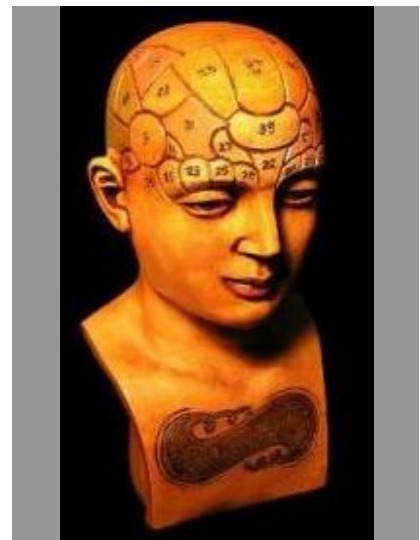


Mind Mapping

A skill every modern manager should possess.

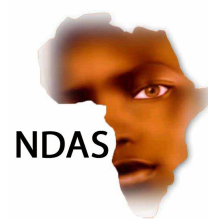
SIFISO CHIKANDI



Ntuthuko
Development
Advisory
Services

Do good. Do it well. Sustainably!

RESOURCES FOR PROJECT MANAGERS



About the Author and this book

The Author



Sifiso Chikandi has worked in the development sector for 21 years. He has worked in the academia, UN and ActionAid International. He is a founder of Ntuthuko Development Advisory Services (NDAS-Africa) a consultancy services firm. He is a consultant on project design, management and evaluation and has been providing training and consultancy services since 2004.

About the Book

Mind Mapping: A skill every modern manager should possess

The promotion to management brings with it much responsibility. Suddenly you must think, plan, guide, motivate, lead, manage, be extremely knowledgeable about your technical field, get a decent grasp of your team members' fields, and develop understanding of new areas – strategy, management approaches, problem solving, etc. On top of that you have many stakeholders to inform and convince. Management responsibility demands high levels of reflection, organization and effectiveness in communication. In this book we share a unique tool that can assist managers to be more efficient and effective in their work. Amazingly, learning the basic skills improves managers' problem-solving, communication, presentations, project planning, and facilitation abilities. This book presents an introduction to this amazing tool - Mind Mapping.

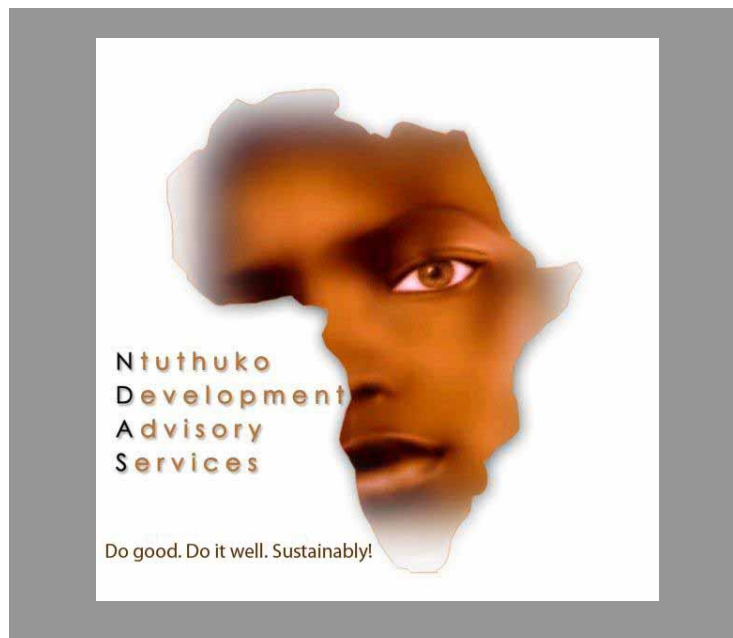
The NDAS-Africa Resources for Project Managers Series

This book is part of the NDAS-Africa Resources for Project Managers Series. The series is produced by Ntuthuko Development Advisory Services (NDAS-Africa) to share our knowledge and experiences with managers in the development sector. One of the rewards of consultancy work is that it affords us access to information across a number of organizations and allows us to develop insights on how problems that cut across organizations can be addressed. It is our view at NDAS-Africa that part of our responsibility is to share some of our knowledge and insights with development sector managers. In the process we assist the managers to be better at what they do but also can engage in processes of mutual learning – something that we all need if the investment of money, passion and effort in the development sector is to prove rewarding to us and the people on whose behalf we strive.

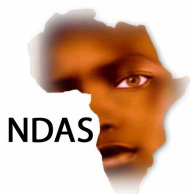
May, 2010

Contents

What is Mind Mapping?.....	3
The Strengths of Mind Mapping.....	4
Practical Applications.....	7
A concluding word.....	14



WWW.NDAS-AFRICA.ORG



What is Mind Mapping?

Mind Mapping Defined

Mind Mapping is a visualization technique that uses categories to organize information and ideas to facilitate better understanding of the linkages between pieces of information.

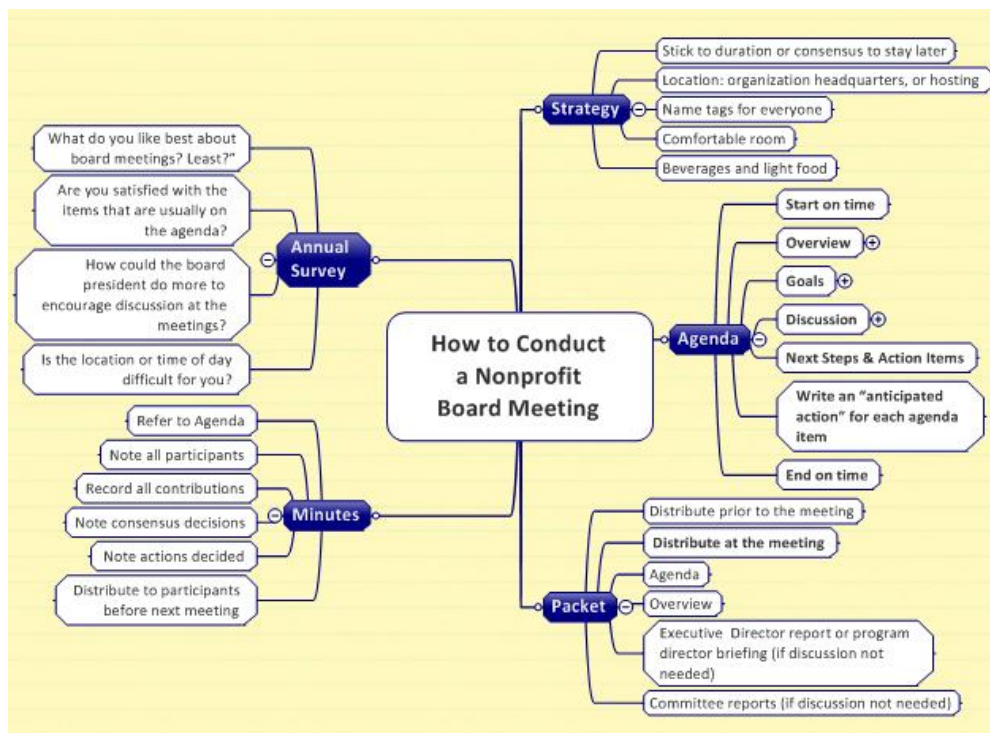
A Mind Map consists of a central idea around which related ideas are organized. As new ideas are developed, they are added to the mind map at levels that reflect their relationships with ideas already on the map.

Put simply, Mind Mapping allows for the structuring of thoughts, ideas and processes with a view to ensure all key components are addressed and the relationships between those components are understood.

One strength of Mind Mapping is that the structure does not have to be imposed from the outset. Ideas can be listed and clustered allowing the structure to emerge from the ideas.

Figure 1 below shows presents a Mind Map of a guide on conducting a nonprofit organization board meeting.

Figure 1: Guide 'How to Conduct a Nonprofit Board Meeting'



Key Features of Mind Mapping

Key features of Mind Mapping include:

1. Visual presentation of ideas.
2. A central issue around which ideas are organized.
3. Flexibility to add ideas and notes on the main ideas.
4. Can deal with issues where a structure already exists and what is needed is application (for example SWOT analysis).
5. Can also deal with issues where there is no initial structure (for example discussion of staff morale in an organization).
6. Allows free flow of ideas before 'boxes' or structure is imposed thus allowing for creativity.
7. Allows for the use of symbols, pictures, and colours to further convey messages or assist recall.
8. Is suitable for a wide range of individual and group processes of reflection and planning.

The Strengths of Mind Mapping



Overview

Mind mapping has several strengths. This section presents some of the key features that I have found useful over the years. I should mention here that I have been using Mind Mapping since 1989 when I was a student a university student. In 2002 I started using computer software for my mind maps.

Improves recall

Personal experiences

I have always struggled with recall. As a result, I was forced to drop history in high school. On the other hand, I have always found tasks in which I must work out solutions easier to handle. Unfortunately, it is not always the case that solutions must be worked out. A certain level of recall is necessary to facilitate choices and decisions.

I first started using Mind Mapping as a way of studying. At the time I was not aware of the vast literature on using Mind Mapping as a learning technique for children.

Mind Mapping allowed me to give structure to learning topics, identify issues relevant to the topic, and use those issues to either further modify the structure or add detail on part of the structure.

Starting with learning topics, I then extended the same practices to reflection exercises. The result has been an ability to quickly figure out structure, organize information between structural issues and detail, and link key elements of history with key elements of the organizing structure. I am still not good at recalling dates but I now have a better ability to use historical developments to understand their role in shaping the present. Working as a policy analyst across sectors and moving rapidly between different types of assignments these skills have proved invaluable. When I must recall, I recall the structure first and the details come easier. If I do not get all the details it is not a train smash!

The Theory

Many authors credit Tony Buzan for the development of Mind Mapping. I am not sure about origination of the idea but I agree that he has made great contributions to the knowledge and practice of Mind Mapping (to some of us mind mapping is like swimming. It is difficult to credit an individual with inventing swimming but we can credit individuals for contributions that have improved swimming techniques and spread those techniques widely). More about the history of Mind Mapping later.

Tony Buzan, a British psychologist is the founder of the Tony Buzan Organization that holds trademarks on the term 'Mind Maps' in many parts of the world including the UK and USA. Tony Buzan, the Tony Buzan Organisation, and various other Buzan-related organizations argue that the human left and right brains work differently. The left brain being more about structured while the left is creative.

Using a technique like Mind Mapping, it is argued, uses more of the brain's capabilities by getting the right brain into tasks in which it is usually excluded. The key is to use colour, shapes, etc. and other elements of association. It is argued that Mind Maps harnesses the full range of cortical skills - word, image, number, logic, rhythm, colour and spatial awareness - in a single, uniquely powerful manner. In so doing, one gains the freedom to roam the infinite expanses of the brain.

Concluding observation

History (which I have admitted I am not very good at) has examples of great philosophers who used Mind Mapping technique to reflect and present their work. The Tony Buzan Organisation and affiliates have produced evidence on the effectiveness of their techniques. On a personal level, I care less about the theory and more about what works in practice. Mind Mapping has improved my ability to handle massive amounts of information. There are simple features of the technique that make such recall possible. Be skeptical about theory but adopt what works for you.

Important Features of Mind Maps

- Structure to organize information
- Ability to see all information on a single sheet
- Ease of creating templates and models for handling similar issues



Improves clarity

Separating structure from detail is a basic requirement in communication. Mind Maps facilitate such separation. The Mind Map presented in Figure 1 illustrates the important things that must be thought about in organizing a board meeting. There are the broad categories (strategy, agenda, board pack, minutes, and annual survey). Each of these has associated detail on preparation and execution. By organizing information in this way we gain clarity on the range of issues to be considered. Some call it seeing the forest. We can see the whole and place the parts where they belong. New ideas can be positioned at the appropriate level.

Bridges different learning styles

Personal experiences

The biggest challenge of my professional career came when I was involved in developing a field toolkit for rights-based approaches. The process of developing the toolkit brought together those of us working on policy issues and field officers. The workshop was facilitated by a team from the Institute of Development Studies at Oxford. The facilitators insisted on starting off by discussing individual field tools. The field staff happily presented their individual tools and engaged in discussion. The three days for which this went on were extremely frustrating for me. Everything appeared disorganized. The facilitators took note of my frustrations and urged me to be patient. On day four, they began to pull things together to develop the toolkit. At this point it all made sense. I had learnt an important lesson.

As individuals we have different learning styles. Some prefer to begin with the structure and add the details. Others start with the details and finish with form.

Often as facilitators we impose our preferred ways of working and force groups to do things our way. Fortunately, in my case, I could not leave when I felt frustrated. Contributing to that toolkit was an important part in my journey with the organisation. In most situations the people we make presentations to do not have to take anything they find punishing.

Mind mapping and Learning Styles

Mind Mapping can bridge different learning styles when individuals must jointly develop ideas. Every process of developing ideas begins with a central issue on which the process is organized.

Mind Mapping allows us to work with both the structure and the detail at the same time. Participants can bring up thoughts as they occur to them. The thoughts are captured and visible to all. Participants keen on structure can suggest where an idea belongs in the structure. Those concerned with content can keep bringing up the content. Even as those keen on structure help develop the structure, such a structure is less restrictive as it is not imposed by the facilitator. It is a structure that can be challenged. Thinking takes place outside of boxes and the appropriate boxes are defined by the group!

Mind Maps facilitate:

- Ordering of information so that structure emerges
 - Details can be placed at the appropriate level
- In this way clarity is enhanced.

Mind Maps can help bridge differences in learning styles.

- In facilitation, all ideas can be captured and discussed as they emerge.
- Individuals who prefer to work with structure can develop structure without imposing it on those who prefer free thought.
- Structure can be developed as a last step through consensus.

Builds on skills managers may already have

Many project managers that have been engaged in the development sector have learnt a number of participatory approaches that are based on adult learning theory. Among such techniques are Participatory Action Research, Metaplan, Visualisation in Participatory Programmes (VIPP), Goal Oriented Project Planning (GOPP or ZOPP in German). Many may not know the names of the techniques but use elements of these approaches or their techniques.

The various adult education theory based approaches emphasize, in varying degrees: visualization, flexibility in structure, discovery, and mutual learning.

In VIPP a large number of multi-coloured cards of different shapes and sizes are used to capture ideas and posted on a wall. The cards are moved to create clusters. Cluster labels are developed and the previously unstructured discussion takes form. Often photographs are taken and/or the final content is transcribed into a text document.

At a functional level, Mind mapping is similar to VIPP, GOPP and other participatory learning approaches. A major difference is that nowadays instead of having a fancy briefcase containing cards, a pair of scissors, sticky-stuff/glue, markers, etc. all I need now is a laptop, the correct software and a projector. With these I can gain all the advantages of visualization and have all my work on the computer ready for presentation.

Can be applied across functions

Mind Mapping can be applied in a variety of situations. The situations in which I have used Mind Mapping include:

- Planning and facilitating workshops
- Planning and structuring presentations
- Situation analyses and project design
- Developing business plans
- Thinking through the content and structure of reports
- Taking minutes of meetings
- Developing a project work break-down structure
- Creating GANTT charts
- Organizing and analyzing information; and
- Creating the structure and content of this book, among many other uses.



Single-Page Presentation of Information

Mind Mapping allow presentation of all information related to a subject to be presented on a single page. Such presentation allows a complete view which facilitates analysis of the whole. The only requirement is to be able to expand or decrease the amount of detail viewed.

My personal experience is that it is easier to follow when I can see the whole picture. I can analyse, satisfy myself as to the completeness of the picture, and check the detail to ensure all my concerns are adequately addressed.

The single page presentation also has another advantage. While I love PowerPoint, especially when used for a well structured and concise presentation, I often find many presenters do not share their presentations ahead of delivery. Nor do they share the structure of their presentations or keep it where it is visible. Often, I get lost in the presentation: wondering where we are headed, where we are, and trying to create a thread between preceding slides and the next slide. Mind Mapping eliminates this pain. I can focus on the substance.

Great IT Products

The software available for Mind Mapping today has created unlimited potential for uses of Mind Mapping. For example, once created, a Mind Map can be turned into a PowerPoint presentation, A Word document, or a project plan, at the click of a button. My personal favourite is using Mind maps to create and enter data into Microsoft Project whose interface has never appealed to me. More on this topic in the next section.

Mind Mapping should be viewed as a basic literacy skill for anyone who must communicate ideas.



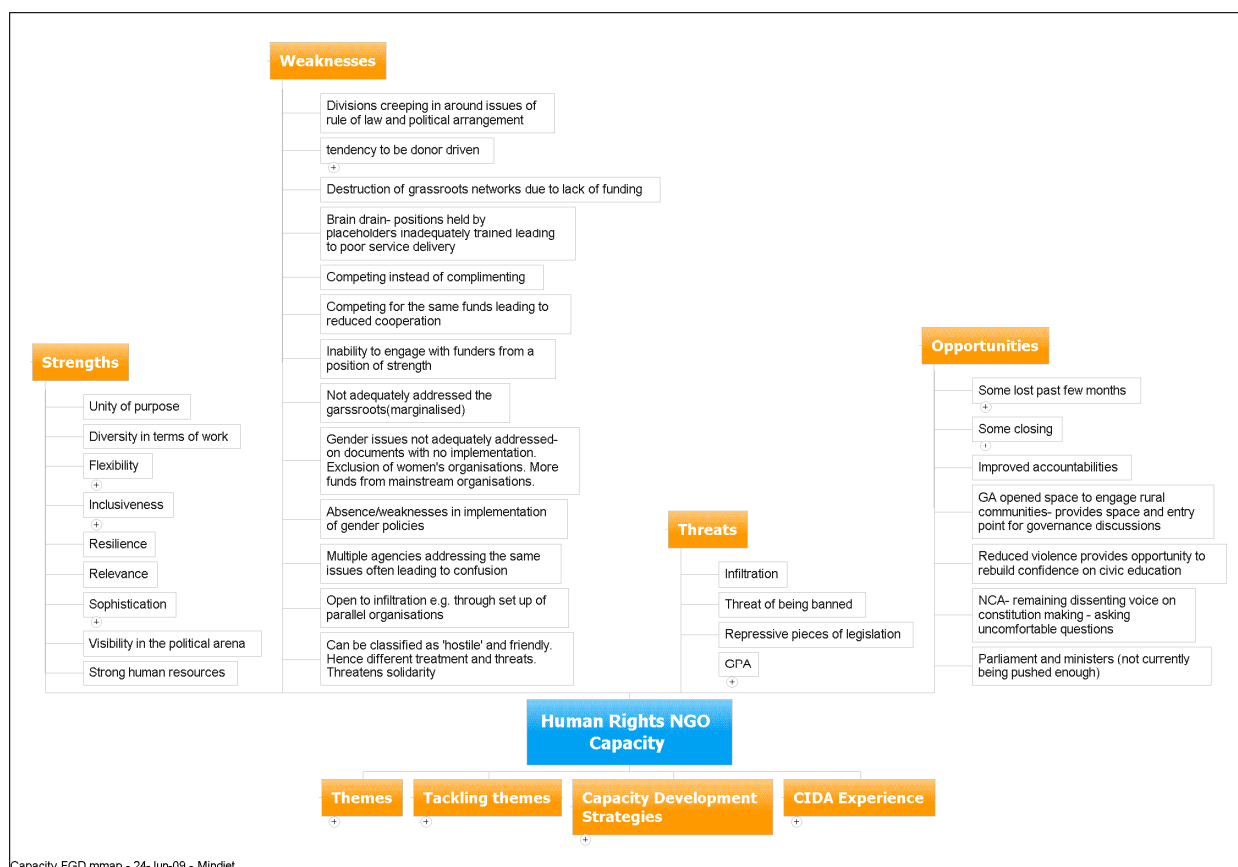
Overview

In this section we present some examples of Mind Maps. All the Mind Maps have been developed using a single software package.

Case 1: Brainstorming and Focus Group Discussions

I have used Mind Mapping to facilitate brainstorming sessions and Focus Group Discussions. I begin by placing the issue to be brainstormed at the centre of my Mind Map. I invite ideas/thoughts from the participants and type these in while projecting the Mind Map. The ideas are visible to all. New additions can be expansions on ideas already captured or they can be new additions. Comments on issues are added as notes. When the ideas stop flowing, I facilitate a group process of clustering the ideas that have emerged. The clusters form the basis of further rounds of brainstorming. The technique is useful for facilitating all kinds of discussions. Figure 2 below presents the result from a focus group discussion on capacity building.

Figure 2: Output from a Focus Group Discussion



Capacity FGD.mmap - 24-Jun-09 - Mindjet

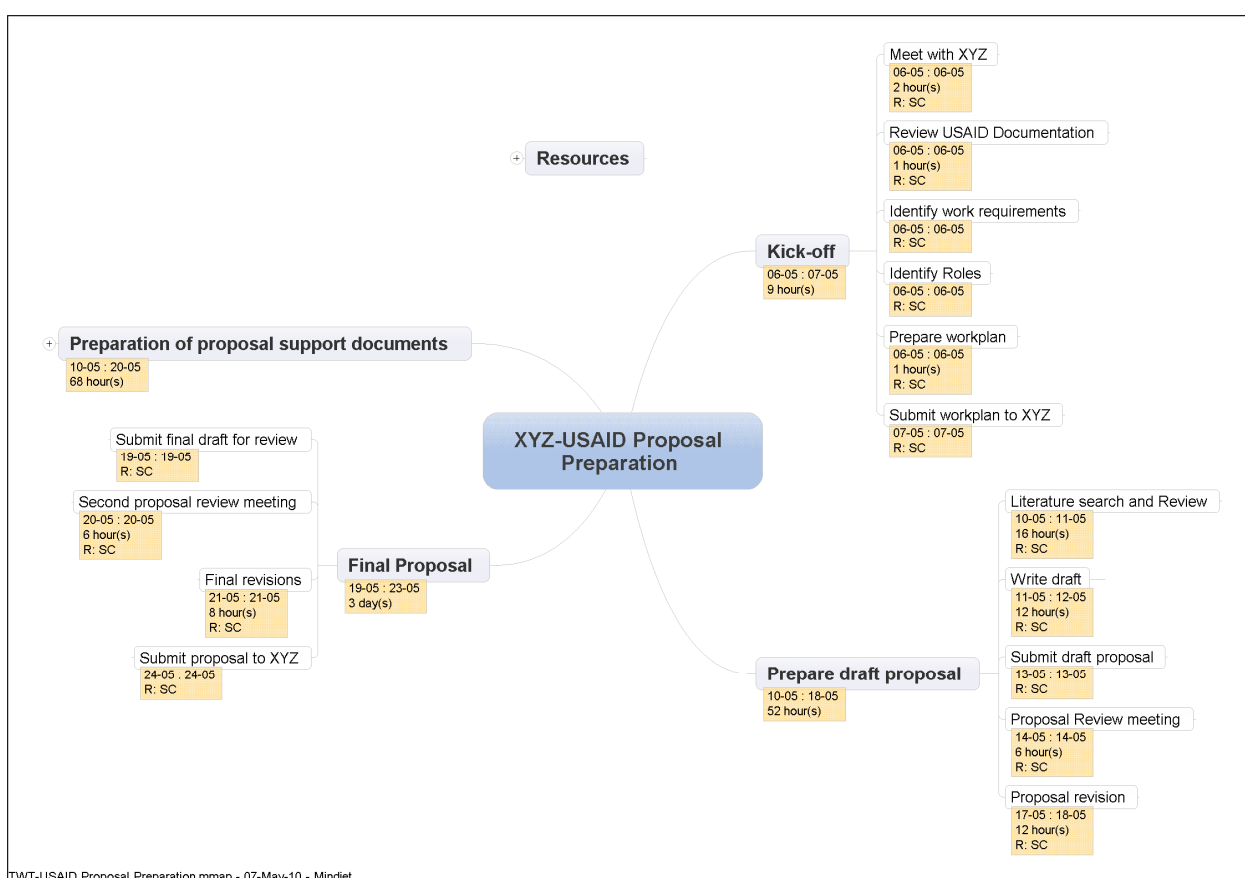


Case 3: Work Planning

I also use Mind Mapping to plan my assignments and projects.

I place the project title in the middle of my Mind Map. List down the work that needs to be done. Group the work activities. Assign each group a descriptive name. Look at the groups for completeness. Once this is done I start to add task information. This includes start and finish, durations of tasks, and the resources to be used. Figure 4 below shows an example of a project work plan.

Figure 4: Mind Map application in Work Planning



In this example I started by listing tasks, then grouped and labeled them. Then I added new information – the dates, duration in hours and resources (people to undertake the tasks). Notice also the presence of a floating topic called 'Resources'. I used the floating topic to record all resource materials available for the assignment.

The software programme I use for Mind Mapping interfaces with Microsoft Project. I then use this feature to present a workplan in the form of a Gantt Chart. Thus, I make use of an important feature of Microsoft project without needing to directly enter any information. See Figure 5 for the resulting workplan.



Case 3: Work Planning Cont...

Figure 5: Workplan/GANTT Chart from Mind Map



The software programme I use for mind Mapping has an add-on feature in which I can enter resource names and costs. Using this feature I view my Mind Map in the add-on and move from project view to budget view to get project cost. Again this is just at the click of a button from my Mind Map.

Figure 6: Cost Estimate from Mind Map

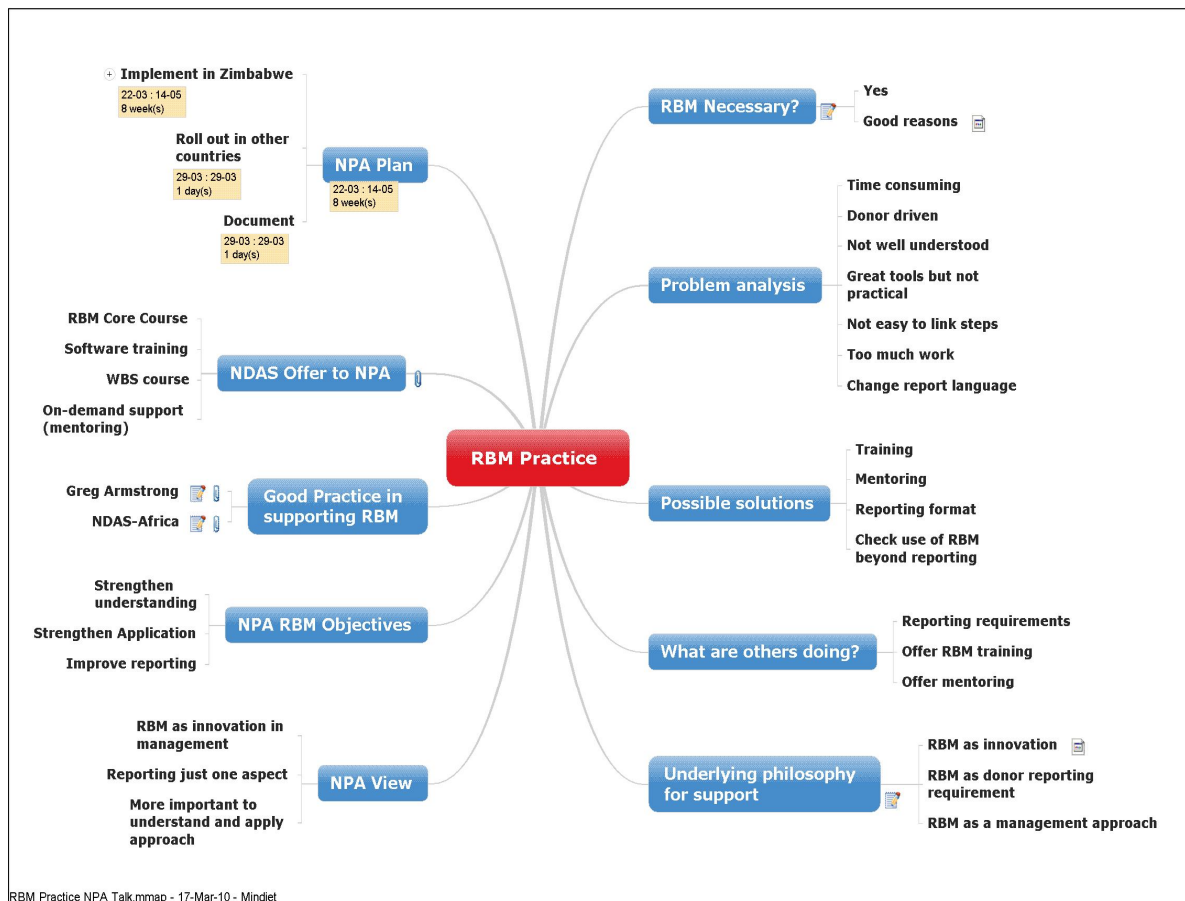
	A	B	C	D
1		Total cost		
2			Fixed	Variable
3		Kick-off	\$0.00	\$250.00
4		Prepare draft proposal	\$0.00	\$2875.00
5		Final Proposal	\$0.00	\$875.00
6		Preparation of proposal support documents	\$0.00	\$554.55
7				



Case 4: Making Presentations

When presenting to small groups I avoid using Microsoft PowerPoint. Instead I develop a Mind Map and make use of the presentation mode of the software I use. This mode allows me to show the whole map and expand branches as I speak about them. A great feature is that I can attach reference documents, add notes, pictures, etc. As I speak I can bring up references without leaving the Map. If I were to make the same presentation to a larger group, I would simply click a button to generate Powerpoint Slides. All my material will be in the right sequence and I will have checked for completeness by looking at the Mind Map.

Figure 7: Mind Map for Presentation



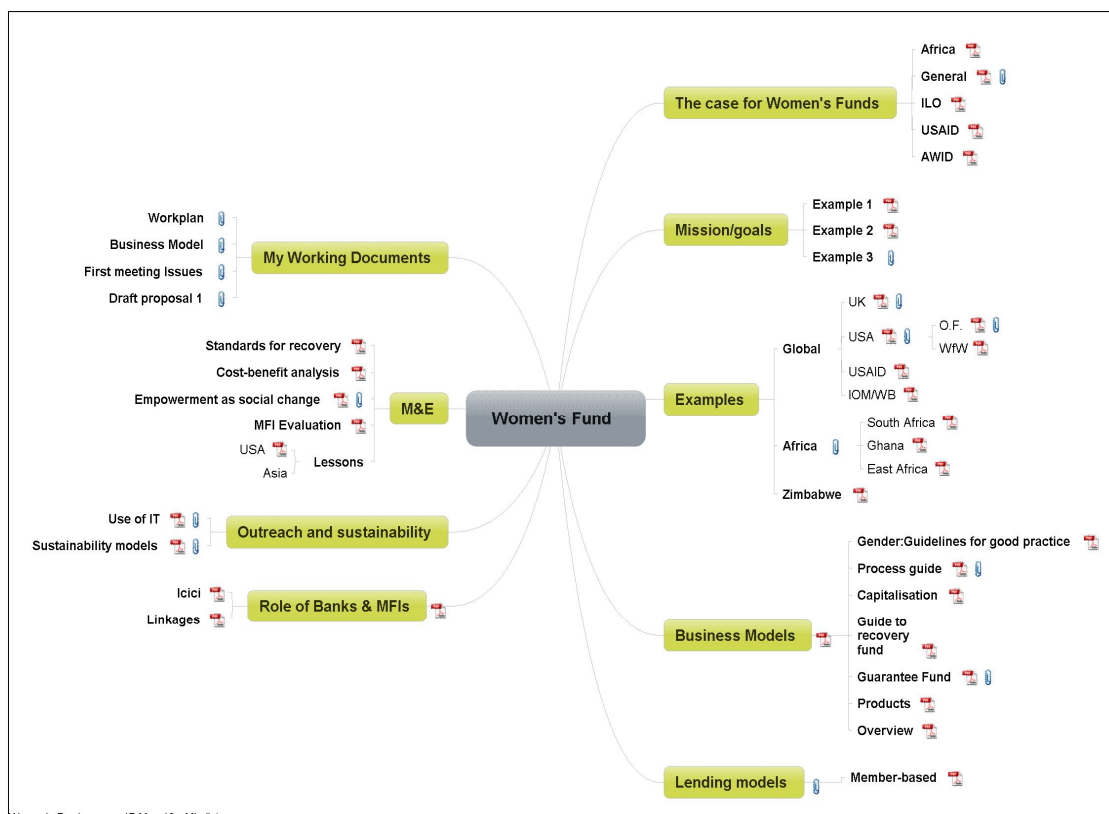


Case 5: Mind Maps as a Study Aid

I also use Mind Maps as a Study Tool. Every new assignment brings with it a need to review literature. I have a considerable collection of electronic literature. The internet provides even more reference material. Then there is the client-provided material (often in hard copy). The information can be overwhelming. To make sense of it all, I first create a Mind Map reflecting the issues I would like to gather from the literature. The initial Mind Map does not need to be complete. It only needs to provide initial structure to my reading. As I go through the literature I can create different categories. As I go through the literature I do 3 things. First, I attach the actual documents or links to the documents where these are electronic or type the document title where I only have a hard copy. Second I make screen captures of the most striking things in the particular reference. Third I make notes/observations on any similarities differences with what other sources say. At the end of this exercise I have a reference list on a single page. The content is summarized. I have notes on issues to explore further. Thus, my further literature searches are more focused as I am aware of where the gaps in my literature are. The Mind Map below presents an example.

A major strength of this type of use is that it presents me with a dashboard – I can manage all my content from one page. After creating the Mind Map, my reading is ordered and all my materials accessed from the Mind Map. Notice how I have added a branch called 'My Working Documents'. This branch enables me to access all the work I have done so far from the Mind Map. I am effectively working across programmes without having to leave the Mind Map. This is a project dashboard. With decent Mind Mapping Software there is no need for project documentation management software!

Figure 8: Mind Map as a Project Dashboard





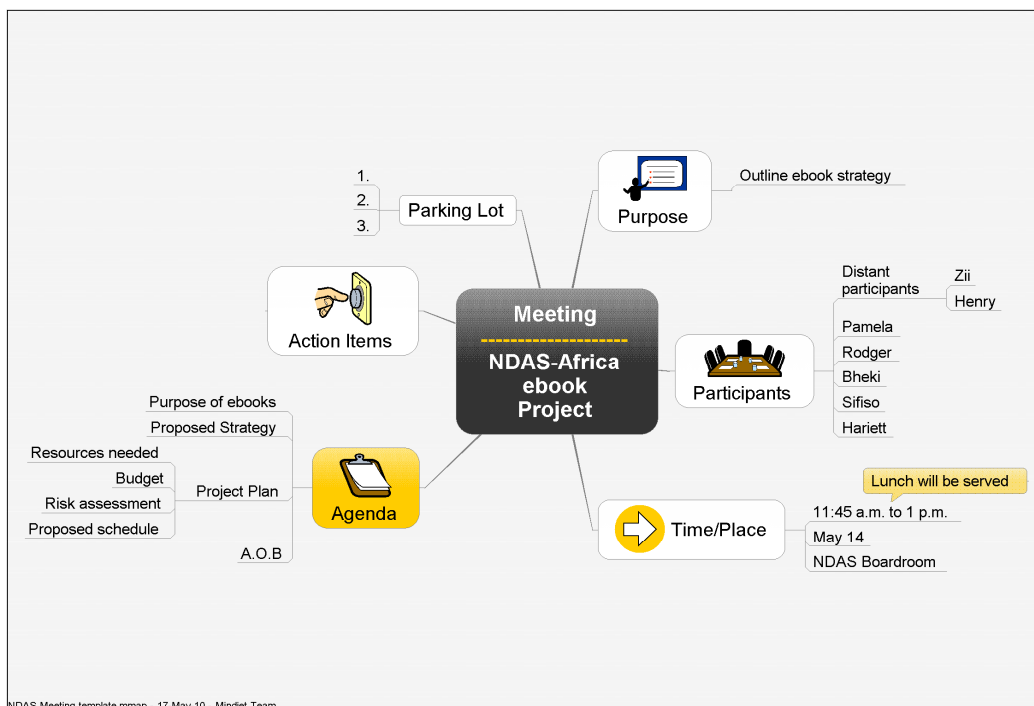
Mind Mapping Practical Applications cont...

Case 6: Planning and Managing Meetings

A simple but effective use for Mind Mapping is to use Mind Maps to plan and manage meetings. In this type of application, one can define participants, venue, the agenda, attach key meeting documents and record proceedings. At the end of the meeting the elements that constitute minutes can be grouped and exported to Microsoft Word thus enabling participants to leave with draft minutes. This I find particularly useful when there are action points.

The template below illustrates the application of Mind Mapping to meeting planning.

Figure 9: Mind Mapping as a Meeting Planning and Management Tool



Final Word



Mind Mapping is a versatile tool

The examples presented in this book illustrate how today with good software Mind Mapping is no longer something done just by an individual for his/her own clarity but has become a powerful tool in group facilitation and project management. In Mind Mapping, we have a tool that is suitable for so many purposes.

Mind mapping provides a tool for organizing and sharing information. And that it allows for a conceptual model that I have in my head to be put out there for others to look at and improve upon. Collectively, the team produces a better product that is understood by all. Mind Mapping allows the development of templates – a critical step in process standardization and setting of minimum standards. We can also use of Mind Mapping to map processes and analyse performance problems. We have a planning tool that integrates well with other programmes for easy presentation of information.

The variety of applications illustrates that this tool is something that every manager needs. With practice and advice on the right software, Mind Mapping can significantly improve planning and communication in any organization.

It is often said that one of the biggest challenges in Africa is the use of technology. Often we cite lack of access to electricity, cost of equipment, lack of connectivity, etc. as reasons for low technology uptake. However, in my experience, the biggest obstacle is the condescending attitude that senior personnel in organizations have towards their juniors and technology. On numerous occasions I have been informed that expecting people to plan on computers and do most of their work on computers is expecting too much. Unfortunately, Africa, has and continues to pay a heavy price for this type of perspective. Businesses are already using computers. People in those organizations are already typing email, letters and entering other types of information. The basic skills needed for Mind Mapping on the computer already exist. How much more challenging can creating structure in the combination of thinking and typing be? We simply choose not to invest in further learning. We underrate people's capacities. Yet mobile phones and the internet continue to confirm what we already know – if it is useful, people will invest the effort needed to learn. What we need to do is afford them the exposure.

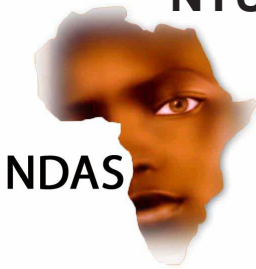
Over the past three years I have in workshop facilitation introduced participants to Mind Mapping in 30 minutes, allowed them 30 minutes of practice and then asked for all group work sessions to be captured in Mind Maps. I have not had a single group fail to present a well thought through Mind Map. These have not just been groups of well-educated professionals but have included representatives of community-based organizations. A result of the use of Mind Mapping software in facilitation has been not just the transfer of skills but also a rapid turnaround of workshop and meeting reports. After all, there is little point in groups doing work and the facilitator retyping the same work. This approach has saved me time but also made my clients happier. This is a tool that every manager should use at all times.

NDAS Support

At NDAS we offer training in Mind Mapping and can provide both trial and licenced software for Mind Mapping. Contact us for a free demonstration and question and answer session on what Mind Mapping can do for you and your organization. Visit www.ndas-africa.org for the Mind Mapping support brochure or contact NDAS-Africa.

Contact: **Sifiso Chikandi**
sifiso@ndas-africa.org
0913 125 378 or 0915 603 855

NTUTHUKO DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY SERVICES



99 Josiah Chinamano Avenue,
Avenues, HARARE

P +263-4-790-191

M +263-915-603 856

E advisor@ndas-africa.org

www.ndas-africa.org