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MIND-MAPPING MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Mind maps are used to generate, visualize, structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid to studying and organizing information, solving problems, making decisions, and writing. The fundamentals of mind map are arranged naturally according to the importance of the concepts, and are classified into groupings, branches, or areas, with the goal of representing semantic or other connections between portions of information. Mind maps may also aid recall of existing memories.

Tony Buzan is widely credited with coining the term mind map. Mind maps are a means of organizing information visually, showing how large ideas are made of big pieces, which in turn are composed of smaller pieces. Pictorial methods for recording knowledge and modeling systems have been used for centuries in learning, brainstorming, memory, visual thinking, and problem solving by educators, engineers, psychologists, and others. British popular psychology author Tony Buzan claims to have invented modern mind mapping. The mind map continues to be used in various forms, and for various applications including learning and education (where it is often taught as "webs", "mind webs", or "webbing"), planning, and in engineering diagramming. Mind maps help people connect information quickly. Using the mind mapping technique in project management allows a project manager to draw simple pictures that reflect complex ideas. Drawing a mind map typically starts by writing the title of a topic in the center of a whiteboard, piece of paper or software tool. The next step is to write down subtopics and draw lines out from the circle so the project manager can show the connections.

Mind-Mapping Guidelines:

Tony Buzan suggests using the following guidelines for creating mind maps:

1. Start in the center with an image of the topic, using at least 3 colors.
2. Use images, symbols, codes, and dimensions throughout your mind map.
3. Select key words and print using upper or lower case letters.
4. Each word/image is best alone and sitting on its own line.
5. The lines should be connected, starting from the central image. The central lines are thicker, organic and thinner as they radiate out from the centre.
6. Make the lines the same length as the word/image they support.
7. Use multiple colors throughout the mind map, for visual stimulation and also to group.
8. Develop your own personal style of mind mapping.
9. Use emphasis and show associations in your mind map.
10. Keep the mind map clear by using radial hierarchy, numerical order or outlines to embrace your branches.

Start in the center with an image of the topic, using at least 3 colors.

The ideas are documented in a mind map radiate from the center of diagram, similar the branches or root system of a tree. The colors are important because they provide an extra dimension of information to help your brain interpret the data more effectively.

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Use images, symbols, codes, and dimensions throughout your Mind Map.

Words are important, but pictures make it easier and faster to communicate information visually. Similarly, symbols, codes and dimensions provide a mental shorthand to speed up the communication process.

Select key words and print using upper or lower case letters.

Key words work well with images to convey information, similar to the way slides work in presentations. Printing makes them legible.

Each word/image is best alone and sitting on its own line.

This is to make the mind map easy to interpret. Too many uncoordinated lines makes for a confusing mind map.

The lines should be connected, starting from the central image. The central lines are thicker, organic and flowing, becoming thinner as they radiate out from the centre.

The idea here is to give the reader a visual guide as to the level of detail they're at within a mind map. Obviously, if you follow the lines through the map, you'll see how everything is connected. Varying thicknesses will make the mind map look like a system of branches or roots.

Make the lines the same length as the word/image they support.

Again, readability is the key.

Use multiple colors throughout the Mind Map, for visual stimulation and also to encode or group.

Much like bus routes and subway maps use color to distinguish between routes, use of color in a mind map will make it easier to follow the information.

Develop your own personal style of Mind Mapping.

Personal style allows you to create mind maps more efficiently and effectively.

Use emphasis and show associations in your Mind Map.

This allows you to focus attention on key topics in the mind map.

Mind mapping can be used for:

- problem solving
- outline/framework design
- structure/relationship representations
- anonymous collaboration
- marriage of words and visuals
- individual expression of creativity
- condensing material into a concise and memorable format
- team building or synergy creating activity
- enhancing work morale

Conceptual frame work of Mind-Mapping

Mind Mapping is a pictorial way of transferring ideas from our brains onto paper very quickly and easily. With practice you will find that your brain can produce ideas faster than your pencil can write them onto paper. Ideas are normally produced by our brain in a random sequence - certain things tend to trigger off other ideas that lead to suggestions, images and concepts.

Mind Mapping - Basic Rules

The rules for producing Mind Maps are very simple and can be adapted to suit your personal preference.

- Take a piece of paper and draw a rectangle in the centre of the page.
- Inside the rectangle write the name of the topic that you want to mind map.
- As each major idea or theme emerges from your brain draw a line radiating from the rectangle.
- Write the name of the major idea above each line.
- Don't spend too much time writing neatly or drawing nice straight lines- go for SPEED not NEATNESS.

- As each idea materializes, quickly check whether the idea is an extension of an existing idea.
- If the idea is something totally new, then draw a brand new line from the rectangle in the center of the page.
- Within a short space of time out Mind Map will begin to take shape. Don't be too alarmed if it looks as if a spider, with ink on its feet has crawled across the page.
Mind Maps are personal records of thought processes and are normally PRIVATE.
- Once you have finished generating ideas and constructing the Mind Map you can start analysing the information shown on the mind map.

Mind Mapping - Applications

Mind Maps can be used in many different situations for planning purposes or sequencing of events. It is applied in the process of creative thinking, with links being made between themes or statements in real time as the write out is going on. Adaptation could be achieved far more easily by listening to the interview numerous times than by waiting for typed transcripts applied in traditional research applications.

Mind Mapping Technique in Project Management

Using the mind mapping technique in project management typically involves analyzing a topic, figuring out how pieces of information fit together, and generating conclusions.

Defining Project Objectives

A project manager can use a mind map to draw a list of the strategic goals associated with the effort.

Scheduling Project Tasks

Using the mind mapping technique for project scheduling involves writing down each project task and estimating how long each activity takes to complete. By breaking each task into subtasks, a project manager can more accurately draw a picture that reflects the precise actions and how long each task actually takes. Project managers can use mind maps to schedule tasks and allow for contingencies.

Solving Problems

Project managers and teams frequently encounter complex problems. Team building exercises involving generating mind maps can help generate troubleshooting procedures make decisions based on available data or determine the root cause of a production issue. For example, a project team faced with the challenge of budget reductions can list the remaining activities and propose less expensive alternatives.

Documenting Meetings

Project managers acting as meeting facilitators can draw a mind map to document all topics discussed in team meetings. The resulting visual image often triggers creative thinking. For example, listing questions about the scope of the project, unresolved problems or expertise lacking to complete a project task can serve as an effective visual status report.

Structuring Project Archives

Faced with information overload, many project managers lose track of project documents, such as functional requirements, project plans and risk registers.

Conclusion

The mind mapping technique can be used as a authoritative, creative and dynamic way to administer projects, structure and classify multifaceted information, and provide motivating reports that grasp people's attention. By minimizing words and focusing on associations, mind maps allow project managers and team members to rapidly see dependencies and problems, saving time and money. Using mind maps can notably improve a project team's productivity.

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Web resources:

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- <http://www.mindtools.com>
- <http://www.smartdraw.com>
- <http://www.thinkbuzan.com>
