

Mind Mapping...And Loving It! ©

by Kathy Ellis, Business Lab Marketing Coach

Business continues to be more complex and rapid planning seems to be a daily requirement. When faced with a large project, or when pressured to reach tall goals or even when you are trying to fix a reoccurring problem...Mind Mapping is the perfect tool. In this article, you will learn the three steps for creating a clear and well-organized "front-end" approach to resolving your most challenging problems or developing your most inspiring dreams! Mind Mapping will also allow you to discover new patterns, see untapped concepts and link unforeseen ideas.

Getting started: Begin by scheduling 30 minutes of uninterrupted time with no distractions such as ringing telephones, loud noises or knocks at your office door. Start with a blank sheet of paper and draw a large circle in the center of the page. Next, place the name of your project, goal, dream or problem in the center of this circle. Next, draw 10 or 15 lines around the circle, like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. Lastly, on each spoke, list one idea or concept relating to the words inside the circle. Do not edit or judge the words you are placing on each spoke while you are brainstorming because you want to generate as many ideas as possible.

Tip from The Business Lab: If you are an auditory rather than a visual learner you may want to use a tape recorder to build your Mind Map, then transfer your words to paper as the second step. If you find your ideas are not flowing, then take a break to refresh your mind or share your progress with your manager, a peer or a close friend. Sometimes having another person's perspective is just enough to get your creative juices flowing.

Developing your action words: With your initial Mind Map now complete, take a second sheet of paper and list the first "spoke" topic in the center of a new large circle and draw another five or seven lines around this circle. These lines are now the action words for completing your project, fixing a problem or realizing your dreams. When building these action words, do not make any quick assumptions but remain open to unusual ideas or solutions. Try to look at this project or task from a different level by asking yourself, "How will this impact my prospects, my owner, the clients I manage or my sales team?"

Tip from The Business Lab: Some of the best Mind Mapping is done when we look to other industries, other professions or other successful individuals and see how they have addressed a similar problem or opportunity. Many "great" ideas are just inches from where you are standing this very minute but you have to look closely and have your "antenna" up, to see and hear them. As a small step, try reading trade or business magazines unrelated to your current industry and you will find that "re-inventing the wheel" is seldom necessary. Plus, exposure to new ideas in other industries will help you become a "Futurist" on your own behalf...a special trait!

Taking words to action: Now comes the fun part! Take each of your Mind Maps and put them in outline form. Next to each action word, place an action step and specify the exact date for completing each task or step. Also, if you are going to delegate portions of this project, include the name of each person who will be responsible for a specific step and be certain they receive a copy of your Mind Map so they can be clear on the purpose of your request. Lastly, take the action steps you are going to personally complete and place them directly in your appointment book. By scheduling time for each step on this project you are bringing this project to "life".

Tip from The Business Lab: Once you have completed your first Mind Mapping, pause and reflect joyfully on what you have accomplished. This process is specifically designed to support your thinking process and will get easier and easier, with practice. Remember, Mind Mapping is meant to be fun and can be done in large groups, at your next big meeting or any time you need to visualize ideas quickly!

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic, please send an E-mail to ideas@thebusinesslab.com or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-517-0789.

Author's Note: Kathy Ellis is a Marketing Coach and the owner of The Business Lab, a full service marketing and graphic design company. We specialize in relationship marketing programs including database marketing, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials for our clients. We share with you our FREE newsletter to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX at 281-517-0998 or by E-mail at kathy@thebusinesslab.com