

WORKING WITH THE MINDMAP: THE QUICKSTART MANUAL

The basics of working with the mindmap are pretty simple.

To open it, install the program you want to use. I recommend XMind for most people, as it's more stable, and not as subject to version incompatibilities as Freemind.

If you already have a mindmapping program that works with Freemind or XMind maps, by all means, use what you're comfortable with. Most of the major mindmappers will open at least one of those.

If you have Freemind installed already, double-click on the file PLANTS.mm. If it opens, you're good to go. If not, don't be surprised. Freemind has gotten progressively more twitchy with recent updates to Java.

If you already have XMind installed, double-click on PLANTS.xmind. This was created in XMind 2013, so you may need to upgrade if it doesn't open properly. It's a free upgrade, with some cool new features, so it's worth doing if needed.

If you don't have anything installed that will open them, choose your program and install it. You can download Freemind here:

<http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Download>

You can download XMind here: <http://www.xmind.net/download/>

Again, if you're not familiar with both, go with XMind.

EDITING THE MAP

This is easy.

To add a new node branching out from the one that's currently highlighted you hit Insert (in Freemind) or Tab (in XMind).

To add a new node branching from the same one the currently selected node is branched from, hit Enter. (Same in either program.)

To edit the label on the current node, hit F2. (Same in either program.)

To delete the currently active node, hit Delete. If you delete the wrong node, or change your mind, hit CTRL-Z.

The rest you can figure out as you go along. The right-mouse button will bring up a menu in either that will give you more options than you're ever likely to use.

THE TOPICS

On Your Mark...

Your Ideal Business: In this section, describe what your ideal business would look like. And keep in mind that, like with all the rest of this system, the only right answers are the ones you want. This is your life, so don't fill in things that don't accurately represent your personal values and goals.

Forget what anyone else tells you should be there, and don't plan based on impressing other people. They won't really care anyway, and you're the one who has to live with it.

Your ideal business should be described based on how and where you want to work, who you want to work with (if anyone), and how you prefer to handle your daily tasks.

Goals: This part is pretty obvious. ;)

Get Set...

Business model: This is where a lot of people get tripped up. They don't define what they plan to do, so they scramble around trying all sorts of disconnected things, and never develop a real business.

While the questions in this part will seem obvious, the answers are the basis for everything in the PLANTS system. Be very clear with yourself on these. You can change them at any time, but you have to have an original plan in order to understand how the whole thing works.

Inventory: Just what it says. In this section, you're going to list what you already have under one "node," and what you need under another.

This is probably where you'll first feel the need to change, add, or delete categories. Go for it. This is a general template, and it needs to be tailored to suit your business, work style, and desires.

As always, I recommend making a copy of the map and working with that, rather than the original. That way you can make copies for other projects later, and have a familiar base from which to work.

It's also good insurance against accidents...

Go!

This is the actual PLANTS system itself, or at least a reasonable outline of it. The 6 main categories are included, as described in the chapter from "Need to Know." They are:

- Product
- Links
- Audience
- Network
- Traffic
- Success points

I recommend browsing the entire map, to get a good overview of what's included. Then, since you're working with a copy, slash away at it. Remove anything that doesn't fit with how you see yourself developing your business in the near term. There is way more here than most people will ever need to include. You can always go to the original and copy and paste anything back into your working version, as needed.

Also, add notes as you go.

I don't recommend trying to use the notes feature of Freemind, as it's terribly clumsy to access them when needed. In XMind, it's really convenient. Just tap the F4 key, and a text window will open. Type in your notes, or edit existing ones, and you're good to go.

When you're done adding or editing, click anywhere outside the text window. The text will be saved, and a small yellow "notepad" icon will appear on the node you just modified. Click on that in the future to access the notes. This is a very handy way to organize resource lists, questions, ideas, and snippets of advice from your research.

Beyond that, play with it. Experiment. Brainstorm. The whole thing is free, and it's something you can make as many copies of as you like. Don't be shy.

And don't forget to send me your comments, criticisms, and success stories. How did it work for you, and what do you think would make it even better?

Email me at paul@talkbiz.com

Enjoy!

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