis on a process. The flow naturally goes from top to bottom, from understanding the task at hand, to making a tentative plan, briefing your team and finally revisiting and updating the plan periodically.

If these first-level topics were numbered, that would reinforce this process more strongly, but it's not necessary. It's very effective as is.

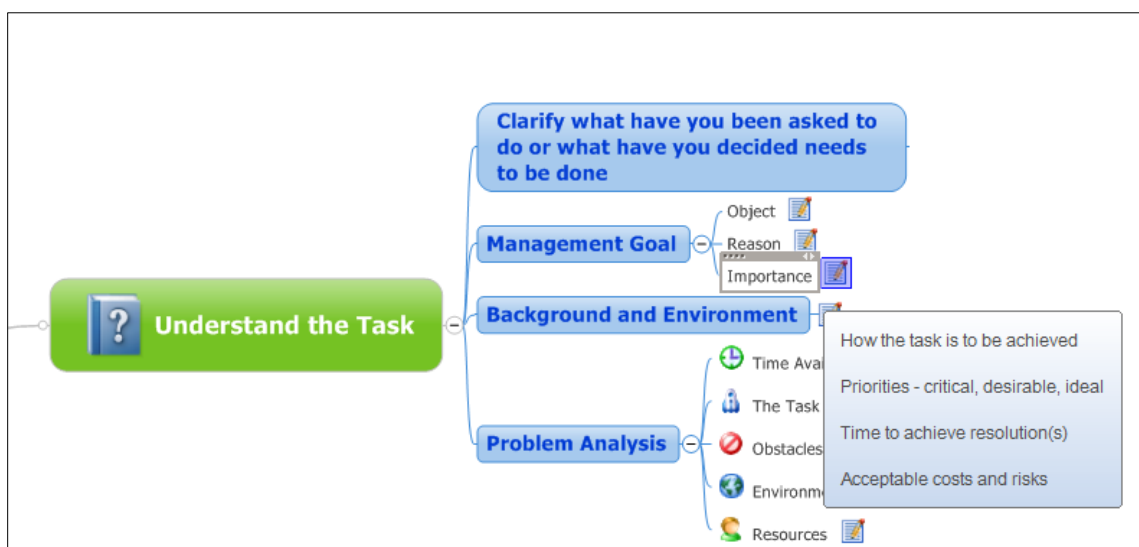


2 Effective use of symbols

This mind map makes excellent use of icons or symbols to add meaning and context to it. They are business-appropriate and look very professional. They don't look cartoonish or draw too much attention away from the topics themselves – a very good thing. They give this mind map a nice balance of visual and text elements.



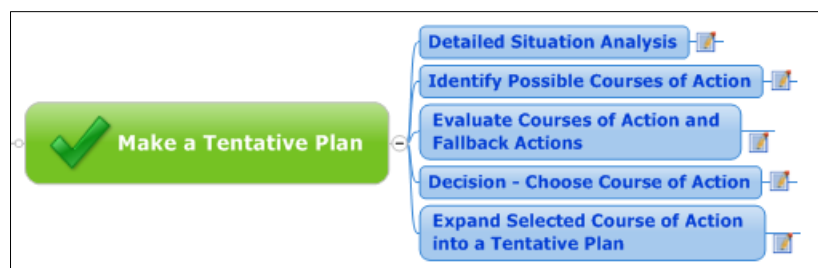
3 Extensive use of notes helps prevent visual clutter



The author of this mind map wisely chose to put a lot of the underlying details that team members will need to think about when creating or updating this crisis plan in topic notes. This helps to keep visual clutter to a minimum. As you can see from the screen shot on the previous page, most of these notes are in the form of brief statements. That means each one could have become a sub-topic, rather than gathered together into a note. It's really a matter of personal preference in this case.

4 Opportunity to create sub-maps

This section of the crisis planning mind map is where most of the action is going to take place. As you add detail to this section of the map, such as the “detailed situation



analysis” and “identify possible courses of action,” it will quickly become cluttered. This is your chance to create linked sub-maps to these topics, as needed. What are the criteria to decide if you need to create a sub-map? The biggest one is this: Is this section of my mind map self-contained? The situation analysis would certainly fit that description.

Managed in this way, this crisis planning mind map can essentially become your master control document, providing a high-level overview of your planning process. With a single mouse click, you can then drill down to the details of the crisis plan.

5 Author information



This treatment of the author information is quite common, and is very effectively handled as a floating topic, with sub-topics that link to the author's company and his blog. I like the way in which he utilizes an image to reinforce his company's branding. Nicely done!

Enhancing your crisis plan

If you're planning to create a crisis planning mind map for your business, here are some additional topics you may want to include in it:



- **Lay out scenarios for each potential crisis** that you think is unlikely, but possible. Consider natural disasters, such as flooding, earthquake damage, tornado or fire. If you live in a climate that gets a lot of snow in the winter, what if the roof of your building collapsed? Think broadly. For each potential crisis, what would the immediate effects be upon your business? For example, you would be unable to access your computer records. You may be unable to access payroll or customer records from your database. You may be unable to process customer transactions or fill orders for a certain period of time. If your company manufactures a physical product, you may be unable to run your production line for weeks or months. Your mind map is a great way to work your way through each potential scenario. Think, "If A happens, then B would be the result." Map these relationships.
- **What is your plan from a facilities standpoint?** Where could you temporarily set up a makeshift headquarters for your business, so you can continue operations, at least to a limited degree, until you're able to get back into your existing building.
- **What is your back-up strategy for electronic data, such as e-mail, document repositories and important databases?** Follow generally accepted guidelines for data backup (for example, a full backup of all data on your computer system once per week, plus incremental backups each night; all employee files should be stored on a network server rather than on the hard drives of desktop PCs, to ensure that their work gets backed up, too). Most importantly, the backup media needs to be taken off-site each night, so that if disaster should strike your office, your backups won't be damaged or destroyed, too.

- **Have a crisis communication plan.** If your business provides critically important services to its customers, clients or constituents, then you need to formulate a plan for communicating with them. If appropriate, what will you say to the media? Having a plan makes it more likely that you'll be able to maintain the confidence of your key stakeholders if and when a crisis does occur? Use your mind map to store the names and numbers of key people who need to be contacted in case of a disaster, such as your board of directors, your insurance company and local media representatives.

The bottom line is that crisis planning is an excellent opportunity to step back from your day-to-day business and assess your current business practices. Chances are, this planning process will help to illuminate some practices, processes and policies that need to be changed, to make your firm more sustainable in the event of a crisis.

Questions?

Got questions about this report? Please contact me at chuck@innovationtools.com.

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