

2024 Mind Mapping Tools Survey

Quantitative proof of the value and versatility of this type of visual thinking tool



The State of Mind Mapping Tools 2024

It has been three long years since the last Mind Mapping Tools Survey, and much has happened. Mind mapping tools have been gradually moving to web-based, hybrid work and collaboration is here to stay, and AI has dropped like a bomb onto a fairly mature market, leaving developers and users alike struggling to figure out the best use cases for it within mind maps.

In other words, it's a perfect time to dip our toes in the water and figure out how the world is using and benefiting from our favorite type of visual thinking tools!

Survey objectives

- Shed light on the ways in which you and your peers utilize mind mapping tools to enhance your work.
- If you're thinking of investing in it, to help you clearly understand what it makes possible.
- Gain insight into the early use of AI-enhanced mind mapping tools.

Research highlights

Here are some most notable highlights from the 2024 survey:

Productivity increase: On average, mind mapping software helps busy executives to be 35% more productive in their work, a 10% increase from the 2021 survey. Surprisingly, 13% said it gave them a whopping 100% increase in their productivity!

Creativity increase: The largest percentage of respondents said it increases their creativity by 50%.

The top 5 benefits of mind mapping software, according to survey respondents, are Improved understanding of complex issues, reaching clarity of thinking faster, Increased productivity, managing information overload better and Improving their ability to do research

The top 5 applications of mind mapping software are knowledge management, creative problem solving, strategic planning, writing reports/outlining content and decision making.

Complex tasks beware! Over three-quarter of survey respondents (83%) say that

their mind mapping tool gives them the confidence to take on more complex projects that they would have previously avoided.

Quality work made easier: Over half of survey respondents (57%) believe mind mapping has improved the quality of their work to a large extent.

Information overload, begone! Nearly half of survey respondents (47%) called mind mapping tools “invaluable” in helping them tackle information overload.

AI usage is off to a strong start: Roughly one-third of survey respondents (37%) say they're already using AI-enhanced mind mapping and another third (34%) said they plan to start soon.

Top 3 uses of AI: Respondents cited these as their top 4 uses of the AI capabilities of their mind mapping tools: Expanding the content of their mind maps, exploring new perspectives and using it for efficient content summarization.

This is just the highlights. For more details and my analysis of the results, read on!

Wishing you many ideas and insights,

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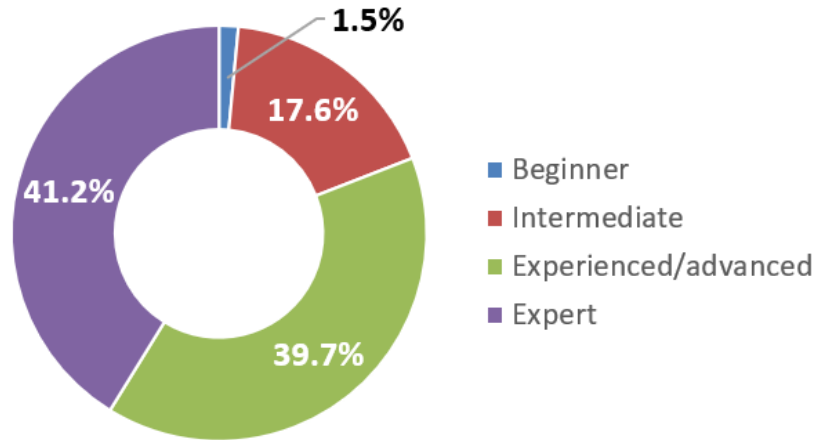
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2024 survey results

What is your level of experience with mind mapping tools?

The majority of respondents (57%) reported that they were either intermediate or experienced/advanced users of mind mapping tools.

Only 1.5% identified themselves as beginners, while just over 41% said they were expert users—an increase of 11% from the last survey.

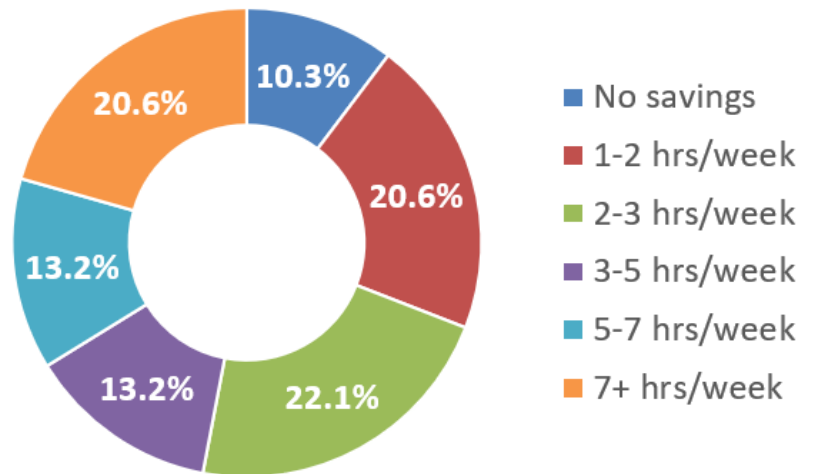


Approximately how many hours per week does your mind mapping tool save you?

Respondents to the 2024 survey continued to give their mind mapping tools high marks for its ability to save them time.

22% of all survey respondents said it saves them 2-3 hours a week, an increase of over 1% compared to 2021.

Another 21% say it saves them more than 7 hours per week—the equivalent of almost an entire work day!

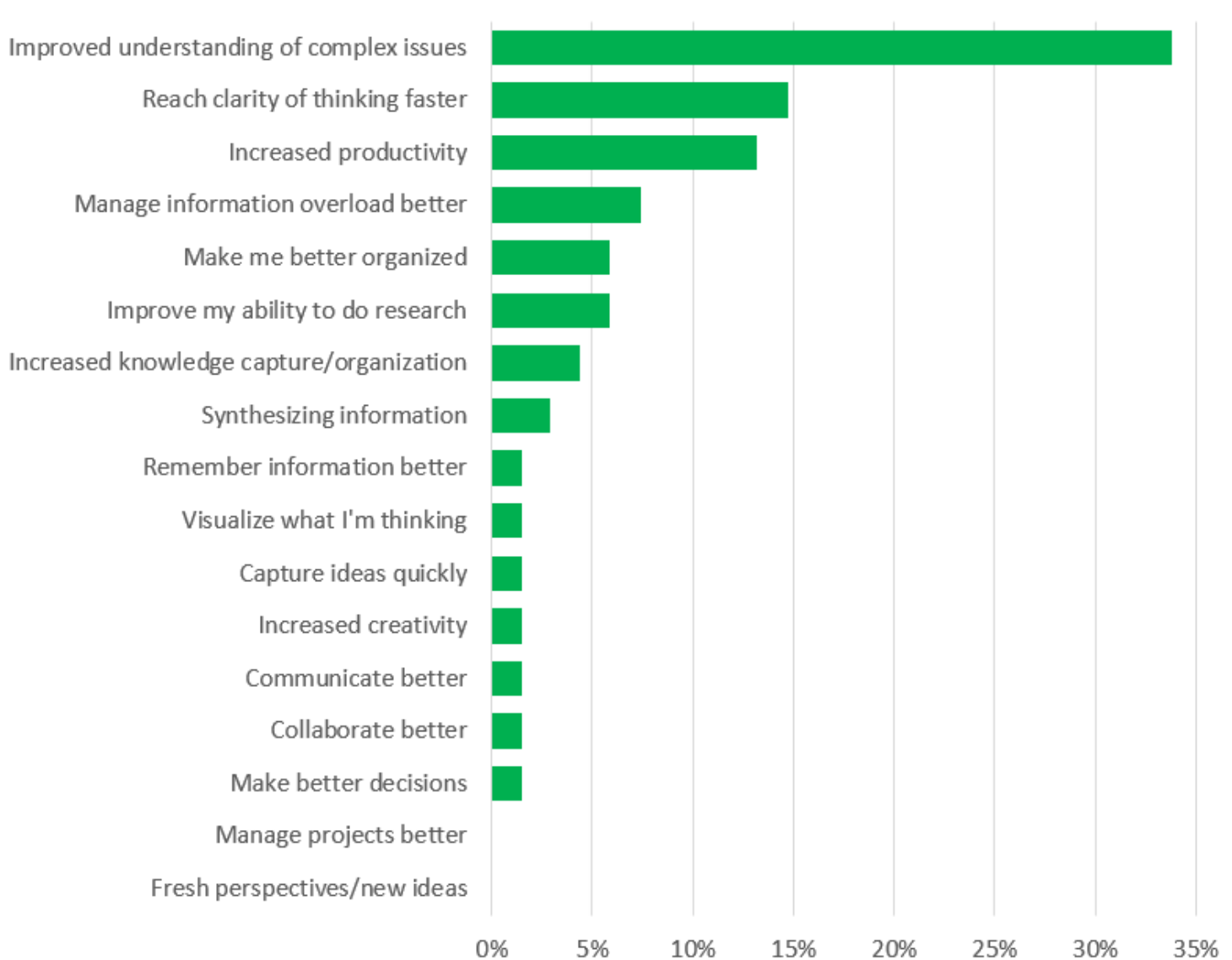


41% of expert users said it saves them more than 7 hours per week, more than double the overall results (21%). This isn't surprising, because they know how to get the results they seek faster than less experienced users. Plus, they probably use their mind mapping tool for more of their day-to-day tasks than less experienced users. That number drops to only 22% for experienced/advanced users.

Over 76% of intermediate level users experienced only 1-3 hours of savings per week.

What is the single biggest benefit you have experienced from using mind mapping tools?

Here are the biggest benefits survey respondents get from using mind mapping tools, in declining order of popularity:



“Improved understanding of complex issues” was the number one benefit in the 2021 survey and remains at the top for 2024 (33.8%). It was ranked more than 2 times higher than “reach clarity of thinking faster,” which moved from the number 3 to number 2 position with 14.7% of the responses.

“Increased productivity” leaped from number 9 in the last survey to number 3 in the 2024 survey (13.2%). Considering the manic pace of work today, workers need an edge, a tool that can help them with organizing their thinking, planning projects and executing them more efficiently.

“Managing information overload” moved up 3 positions, from number 6 in 2021 to number 4 in this latest survey (7.4%).

This data seems to suggest that information overload is getting worse. If you consider that the web is increasingly awash in AI-generated content, the flow of emails seems to be ever-increasing and there are more social media channels vying for our attention, it’s no wonder that workers seek a solution to help simplify their work.

Another surprising insight is where creativity ranks in the list of top benefits from mind mapping tools. “Capture ideas quickly” and “increased creativity didn’t even break into the top 10. They were ranked as 11 and 12, respectively (1.5% for each).

To summarize, here are the top 10 biggest benefits of mind mapping tools, according to survey participants:

1. Improved understanding of complex issues (33.8%)
2. Reach clarity of thinking faster (14.7%)
3. Increased productivity (13.2%)
4. Manage information overload better (7.4%)
5. Improve my ability to do research (5.9%)
6. Make me better organized (5.9%)
7. Increased knowledge capture/organization (4.4%)
8. Synthesizing information (2.9%)
9. Make better decisions (1.5%)
10. Collaborate better (1.5%)

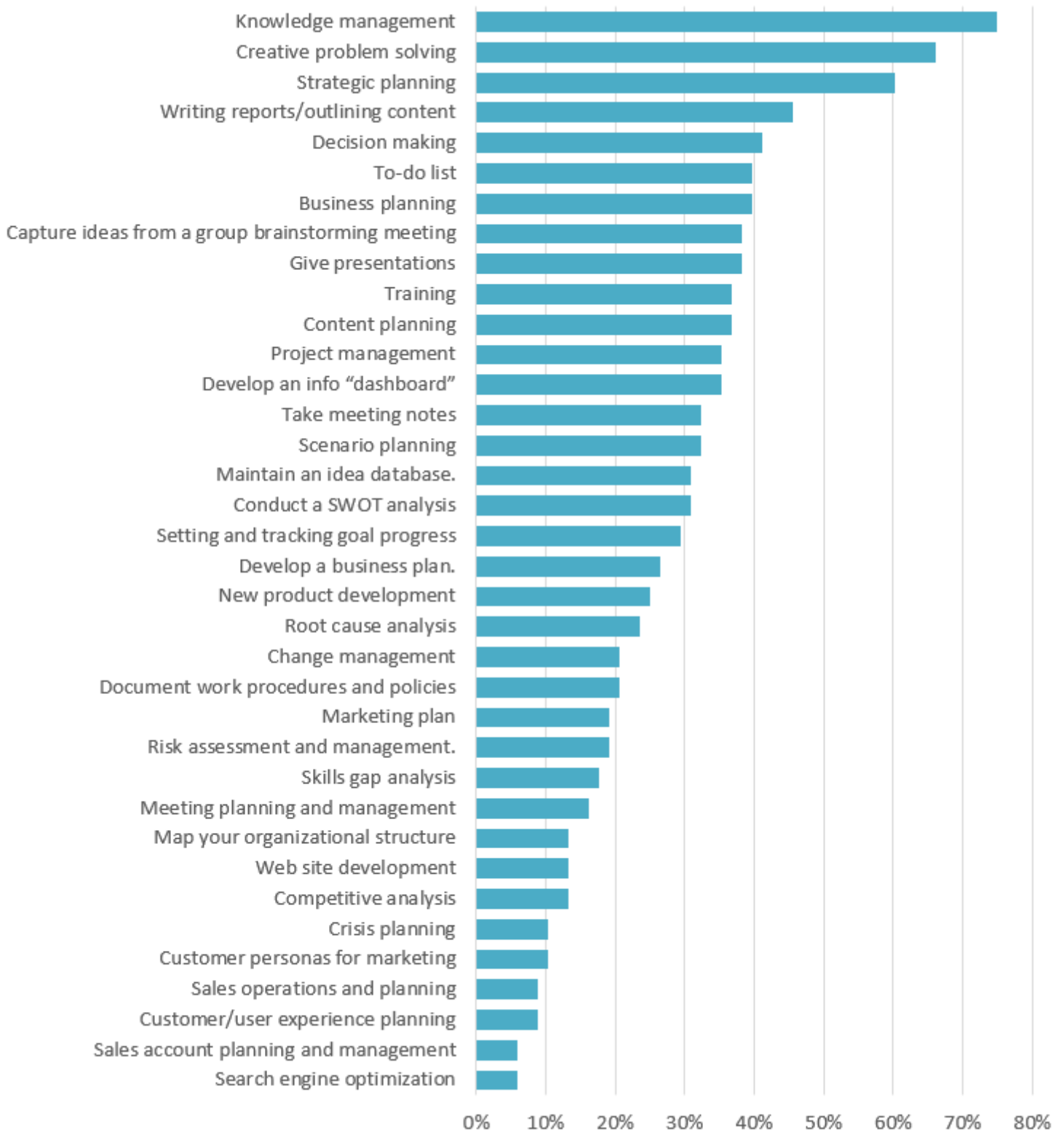
In what business applications do you currently use mind mapping tools?

This perennial question is always a good measure of how the nature of work is evolving. Here are the top 10 applications survey respondents cited:

1. Knowledge management (75%)
2. Creative problem solving (66.2%)
3. Strategic planning (60.3%)
4. Writing reports/outlining content (45.6%)
5. Decision making (41.2%)
6. Business planning (39.7%)
7. To-do list (39.7%)
8. Give presentations (38.2%)
9. Capture ideas from a group brainstorming meeting (38.2%)
10. Content planning (36.8%)

Knowledge management exploded into the first position in this survey (75%); in 2021, it was ranked number 3 and was only used by 51% of users.

Creative problem solving also moved up significantly, from number 5 in 2021 to number 2 in this survey (66.2%). Writing reports and outlining content only ranked number 9 in 2021, but is now in the number 4 position at 45.6%.

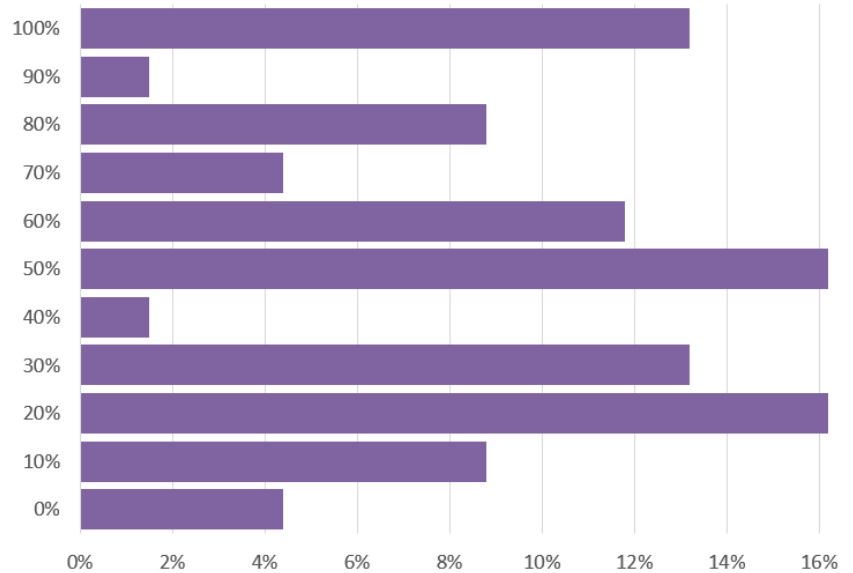


How much of a **PRODUCTIVITY** increase have you experienced from using mind mapping tools?

For this survey question, we had a tie between 50% and 20%, with 16% of respondents selecting each. So by averaging out those responses, we can conclude that mind mapping tools deliver a 35% productivity increase.

This is a bit higher than the 2021 survey, when respondents said it increased their productivity by 25%.

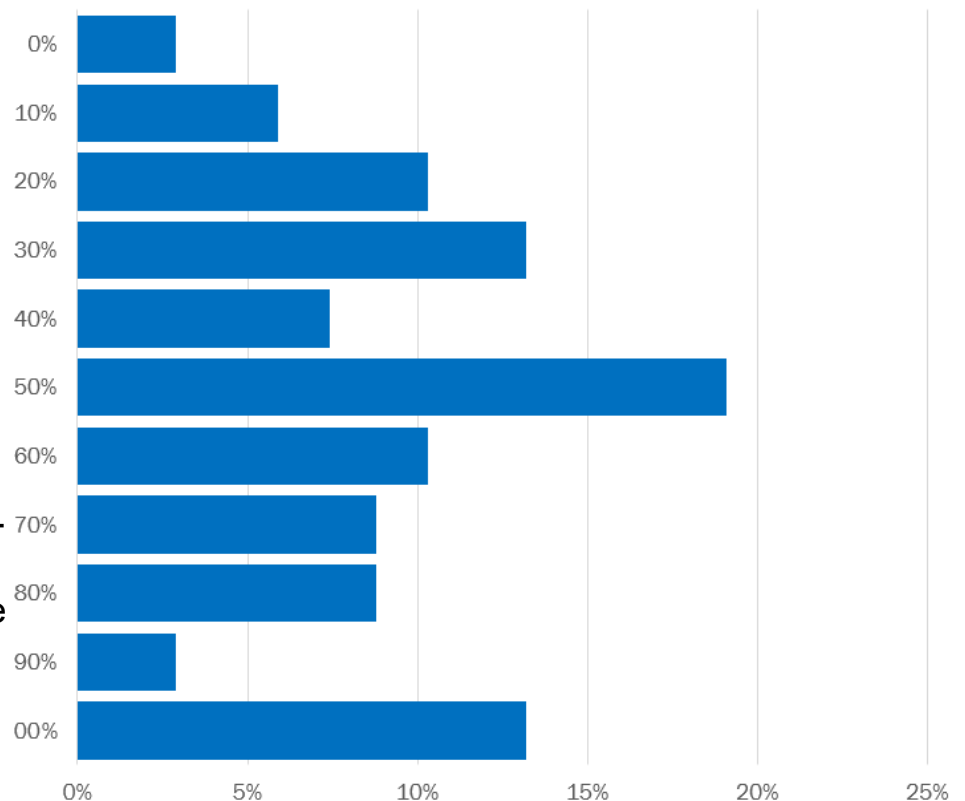
One big surprise: 13.2% of respondents said it provides them with a 100% increase in productivity!



How much of a **CREATIVITY** increase have you experienced from using mind mapping tools?

Creativity is very important to knowledge workers in general and users of mind mapping software specifically. That's why I continue to be interested in quantifying how much better it makes them at generating and cultivating ideas.

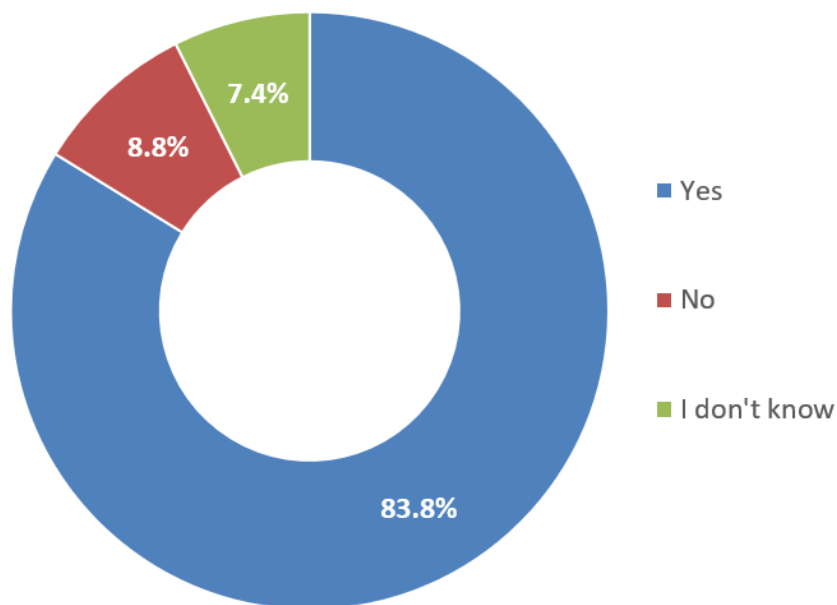
Users of mind mapping tools say that it increases their creativity by an average of 50%. This is the same as the 2021 survey results.



Does your mind mapping tool enable you to tackle more complex tasks and projects that you would have previously avoided?

I love asking “What if?” questions like this, because they help to communicate the real value that mind mapping tools provide to their users.

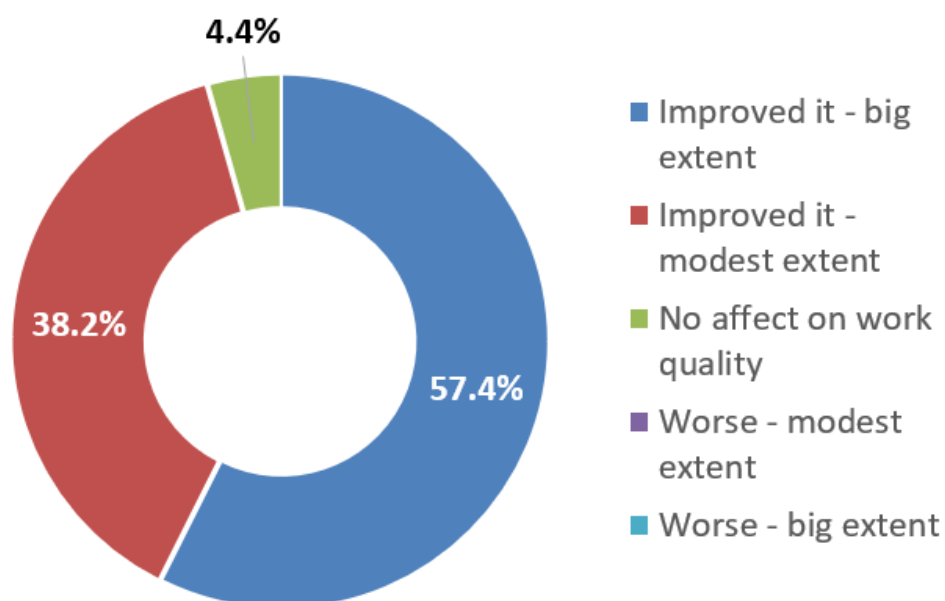
Overwhelmingly, almost 84% of respondents said they would not be able to tackle the complex tasks and projects that they’re now managing using mind mapping tools. That represents a 9% increase compared to the 2021 survey—perhaps a sign that work is getting more challenging for the majority of respondents. But their mind mapping tool enables them to cut their tasks and projects down to size and increase their productivity and creativity in the process.



How has using mind mapping tools contributed to the overall quality of your work?

This question, perhaps more than any other in this survey, points to the incredible value that mind mapping tools provide in today’s work environment.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (57.4%) say that it has improved the quality of their work to a large extent. Another 38.2% said it improved their work to a modest extent.



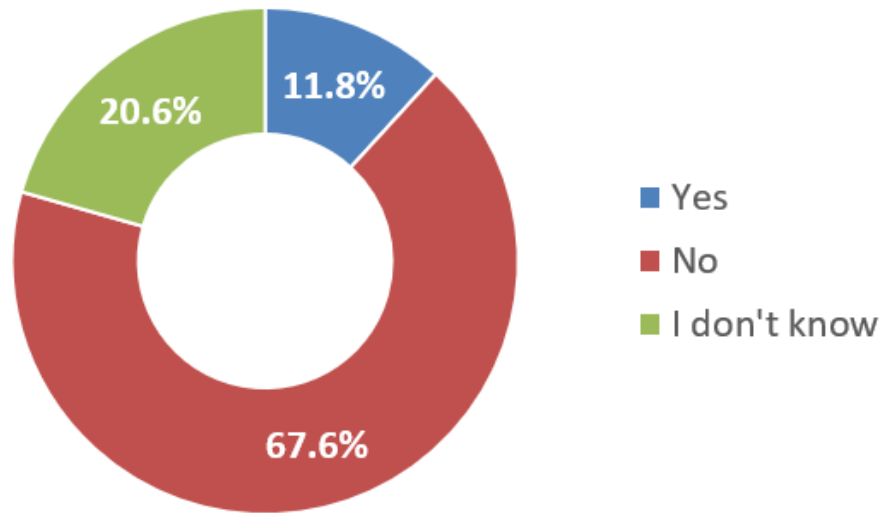
The message is clear: If you want to impress your boss or clients with higher-value thinking, mind mapping tools can be a powerful tool to help you do that.

If you didn't have mind mapping software, would you be able to produce the same quality of work?

This is another one of those great “What if?” questions, where I asked survey respondents to imagine that their favorite mind mapping tool was taken away from them. What would happen to the quality of their work?

Two-thirds of survey respondents (67.6%) said they would NOT be able to produce the same quality of work as before.

This is an increase of 4% compared to the 2021 survey. Only 12% said they could produce the same quality of work as before.

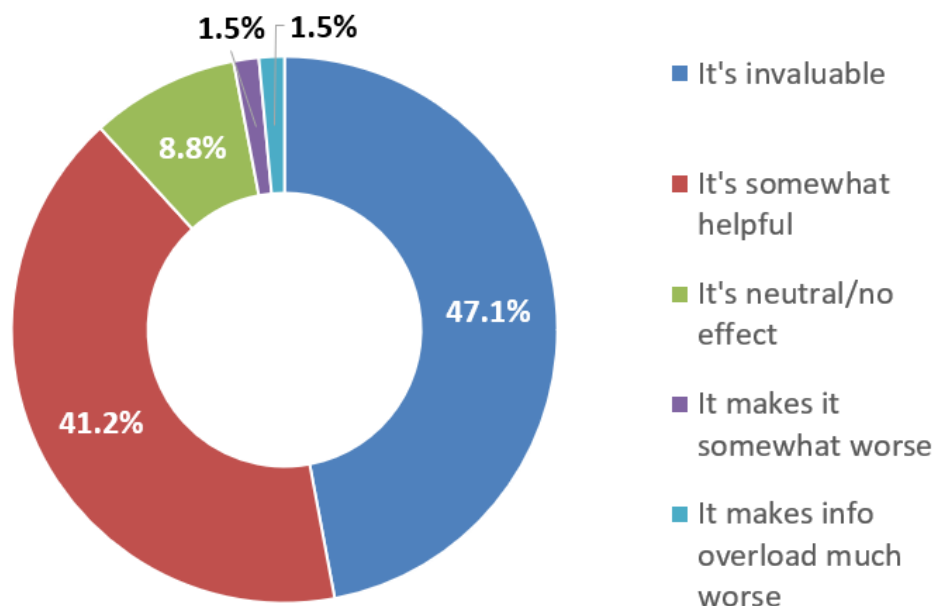


To what extent do mind mapping tools help you to manage information overload?

Information overload never seems to get better—only worse. Business moves at a frantic pace, workers are expected to do more with less information and we're awash in a digital tsunami of information, data and ideas. Thankfully, nearly half of this survey's respondents believe they have an irreplaceable ally:

47% describe their mind mapping tool as “invaluable.” That's an increase of nearly 4 percentage points compared to the 2021 survey. Looking at expert users, 64% say it's invaluable.

Another 41% of all survey respondents believe it's “somewhat helpful” in managing information overload. Only about 11% of survey respondents responded neutral or negatively to this question.



AI and Mind Mapping Tools

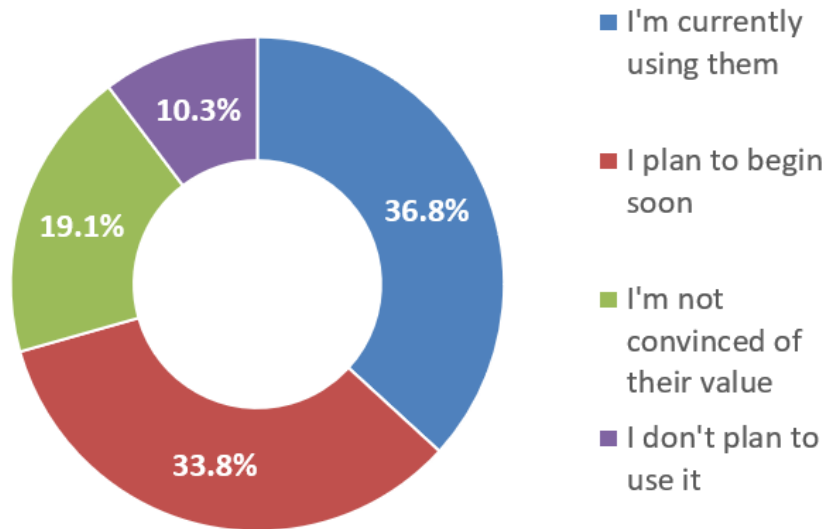
New in this survey was a set of questions that focused on the AI-enhanced mind mapping trend. Here's what survey respondents had to say:

Which one of these statements describes your current use of AI-enhanced mind mapping tools?

Just over one-third of respondents (36.8%) reported that they're using AI-enhanced mind mapping tools now, with another third (33.8%) saying that they plan to start soon.

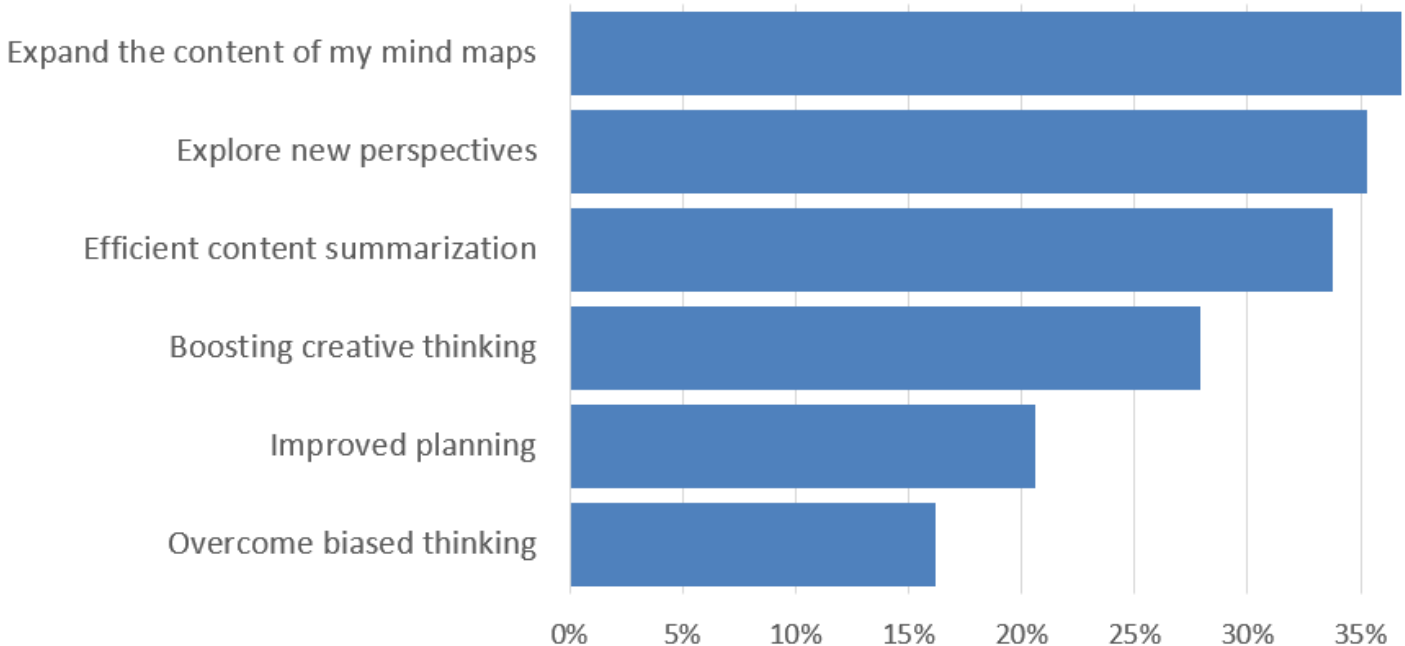
Another 19.1% said they're not yet convinced of the value of AI for mind mapping.

Only 10% said they don't plan to use it.



How are AI-enhanced mind mapping tools benefiting you in your work?

Respondents were given 6 choices and were instructed to check all that applied to their use of AI-enhanced mind mapping tools. Not surprisingly, the top benefit selected by them was expanding the content of their mind maps (36.8%). This isn't surprising because this is what developers have enabled users to do in their first iteration of AI-



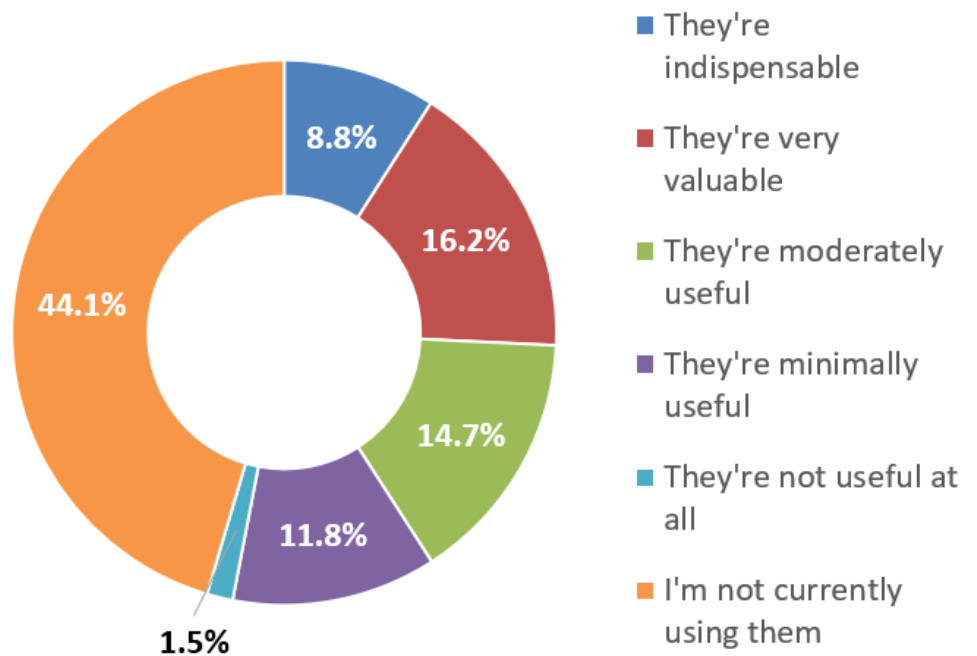
enhanced mind mapping. Following close behind were “explore new perspectives (35.3%) and “efficient content summarization” at 33.8%. These are both good applications of AI in the mind mapping environment, in my opinion.

If you're currently using AI-enhanced mind mapping tools, how would you describe your level of satisfaction with them?

The responses for this question were skewed by the large number of respondents who said they're not yet using AI-enhanced mind mapping tools—nearly half (44.1%).

The next biggest group of respondents (16.2%) characterized their use of it as “very valuable.”

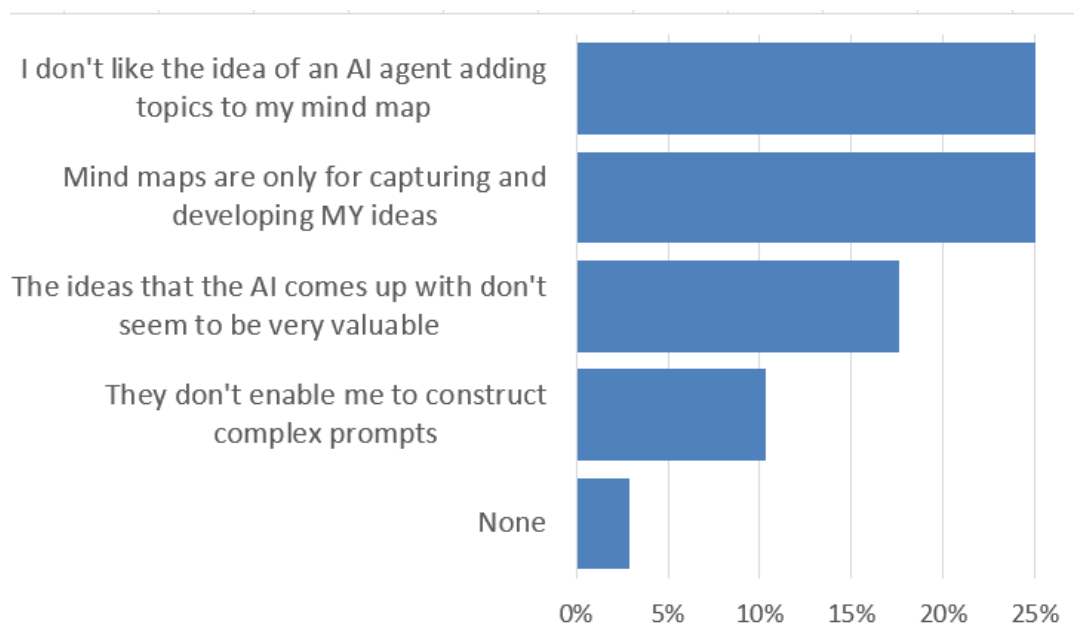
Only 13% said they believed it's either minimally useful or not at all.



If you have any concerns about utilizing AI-enhanced mind mapping tools, which of these statements are closest to your feelings about it?

This question was optional, to ensure that I wasn't forcing people to respond to my overly pragmatic and somewhat negative concerns about AI and mind mapping.

Two responses tied for first place with 25% of agreement:



- Mind maps are only for capturing and developing MY ideas
- I don't like the idea of an AI agent adding topics to my mind map

The next most popular response was “The ideas that the AI comes up with don't seem to be very valuable” (17.6%). I've noticed that, too. But I think it may be due to the fact that current iterations of mind mapping tools don't support more lengthy and complex prompts, which are usually required to get the most valuable and useful responses from existing AI engines.

Do you have any comments, observations or questions you'd like to share about AI-enhanced mind mapping tools?

This open-ended question resulted in some truly thought-provoking answers:

“They exist because they are technically possible rather than because they can solve an established problem.”

“Generative AI can be helpful for framing and sanity checking your work. Using it to write what should be the author's own words is likely to undermine the value of using mind mapping tools in the long term, because the author will not grow as a result of this “knowledge work”. They will not learn by doing. The results will be generic and will lack strategy, insight, priorities, and context, and the author will not be able to further explain or defend decisions.”

“AI mind mapping is too impersonal.”

“AI somehow takes the fun out of mind mapping.”

“Valuable tool if used as a resource not as ‘the answer.’”

“When I tried it the AI did come up with a few unexpected ideas but not especially valuable. I think mind maps excel at encouraging personal (human) creativity and that will become even more important in a world where AI plays an increasingly prominent role.”

“They overcome the blank canvas, kickstarting your own thought process.”

“The tools are simplistic at this point. Excited on where they are going.”

“The potential for AI-enhanced collaboration continues to increase.”

“Need better prompting capabilities for the built in tools. The real power of pure AI GPTs is that they let you create custom prompts like “answer as a CxO” If I wanted to

create a mind map of a marketing strategy for example, I would like to define the persona of the user very precisely.”

“AI have to be part of mind mapping software, it can be very helpful , beyond adding automatically new items or notes. AI should be able to understand the context of a human created mind map before making suggestions. It's important too that AI could suggest appropriate illustrations and color schemes in order to improve the mind map's design.”

I share many of the views expressed by these survey respondents. For example, in its infancy, AI-equipped mind mapping tools can only submit the simplest of prompts. The best results come from building thorough, detailed prompts that give the AI engine plenty of context surrounding your query. What we see today is a decent start, but it has a long way to go.

I also like the idea of using AI to frame and sanity check your work. I've stated on the blog and in several recent webinars that one of the most practical uses of AI is to feed it what you've been working on and then ask it to consider it from different perspectives. What are you overlooking? What additional factors should you consider? How have others approached similar challenges?

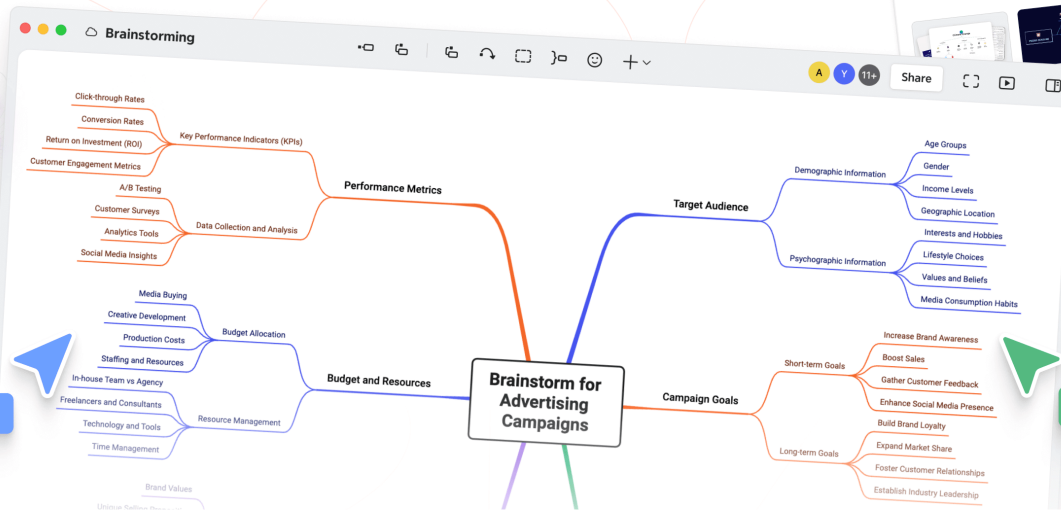
Another person noted that AI-enhanced mind mapping is a “valuable tool if used as a resource not as ‘the answer.’” So true! Remember, AI tools are not capable of creative thought. They atomize the content of the internet, remix it and serve it back to you in responses to prompts. At the most, its output ought to be used as a STARTING POINT or as an adjunct to your own best thinking. It shouldn't provide THE answer.

The problem is that many people who need answers in a hurry will do just that. They'll take what looks like a “right answer” from the AI tool and run with it—even though that idea probably has relatively low value.

Finally, I love this person's out-of-the-box suggestion of using AI as a design assistant: “AI could suggest appropriate illustrations and color schemes in order to improve the mind map's design.” That's an area that could have a lot of potential for visual thinking in general, not just mind maps. There's already a tool called Napkin.ai that can take words or a paragraph and generate a visual representation of it.

If I had to characterize the overall tone of these verbatim comments, I'd call it “cautious but hopeful.” We all know there's much more to come in what AI can do for us. But there's also a sense of determination that we must double down on what makes us uniquely human—our innate creativity.

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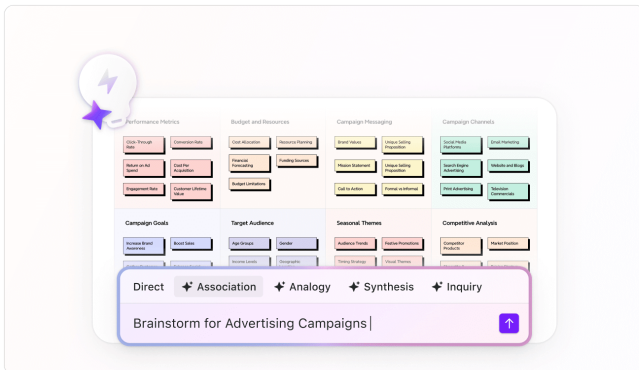


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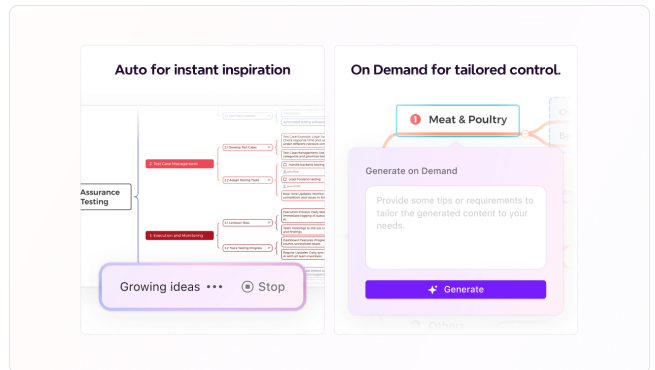
Real-time Collaboration

Share your mind maps with team members, and you can co-edit simultaneously and miss no updates at all.



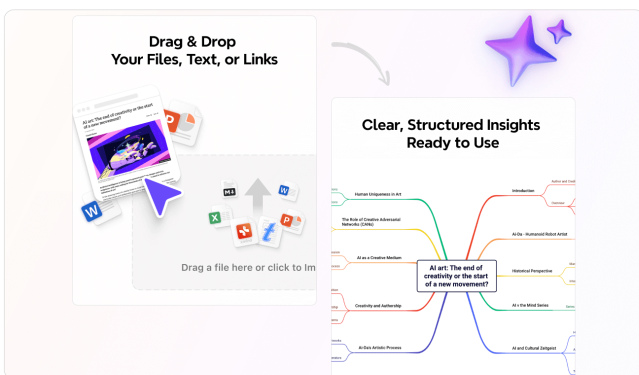
AI Brainstorming Hub

Spark creativity with AI-powered collaborative brainstorming for personal projects or real-time teamwork.



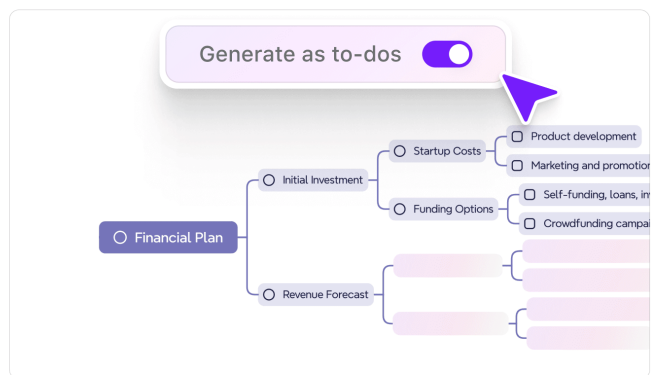
AI Mind Mapping

Input the central idea, and AI will generate a mind map instantly; or create more precise work based on your prompt.



AI Copilot

A Brand New way to summarize any text, link, or file into a mind map in seconds.



AI-generated To-dos

When you're unsure where to begin, AI creates an actionable to-do list to kickstart your project.

Thanks so much for helping to make this 2024 Mind Mapping Tools Report another fascinating snapshot into the world of mind mappers!

Best Regards,
Chuck Frey
Founder & Author

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(formerly The Mind Mapping Software Blog)

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Questions?

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