

GETTING STARTED

Before you can get started, you'll need to install Freemind, the software used to create this map. The most recent version can be found at:

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

I chose Freemind for this product for a few reasons. First, it's free, which means you don't have to go out and buy extra stuff to use the thing. It's got more than enough features for what we're going to do.

It's also available for the Mac and Linux, so we're not excluding many people from using this.

The only other requirement is that you have Java installed. That should already be the case, so the overwhelming majority of you won't need to do anything but install the Freemind software and get started. You might have to update Java, if prompted, but recent security patches made by Sun make that a good idea anyway.

Once you've installed it, open SocialSeup.mm and we'll be on our way..

USING THE MAP

This mindmap is a very simple checklist that illustrates the process I outlined in the recent article on basic social site set-up. You can use it for one or many social media projects, as a planner or tracker, and can tailor it to your own experience and goals.

I recommend that you always work with a backup copy of the map, and keep the original to make copies for new projects.

Now, how can you best use it at each stage?

Learning

When you're new to the game, the biggest problem is often in knowing where to start, and figuring out what you want to do. The next issue is coming up with a plan for getting from where you are to where you want to be.

This map is very limited in its original form. It doesn't cover traffic or selling or a lot of other things you will want to do later. The object is to show you the basic structure. Having that info is often enough to remove the "stuck" factor, and help you get started on something that could prove quite valuable later.

You can add to this as you go along. Don't be shy about tailoring the thing. That's what it's for.

Planning

This part is easy, once you get the hang of a few keyboard shortcuts and navigating the map. You can start a new map, or just delete everything you don't want to do. Then assign priorities

to the things that need to be done, and add any specifics that are missing. Move them around so they're in the right order, and go.

You can use the number icons to set the priorities, or simply type that in along with the name of the node.

When you complete each task add a green check mark icon, using the selection from the left side of the Freemind screen, and move to the next part of the project.

To give you an idea of how easy this is, I recently decided to lay out a map for a fairly large and complex project I've been working on. Getting the whole thing done, with a sensible layout and complete set of steps to follow, took me less than 2 hours. In the process, I came up with some potentially huge improvements in the original plan.

When you start using mindmaps, you'll see how having a visual layout can add a lot of power to the ideas you come up with.

Organizing

Part of this is the planning we just discussed. There's another part that gives a lot of people trouble. Whether it's in your own product creation process or just keeping track of the seemingly endless supply of files that build up on your computer, being able to find what you need when you need it is critical.

You'll notice as you browse through the map that there are a few nodes that link to websites. (These have red arrows on them.) When you click on those, your browser will pop up and bring up the site the node is linked to. Using the right arrangement of categories, this is an excellent way to keep track of all those resources you find that you may want to use or refer to later. And you can use the Note function to give yourself reminders of what the site is for, or what you were thinking about when you added it to your collection.

To add a link to a web-based resource, create the node and fill in the label. While it's still highlighted, hold down the Control key and tap the letter K. (That's abbreviated as CTRL-K.) Then type or paste in the URL and hit return. (The option for this is also in the Insert menu.)

Here's where it gets fun.

You can link files on your computer into The Map. Create the node for the file and label it. Then hold down the Control and Shift keys and tap the letter K. (Ctrl+Shift+K) Or use the Insert menu.

A file browser will open. Change the filetype from .MM to All files. Then just browse to the directory the file you want linked to that node is in and click on it. Click okay, and you're done.

The next time you click on that node in your mindmap, it will open the default program for that file and load it in.

You can use this to create a dashboard for all your important files, or just the ones for a given project. For example, create a node called Library, and create links to all your PDFs, videos,

audio interviews, text files.

You could incorporate spreadsheets, source documents, tracking data, customer lists and more for a given project, all under one folded node. Or place them in various places on your project planner. With the right arrangement of categories, you can turn a simple mindmap like this into a complete business dashboard. And yes, you can link to other mindmaps.

Used correctly, Freemind (or other mindmapping programs) can become a mental operating system for your entire business.

Brainstorming

This has already been touched on. The visual layout of a mindmap can be a big help in coming up with new ideas. The key when doing this is to just play around. Don't turn it into work, or it won't.

Look at different parts of your system and see how they might be able to work together in new ways, or how one might help to improve the other.

An especially effective approach is to look at one asset and then look through the concepts and techniques and see which of them can help you leverage that asset for greater returns.

If there were just one phrase to keep in mind when brainstorming with this tool, it would be "Think about the links."

Navigating and Editing

When you first open this map, you'll see 3 nodes branching off the central node. The small circles next to each means there are further branches off of them. Click on the topic you want to explore, and they'll unfold, showing you more options.

You can also use the arrow keys to move around the map, and the space bar to fold or unfold the currently highlighted node, which will be the one that's shown in grey.

To create a child node (one further toward the outside of the map, tap the Insert key, type in the label, and hit Enter. To create a sibling node (same level, but below the currently highlighted node), hit the Enter key, type in the label, and hit enter again. To move a node up or down, hold down the control key and use the up and down arrow keys to move it.

You can cut or copy nodes and paste them into other sections of the map. They'll be attached as child nodes next to whichever node is highlighted when you do the paste.

To edit the label on the highlighted node, press F2 and then change it to whatever you want.

To remove a node, and all its child nodes, highlight it and hit the Delete key. If you goof, or just change your mind, hit CTRL-Z or use the Undo function in the Edit menu.

Don't forget to save your changes as you go. And, as we mentioned earlier, it's always a good idea to work with a copy of the original, so you have the full map to refer back to.

A better plan is to create a new map for each project, and build it to meet your needs as you go. You can always copy parts over from the working copy of the original into your new project map.

Let's say you wanted everything from the PLANTS Factors branch of the Profit Plan mindmap copied to the new map. You'd go to the original and highlight the node labeled "PLANTS Factors." Hit CTRL-C or use the right mouse button and choose Copy. Click in the screen of the new map, highlight the node you'd like to attach that to, and hit CTRL-V or the menu option Paste.

Voila!

If you do a lot of similar projects, this can make creating the map for them a much quicker process.

To get a look at a more complete and detailed mindmap product, which you can use to plan out anything from individual projects to entire businesses, grab a copy of [The Profit Plan System](http://talkbiz.com/profitplan/).

<http://talkbiz.com/profitplan/>

Not only is that one a truly useful system for planning and tracking your online activities, it's a great example of building a complete product around a mindmap. As you've seen if you followed along with these instructions, creating the map itself is a simple process.

Enjoy!

Paul