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Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

For Those on the Run

Stuck with the myriad of ideas and thoughts about an issue or situation and don't know what to do with them? Looking for a technique for developing a more creative and innovative approach to thinking? Why not try mind mapping. Mind mapping is easy to learn and use. Read below to find out more.

Making Connections in Your Mind

Mind mapping is simply a brain dumping process that helps stimulate new ideas and connections. Mind mapping has a magical effect in that it taps into the whole brain; allows projects to be organized in minutes, promotes creativity, breaks writer's block and provides an effective mechanism for doing brainstorming. Visually mind mapping looks very much like a stylised 'spider-diagram', but contains much more thought and care in its spatial arrangement. Developed by Tony Buzan, the Mind Mapping technique harnesses the full range of your cortical skills, making you more productive and creative.

Got it?!



How to Mind Map

- To begin you only need a piece of paper and something to write with. The bigger the paper the more ideas you will have (e.g., butcher paper, flipchart paper, ledger paper...). Use colors throughout the mind map as a way of enhancing memory.
- In a box in the center of your paper, print the focus of your thinking; one or two words that capture the essence of the problem or situation that you want to think about. Defining the focus of your situation guides the outcomes of your thinking, so take care with this step. Words are best printed; printing gives a more visual, clear image. Colors may be used to highlight the image, especially if the color is linked to the theme.
- As ideas emerge, print one or two word descriptions of the ideas on lines branching from the central focus. Allow the ideas to expand outward into branches and sub-branches. Put down all ideas without judgement or evaluation, even if they are completely unrelated.
- Your brain works best in 5-7 minute bursts so capture that explosion of ideas as rapidly as possible. Key words, symbols, and images provide a mental short hand to help you record ideas as quickly as possible.
- Keep your hand moving. If ideas slow down, draw empty lines, and watch your brain automatically find ideas to put on them. Or change colors to reenergize your mind. Stand up and mind map on an easel pad to generate even more energy.
- Sometimes you may see relationships and connections immediately and you can add sub-branches to the main idea. Sometimes you don't, so you just connect the ideas to the central focus. Organization can always come later; the first requirement is to get the ideas out of your head and onto the paper.

For those who are technologically inclined you might want to explore mind mapping software (such as <http://www.visual-mind.com/wv.htm?0015>). If you are interested in reading more on mind mapping, see Tony Buzan's book (1991), *The mind map book*, New York: Penguin and/or Joyce Wycoff's book (1991), *Mindmapping: Your personal guide to exploring creativity and problem solving*, New York: Berkley Books.

What's the Bottom line

Mind mapping is a simple, yet powerful technique, that can help you break down the mental blocks that hinder your thinking and lead you to more creative ideas



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.

If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at jlaws@foursightconsulting.com.

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