

Mind Mapping Software strategies

The 8 best ways to improve your mind maps

Make sure your maps are as effective as possible with these top tips.

Mind mapping software is one of those software tools that can be used to create clear, concise visual maps that communicate information and knowledge with great clarity. But all too often, they aren't as effective as they should be. Here are eight top ways to supercharge the effectiveness of your software-produced mind maps:

Always review your mind maps with a critical eye – do they communicate as clearly as possible?

1. Use a master map

A master map is a map of all of your mind maps – a single mind map that enables you to organize and quickly access all of the visual diagrams you have created with your mind mapping software. It enables you to organize your knowledge and projects in a way that makes the most sense to you.

2. One map, one purpose

A mind map should be focused on a single topic or purpose – which should be clearly defined before you begin mapping. For best results, stay focused on the map subject and let its

content speak to the issue. Avoid irrelevancy. If the information in your map becomes too complex, consider breaking it into several sub-maps.

3. Use icons in your maps

Icons add visual context to your map topics, and actually give your maps database-like qualities. In other words, you can utilize them to filter your map's content – to zero in on the tasks it contains, or only the follow-ups assigned to a particular person on your staff, for example.

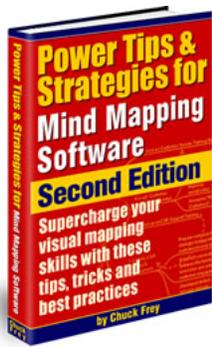
4. Optimize the content of your maps

If you're planning to utilize your mind maps to communicate information to others, you must review them with a critical eye. Do they communicate clearly and unambiguously? Here are some tips for optimizing the visual appearance of your maps:

- Don't be afraid to move topics around to see if they would make better sense in a different area of your map – sort a visual “what if” process that enables you to reassess that information in a different context. This process of “refactoring” is explained in greater detail in my e-book.
- Collapse your map until only the

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More tips are available in my e-book, *Power Tips & Strategies for Mind Mapping Software*



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first-level topics are visible, and then look critically at your map's central theme and first-level topics. Ideally, your map should be self-explanatory at this level.

- Consider the order in which your primary topics appear. Do they follow each other in a logical sequence? If not, rearrange them until they are in a sequence that will make sense to others.
- Don't leave stray topics scattered around your map. Make sure that all of the primary and secondary topics are arranged neatly.

5. Consistency is critical

Be consistent in your use of color, shapes, line styles and other visual elements of your maps. Each of these can help to convey additional meaning or context, if used consistently and systematically. If not, they may confuse the people with whom you share your maps.

6. Leverage the power of images

To get the biggest benefit out of your maps, be sure to include relevant images in them. This technique will enhance their creative impact by appealing to both sides of your brain. Remember: a picture is worth a thousand words!

7. Avoid visual clutter

Often, users of mind mapping software develop maps that are so

cluttered that they get “stuck” and aren't sure how to fix them. As a general rule, you should develop your ideas in topics using brief key words – like brief, persuasive headlines. If you want to add details, place them in topic notes – so you can easily “drill down” to view them if you need to.

8. Create a personal “dashboard” map

A personal dashboard is a mind map whose function is to consolidate information from multiple places. Its purpose is to show you a streamlined view of information from many places in a single map. Ideally, it should help you to connect the dots between previously disparate pieces of information, leading to better decision making. It should contain the information that is most important to you, including:

- Life roles and goals (work, personal, spiritual, etc.)
- Major projects and tasks
- Links to your key files and software applications

Conclusion

Remember that mind maps are much more than a tool for creatively and visually capturing your ideas. They're business tools that can be used to drive strategy, manage projects and produce superior results. For more tips, please order my e-book, [Power Tips & Strategies for Mind Mapping Software](#).