

Mind Mapping

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A mind map is a diagram used to visually outline information. Despite being a tool which we extensively refer to the last few hundred year, it has been used since the ancient time and more precisely by Porphyry of Tyre, a Neoplatonic philosopher that used them to visualized the concept categories of Aristotle (Wikipedia)

Mind mapping is used in several ways and in almost every discipline, especially by the spatial (visual) learners. It is an easy way to visualize whatever needs to be simplified in order to understand it better, to learn something new and to identify problems or solutions. Here are some examples of topics that mind maps can have a great result:

- Self-assessment
- Decision making
- Risk management
- Problem solving
- Marketing strategy
- Meeting structure
- SWOT analysis
- Market research
- New product introduction

Mind mapping is a highly productive and versatile project management tool and it can be used by project managers for (Source PMI.org):

- Brainstorming concepts, ideas, strategies and project objectives at the early stages of a project
- Project planning: it can retain the quality and integrity of conventional project planning and yet exhibits remarkable simplicity and flexibility.
- Problem solving
- Recording meeting and discussion notes
- Produce action items with reminders and email notification
- Risk Management
- Stakeholder management
- Monitoring and controlling

Research suggests that mind mapping techniques can improve learning efficiency and problem solving by up to 15% over conventional ways of learning things such a note taking, simple linear writing and moreover, it enhances creativity. They are called mind maps because they resemble the way human brain creates neurons to extend learning and accumulate knowledge.

How to create a mind map.

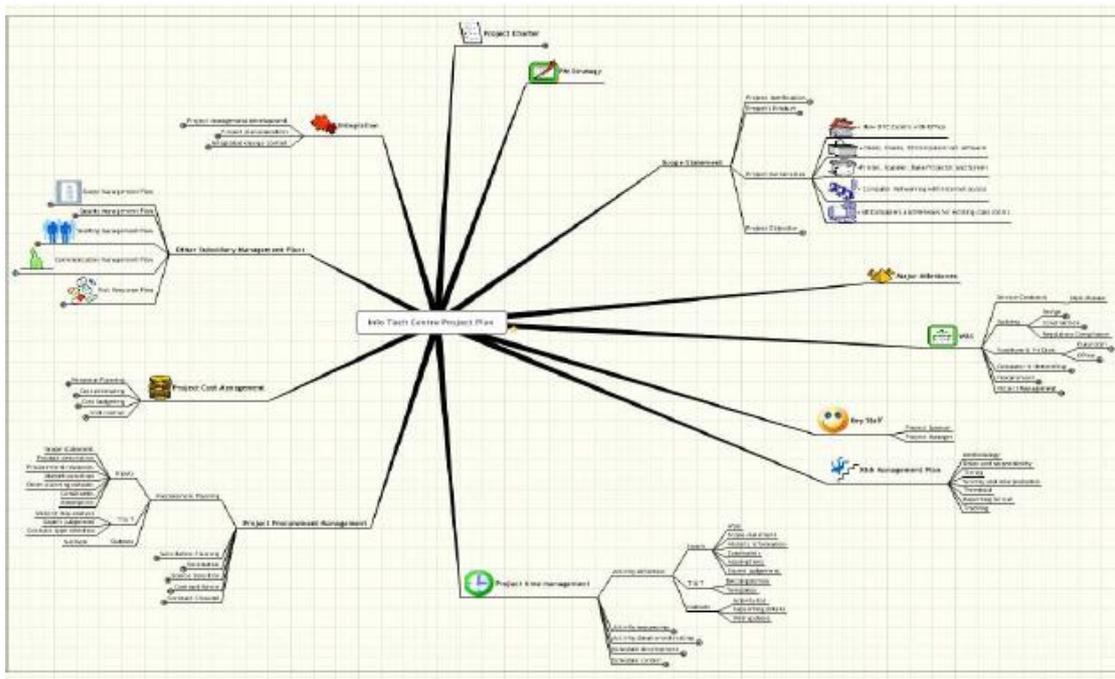
A mind map is often created around a single word or text, placed in the center, to which associated ideas, words and concepts are added. Major categories radiate from a central node, and lesser categories are sub-branches of larger branches. Categories can represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items related to a central key word or idea. Color and images can be used to distinguish between the areas of the mind map and make interpretation easier.

Mind maps can be drawn by hand, either as "rough notes" during a lecture or meeting, for example, or as higher quality pictures using specialized software (Wikipedia). A quick search on the internet will reveal an abundance of mind mapping software in the form of freeware or open source.

Basic steps

- Use a blank page and start writing or drawing the idea you intend to develop right in the middle.
- Think of any possible subtopics and start connecting them to the central idea using lines.
- Expand your subtopics to include any further subtopics and generate as many lower levels as you need using text, drawings, colors and icons.

Example of a software generated Mind Map (Source: PMI.org)



If you haven't used mind mapping by now give it a try to see how simple and yet how powerful it is in many aspects. Some great examples of mind maps you can find them in the PMBoK (Project Management Body of Knowledge). They help visualize the interaction between processes in the project management lifecycle.

