

Drawing Mind Maps

by Olivier Serrat

Thinking as a Skill

Intelligence is a potential, and thinking is the operating skill through which it acts upon experience. Outside highly technical matters, perception is the most important part of thinking. If most errors of thinking are errors of perception—that being colored by emotions and values—thinking as a skill can be improved by practice and education. Numerous straightforward yet powerful tools encourage creativity and flexibility, and help optimize different styles of reasoning (including analyzing, integrating, planning, and problem solving). They include APC,¹ OPV,² PMI,³ brainstorming, lateral thinking, and mind maps. After they are mastered, these tools can be applied explicitly.



Mind maps are a visual means that represent, link, and arrange concepts, themes, or tasks, with connections usually extending radially from a central topic. They are used by individuals and groups (informally and intuitively) to generate, visualize, structure, and classify these.

Definition

We usually write notes as sentences that we break into paragraphs, lists, or bullet points. A mind map is a circular, nonlinear way of organizing information: it shows the connections between a central topic and the relative importance of the concepts, themes, or tasks that one relates to it. It can be applied by individuals and groups to generate, visualize, structure, and classify these whenever clearer thinking and improved learning will enhance performance and effectiveness.

Advantages

Here are a few advantages to using mind maps:

- The process of drawing a mind map is more interesting and entertaining than writing a report, or drafting a standard chart or table.
- The visual quality of mind maps allows users to identify, clarify, classify, summarize, consolidate, highlight, and present the structural elements of a subject more simply than with a standard set of notes. (It also assists review.)
- Mind maps facilitate recall because the clear association and linking of ideas mirrors the way the brain works—keywords and images are remembered with lesser effort than linear notes.⁴

¹ A stands for Alternatives; P stands for Possibilities; C stands for Choices.

² This stands for Other People's Views.

³ P stands for Plus, or the good points. M stands for Minus, or the bad points. I stands for Interesting, or the interesting points.

⁴ Memory is associative, not linear. Any idea probably has thousands of links in one's mind: mind maps allow associations and links to be recorded and reinforced.

- Mind maps are compact, with no unnecessary words; easy to draw; very flexible; and can summarize pages of information.
- Mind maps help identify gaps in information and shine clarity on important issues.

Process

The process of drawing a mind map can be described in a few steps: (i) start at the center of the page (rather than from the top-left corner); (ii) adopt an open, creative attitude; (iii) associate and link keywords and images freely; (iv) think fast; (v) break black-and-white boundaries with different colors and styles; (vi) do not judge; (vii) keep moving; and (viii) allow gradual organization by adding relationships and connections.

Further Reading

ADB. 2008. *The Reframing Matrix*. Manila. Available: www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/the-reframing-matrix.pdf

———. 2009a. *The Five Whys Technique*. Manila. Available: www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/the-five-whys-technique.pdf

———. 2009b. *The SCAMPER Technique*. Manila. Available: www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/the-scamper-technique.pdf

Edward De Bono. 2006. *De Bono's Thinking Course: Powerful Tools to Transform Your Thinking*. BBC Active.

Tony Buzan. 1995. *The Mind Map Book*. London: BBC Books.

For further information

Contact Olivier Serrat, Head of the Knowledge Management Center, Regional and Sustainable Development Department, Asian Development Bank (oserrat@adb.org).

.....
Asian Development Bank

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries substantially reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to two thirds of the world's poor: 1.8 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day, with 903 million struggling on less than \$1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

.....
Knowledge Solutions are handy, quick reference guides to tools, methods, and approaches that propel development forward and enhance its effects. They are offered as resources to ADB staff. They may also appeal to the development community and people having interest in knowledge and learning.

.....
The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent. ADB encourages printing or copying information exclusively for personal and noncommercial use with proper acknowledgment of ADB. Users are restricted from reselling, redistributing, or creating derivative works for commercial purposes without the express, written consent of ADB.

Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City
1550 Metro Manila, Philippines
Tel +63 2 632 4444
Fax +63 2 636 2444
knowledge@adb.org
www.adb.org/knowledgesolutions



