"Mind Mapping …for business...are you serious?"

Time and time again we get asked and challenged on an age-old issue of whether or not mind mapping is , at worst, just another fad, a "nice to have" or, at best, a real value-adding benefit that has a serious place within a business or organisation.

In our experience in working with a diverse range of global clients for over a decade now, we have noticed thousands of customers investing in Mind Mapping software for a variety of reasons…

- exponents of the original mind mapping technique as an aid to capturing, visualizing ideas and knowledge to aid understanding, retention and recall
- people in the area of education (educators, teachers, students, etc.) looking for software to help them consolidate the above technique in a teaching / learning environment
- business people in wide and varied disciplines with a requirement for more efficient and visual ways of capturing information, knowledge and data to aid focus and clarity on moving from ideas to action quicker and more productively
- senior managers, directors and business owners, with specific requirements around high-level strategic thinking, planning and "dashboard"-type approaches to capture, visualize, monitor and manage plans, priorities, objectives, projects, etc.
- Project managers and others involved in project work requiring intuitive, visual and tracking methodologies and tools to make the planning, scheduling and monitor and control stage of managing projects more visible, collaborative and, of course, productive and efficient.

For me, one of the interesting outcomes of interacting with many of these customers is a realisation that mind mapping holds different meaning, pre-conception and, dare I say, misconceptions - particularly in the business world.

Whilst mind mapping is generally recognised as a technique or a methodology to aid thinking and understanding (or variations on that theme) there is a "disconnect" between mind mapping as a basic concept and the actual application of a "way of working" that it has most definitely evolved into over recent years.

Although admittedly improving, there is nevertheless a lack of appreciation throughout the business world that mind mapping has moved on dramatically and has admirably kept pace with this modern technology-savvy world – the diverse functionality and capabilities of Mind Mapping software is the perfect example of how a very valid and creative methodology can be augmented and dramatically improved on, enabling it to be applied intuitively and easily in a whole plethora of personal, business and education environments.

The answer to how mind mapping can be applied and, more importantly, add value in business varies depending on the context, but is centred on some of the following business tenets:

Does lack of focus and clarity on some of the following get in the way of efficiency, productivity or performance?
- Discussions at meetings or brainstorming sessions
- Clear understanding of outcomes and requirements at planning meetings
- Monitoring and managing tasks and activities in the most efficient way
- Thinking things through thoroughly when planning strategies, objectives and projects
- Planning, scheduling and managing projects better
- Preparing documents, reports and presentations

In terms of addressing the business "value-add" question, the key issues emerging here are:
- Do any of the above aspects of business performance apply to you?

- Is there even the slightest opportunity or room for improvement in any aspect?
- Could better focus and clarity improve performance in any aspect?
- Are there others in your team, department or organisation to whom this could also apply?

To address the title of this document, I am seriously suggesting that business mind mapping software "has arrived" and does add real value in a business context –specifically designed to meet business needs with every function and feature included to augment and improve common business processes, from gathering ideas to managing objectives, tasks and projects.

But, it's not just about creating mind maps per-se, it's about..

- using a creative, engaging and visual methodology to think through, capture, visualise and structure knowledge, ideas, plans, projects, etc.;
- using the methodology to simplify and enable better prioritisation and decision-making;
- quick and effortless output to documents, presentations, project plans/schedules and reports

…all of this resulting in savings of time and effort, improved productivity and increased focus and clarity at every stage.

I suspect, there can't be many individuals, teams or whole organisations who would not accept that there is real bottom-line value to be gained for improving performance in these key aspects of everyday work.

Do you need to put pre-conceptions, or even the slightest misconceptions, about mind mapping to one side?
Do you need to take a fresh look at mind mapping, in particular business mind mapping software?

This is certainly an ever-increasing aspect of business life well worth a look, if you haven't done so already, I would recommend it!

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