

# Mind Mapping

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## Introduction

Litigators and transactional attorneys alike are finding mind mapping software an incredibly useful new tool. By graphically organizing notes, this software allows for a visual and creative way to record ideas and information. These materials will show you practical applications for using this tool, including how to share your maps online and allow for multiple collaborators to simultaneously edit your maps.

## What is Mind Mapping?

A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Mind maps are used to generate, visualize, structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid to studying and organizing information, solving problems, making decisions, and writing.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1

A mind map is typically organized according to the prominence of the concepts, and are classified into groupings or branches that represent connections between sections of information. Mind maps approach idea organization from a brainstorming perspective, by presenting thoughts in a radial, graphical, and/or non-linear manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia



Figure 2

## Mind Mapping- How Does It Fit In Your Practice?

So how are attorneys utilizing this technology in their daily practice? The ability to organize ideas, tasks and activities in a visual manner can be a very practical tool for lawyers and enable them to more easily see the big picture as well as the details of a case or transaction. It is a truly productivity enhancing method of managing one's thoughts, tasks or projects – allowing attorneys and their staff to accomplish more in less time, communicate more effectively and ensure project success.

Mind mapping creates a visual map of whatever you are looking to stay on top of. From a legal perspective, this tool offers lawyers the ability to stay organized and on top of their work by visualizing critical information – including legal research, client communications, case status and more – from a central dashboard. As a result, you can easily manage information overload, communicate more clearly, and ultimately establish an efficient and repeatable process to manage your case workload.

One of the most appealing aspects of mind mapping software is that you don't have to be concerned with learning curves and potential inability to "master" the software. With about 15 minutes of training, you can be up and running, implementing the power of visualization of critical information. With the investment of an additional hour or two, you can master even more tasks, including integration of your mind mapping software with Outlook's calendar, tasks, and e-mail. The minimal investment of time and money required to get started makes this a quick and easy addition to your stable of technology tools.

## Software Options

There are a variety of mind mapping software products on the market. Below are some of the most popular options in the marketplace:

- [Mindjet](#)
  - MindManager is their workstation product (\$349/license)
  - Catalyst allows you to collaborate online with others on your mind maps. This product is purchased on a subscription basis for \$108/year or \$11/user/month. Alternatively it can be bundled on a subscription basis with MindManager and the price decreases the more subscriptions you purchase.
    - 1 MindManager subscriptions + 1-User Catalyst account: \$249/yr
    - 5 MindManager subscriptions + 10-User Catalyst account: \$1399/yr
    - 10 MindManager subscriptions + 20-User Catalyst account: \$2499/yr

Ease of use and functionality sets this product apart from some of the others on this list, though it is one of the more expensive options. It also provides excellent product updates, access to sample templates, online training and tips, live support, and a community of lawyers who compare notes and exchange templates for mind managing their practice. Its integration with Microsoft Office and add-ins for other products such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking also make it a major contender. It is also the most graphically pleasing product we have found, with clear navigation icons and a ribbon toolbar like that of current versions of Microsoft Office.

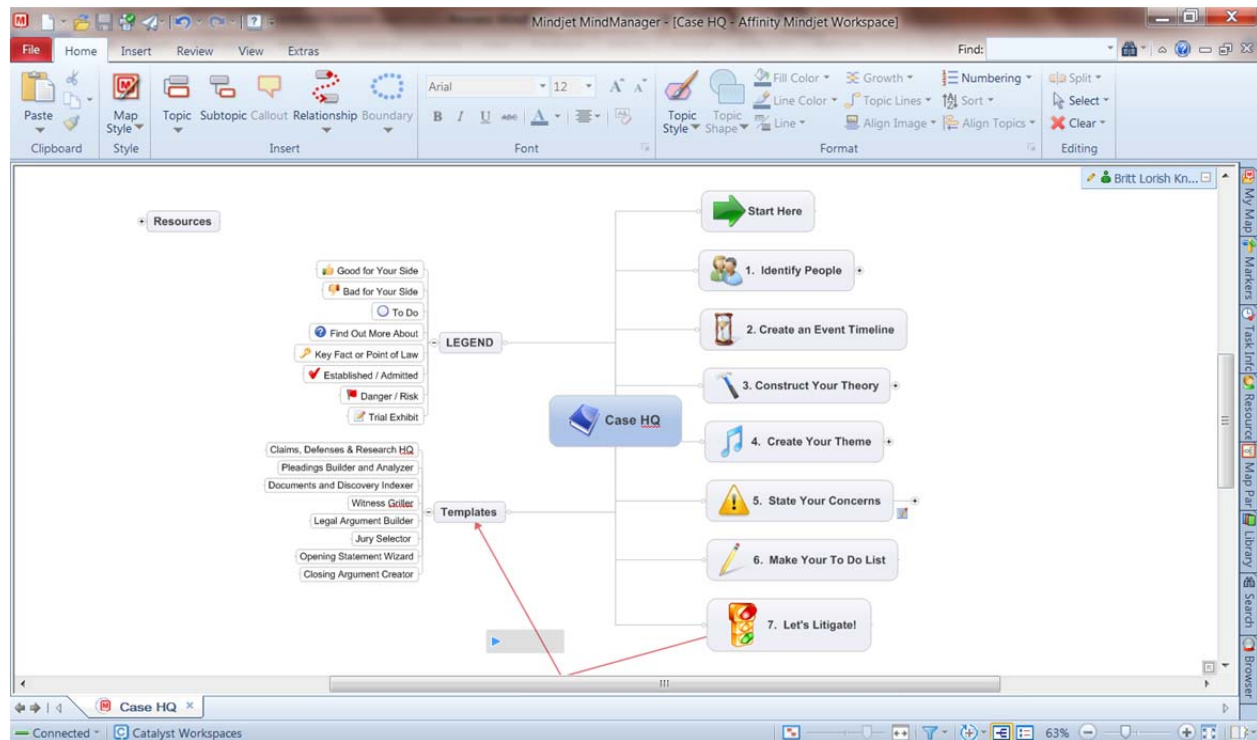


Figure 3

- [MindMapper](#) (by Simtech Systems, Inc.) – pricing starts at \$249.95/license and decreases with volume

MindMapper is another good option and market leader, and this product hails from the UK. It also has import and export capabilities with the Microsoft Office suite, and recently introduced collaboration tools to allow multiple users to work on maps together.

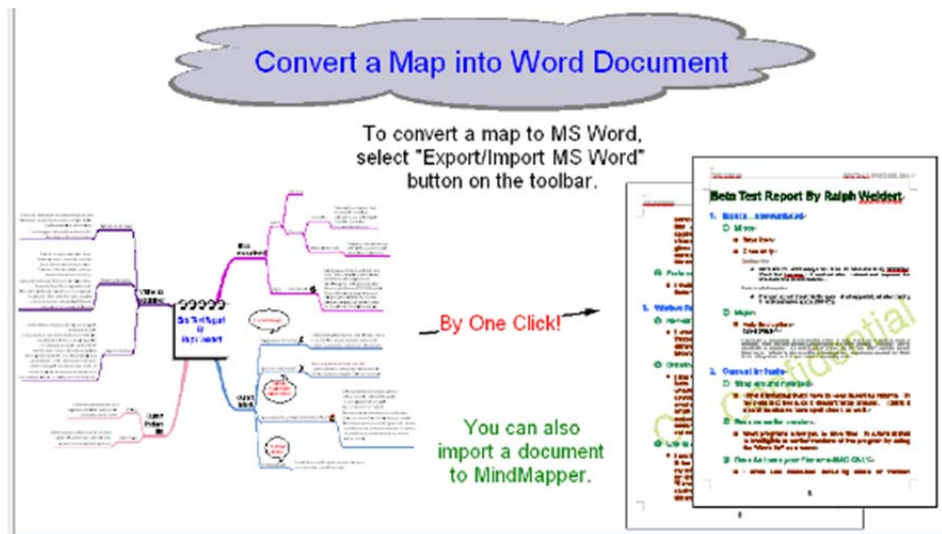


Figure 4

- [MindGenius](#) – pricing starts at \$235/license and decreases with volume

Also hailing from the UK, MindGenius is one of the more user friendly options, more like Mindjet in its appearance. However at this time it does not allow for online collaboration tools, which makes it slightly less desirable. It has a ribbon toolbar, like current versions of Microsoft Office, and clear navigation icons.

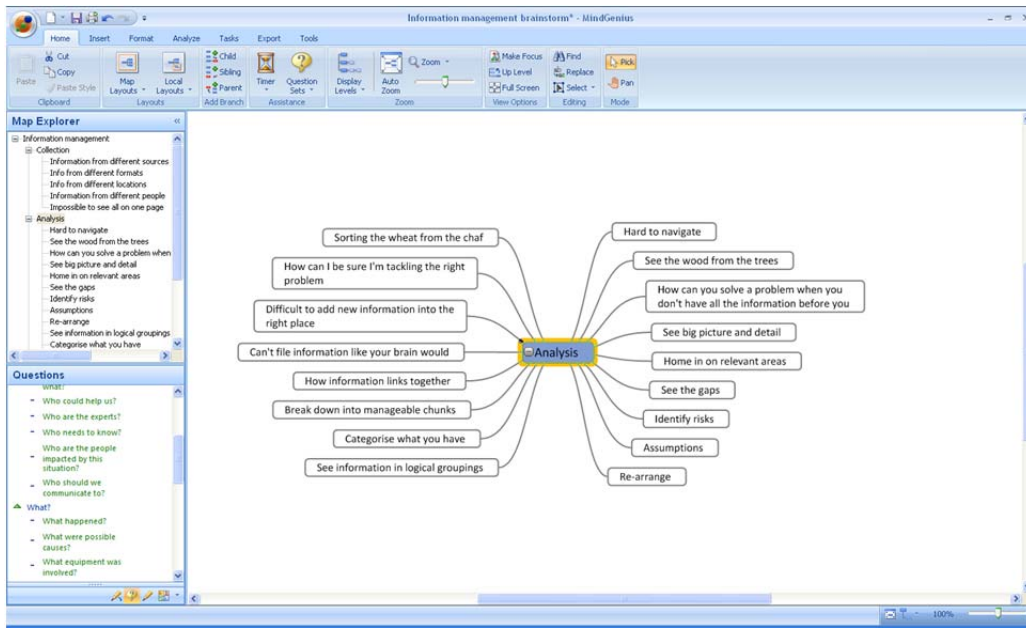


Figure 5

- [Microsoft Visio](#) – part of the Microsoft Office suite of products, pricing ranges from \$249.99 to \$999.99 depending on the version of Visio selected.

For obvious reasons, this product has the best integration with Microsoft Office, being a Microsoft product itself. It is also known for integration with SharePoint and other products that might be less helpful in a legal environment (such as AutoCAD). There are very few legal templates available for download from their site, so users have to build their own or find an outside community to share with.

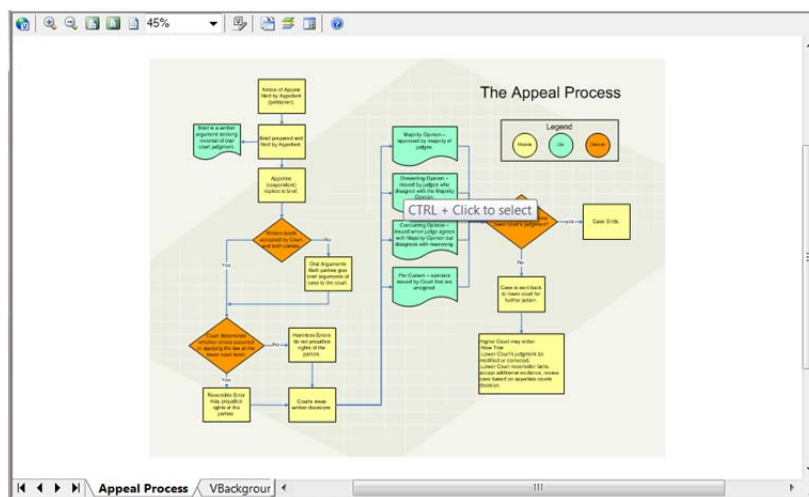


Figure 6

- [Mind42.com](#) – this product is entirely web based and free, allowing for exports to MindManager and Freemind.

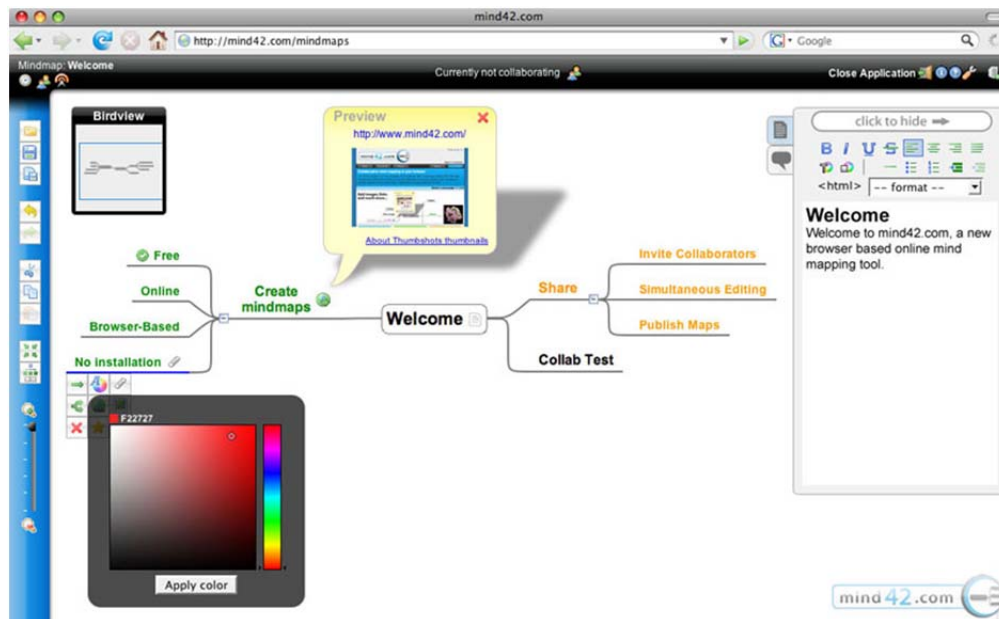


Figure 7

- [The Brain](#) – free software download for mind mapping

The search tools in this product are excellent and this may be a good first product for users to try if they are testing the waters. Before buying a more robust product, get your feet wet with a free product like this. The Brain offers secure synchronization of your maps between home, office and other computers. David Allen, the author of Getting Things Done, is a user of this product and has published some white papers and videos on time/task management using The Brain.



Figure 8

A more complete list of mind mapping options is available [here](#).

## Common Features

So what are the key features of any good mind mapping software application? Here are a few that we feel are important:

- Versatility in mind mapping design; allow for various mind map designs and layouts to accommodate different methods of thinking
- Ease of use – adding new items to your mind map should be a simple click or keystroke away
- Collaboration tools – the ability to work with others on a map and brainstorm together is invaluable. Some products allow you to share your maps online and have real time meetings to collaborate. Others allow sharing over email or a computer network with review/markup options. Some allow for both forms of collaboration. It is important to make sure you have the capabilities you will need to work with others.
- Integration with other software you use on a daily basis, such as Microsoft Office. This allows you to send information to the mindmap from documents, emails, your calendar, contacts, presentations, etc. Likewise being able to quickly link
- Templates – having the ability to draw from other attorneys who use mind maps and share concepts and ideas for common tasks is invaluable and will get you up and running more quickly
- Task Lists/Reminders – most good mind mapping products will allow you to assign tasks or calendar properties to different items, including reminders. This can also help serve as a project timeline with due dates and a chronological listing of events that need to occur.
- Search capabilities – you can have extremely large mind maps with lots of data and ideas noted, but if you can't find items to get back to them, it is less useful. Therefore searchability is key.
- Attach and link items – any good mind mapping software should allow you to link websites, documents, notes, calendar/task information, spreadsheets, and many other items to your mind map detail for quick and easy cross reference.
- Categorization of your items – Using priorities, categories, flags and other colors, icons and tags, you should be able to easily classify various items for cross reference and easy identification. This is discussed in greater detail below under Leveraging Map Markers.
- Presentation Options – Quickly allow your map to be shown in a slideshow presentation, with branches systematically expanding

## Managing From a Central Dashboard

Think about all of the different topics and challenges you face while sitting in front of your computer every day. Think about how you make notes, discuss assignments with staff, and remind yourself to go shopping for your spouse's birthday. In fact, we've seen

statistics that claim we're being bombarded with approximately 1.6 GB of info on average every day through emails, reports, blogs, text messages and more! The single most important lesson about mapping is to start at a basic home base or dashboard, creating links to virtually everything that is important to you – this allows you to have everything you need at your fingertips rather than wasting time looking for relevant information.

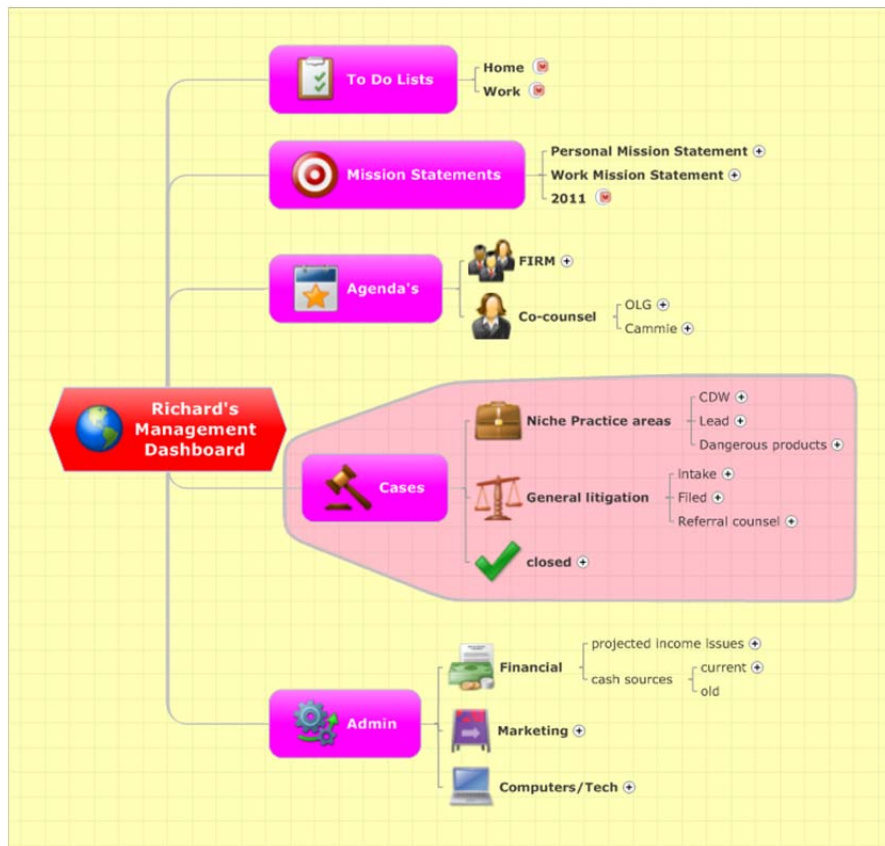


Figure 9

From this dashboard you are three clicks away from every note that you have taken for the past five years. Instead of creating dozens of "standalone" maps which are filed away individually on your network, mind mapping allows you to expand from your dashboard to an unlimited extent as you delve more deeply into an investigation or project. When completed, simply fold up the detail and returned to your dashboard for your next task.

## Leveraging Map Markers

Improve your case management by staying better organized and leveraging map markers to add emphasis and aid with retention. In addition to capturing and organizing the words, products like MindManager provide a toolbox of map markers to gain greater efficiency in the mapping process. Create a staff marker for each person on your team.

A series of intuitive flags can be planted on the map, marking dangers and opportunities. Create priority markings, set deadlines and track progress from your maps as well. This powerful feature is like your POI markers on your GPS. Turn them on and off individually or as group, depending on what you are looking for.

Here is a picture of an "Outlook dashboard" showing the power of map markers and their integration into Outlook:

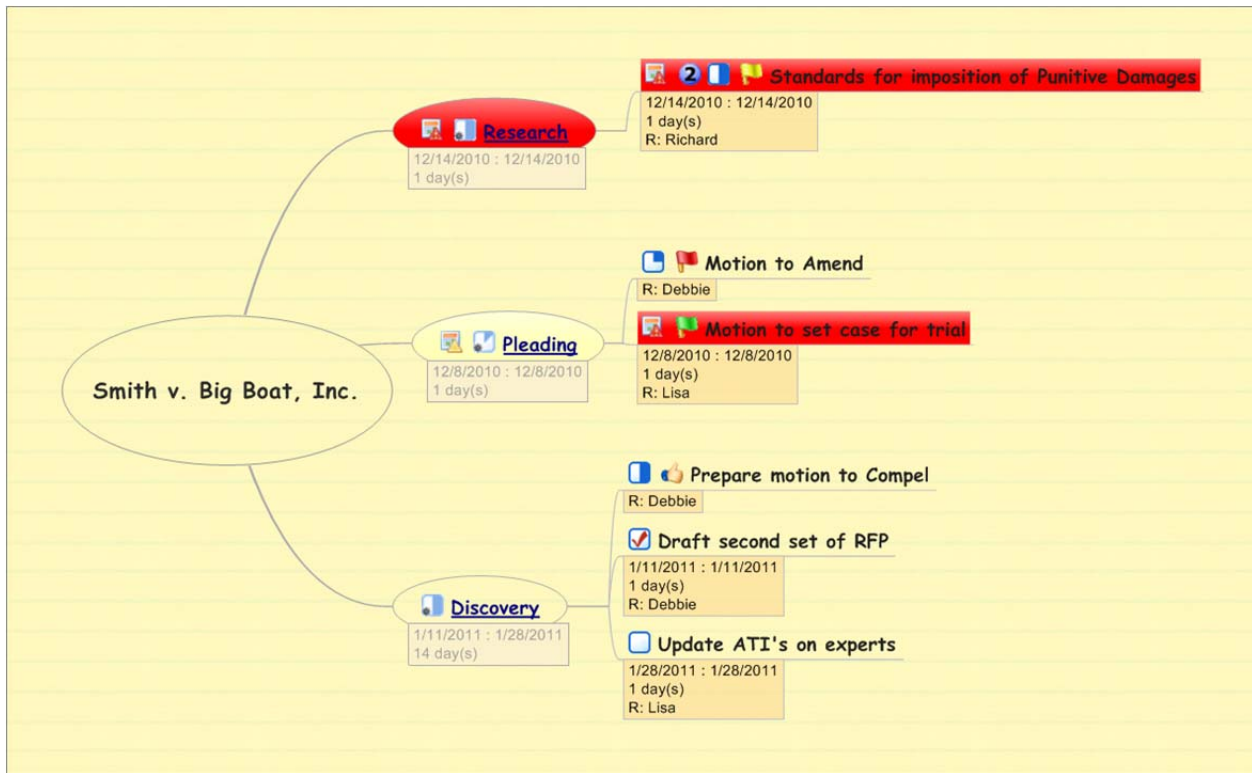


Figure 10

You can track e-mails, notes, tasks and meetings in the context of my map, without having to switch applications. Tasks automatically change color to notify you when tasks are at risk or overdue. This tool allows you to communicate with your staff, obtain "buy in", and provides a shared tool to ensure that assignments are being accomplished.

There are other integrations that can be extremely useful as well. Let's say you're doing some legal research and need to look up various statutes or laws online. You can easily do those searches in the context of your map and save those searches so you always have that information readily available. Mind mapping products also allow you to integrate with your various file folders on your network, with the creation of a file link, so you can have immediate access to important files that might be stored on a specific drive.

## Practical Application for Lawyers

So now that we've explained in greater detail what mind mapping is, let's give you some additional practical examples of how you can use it in your daily practice. We'll discuss two scenarios for both transactional attorneys and litigators alike.

Mind mapping software gives corporate, transactional, and contract lawyers the ability to stay organized and on top of their work by visualizing critical information – including legal research, client communications, due diligence, deal status and more – from a central dashboard. Litigators may have similar issues but case status/management is likely to be a huge issues as well.

### Common Use Cases:

#### Due Diligence

Due diligence is the process of evaluating the potential legal risks of a transaction, such as a merger. When performing due diligence, lawyers review large amounts of contracts and other paperwork (in a real or virtual “data room”) pertaining to intellectual property, taxes, pending litigation, employee issues and other important matters affecting the risk profile and value of a target company. Lawyers often conduct interviews with target company executives to complete the due diligence process. Capturing and organizing this information is a constant challenge.

#### Managing a Deal Closing

This involves tracking the status of various documents, government filings and other deliverables associated with a transaction. Typically in a transaction the buyer's lawyers keep detailed checklists of all such deliverables, which typically include, among other things, signed contracts, government approvals and important consents.

#### Case Management

Managing the lifecycle of a case which includes various stages of litigation: filing of a complaint, answers, the discovery process (interrogatories, subpoenas, depositions), and motions, all of which occur before a trial.

#### Legal Research

The act of researching legal issues, typically via online legal research databases, to provide advice to clients. The two leading legal research databases are Lexis and Westlaw.

## Communicating Complex Information

Translating complex “legalese” into plain English. Lawyers need to explain long and convoluted contract provisions or complex legal theories to clients who have no legal training and short attention spans.

## To-do lists

Managing various tasks and actions items, tracking dates, and monitoring level of completion of the tasks.

## Challenges:

### Information Overload

- It is challenging for lawyers to capture and manage large amounts of due diligence in a transaction.
- To-do lists are difficult to manage. Lawyers have a difficult time distinguishing task priorities, tracking dates, and tracking levels of completion. Many lawyers still use pen and paper to manage their to-do lists and tasks.
- Too much work results in long work hours. They often take on too much work because they don’t have a clear picture of their workload and how much more work they can effectively manage.
- The process of legal research (thoughts and notes) is separate from the source material (cases, statutes and regulations). When lawyers put down their research and resume it at a later date, the source material is not integrated with the thoughts – too much time is wasted refreshing memory and searching for the important source material.

### Difficult to Effectively Communicate Relevant Information

- It is difficult to clearly communicate complex processes, concepts and terminology with clients.
- It is difficult to accurately capture and review information during a meeting or call and then recap with various clients to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- The status of the documents at a closing or during litigation has always been difficult to communicate in real time. This would include tracking all required documentation for a transaction or case, providing status updates of each component of the transaction or case, and ensuring each component is completed within the agreed timeline.

## Inefficient Practices and Processes

- Legal research practices are inefficient, unorganized and time consuming. As a result, it is difficult to organize the vast amounts of research and data in a manner that can be managed effectively.
- Due to the poor processes and inefficiencies, many lawyers find it difficult to deliver services at a lower cost because they tend to work longer hours which is trickles down to the client in the form of higher fees.
- Due to the lack of organization, critical tasks or information can fall through the cracks. Mishaps, misunderstandings or missed deadlines can negatively impact the successful completion of a transaction or case.
- There is a lack of an effective way to prioritize and keep track of tasks and projects as they pertain to the transaction or case. There may be dependencies between tasks that are not easily seen or understood.
- It is difficult to stay organized: tracking progress of deals, time & billing on a matter, research management, communications and collaboration, data mining, storage and accessibility.

## Benefits of Mind Mapping:

Improve Legal Research Practices	How Mind Mapping Can Help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure legal arguments quickly.</li> <li>• A 360 degree view of all the components of the transaction allows you to make visual connections between facts and issues.</li> <li>• Achieve contextually relevant research storage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map parts make easy the creation of standard templates for legal arguments (facts, issues, rules, analysis, conclusion).</li> <li>• Relationships, callouts, icons and text markers enable the highlighting of connections between important facts and issues, as well as meta-data tagging for future filtering and searching.</li> <li>• Attachments and hyperlinks facilitate the storage of legal research <u>directly in the legal analysis</u> (contextually relevant research storage).</li> <li>• Drag and drop capabilities streamline the process of incorporating legal research into a map – simply drag case text or a link into the map and a topic is created.</li> <li>• Topic splitting enables fast visual parsing of statutes and regulations</li> </ul>
Improve Transaction/Case Management	How Mind Mapping Can Help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build multi-dimensional data rooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drag and drop enables fast reorganization of</li> </ul>

<b>Improve Transaction/Case Management</b>	<b>How Mind Mapping Can Help</b>
<p>that are easier to navigate and more user friendly than today's lists, folders and paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture the results of due diligence in a format that is simple to navigate, explore, filter, sort and communicate.</li> </ul>	<p>information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attachments and hyperlinks help populate the data room map with relevant content.</li> <li>• Content Search: Quickly find information within a map with pre-defined or custom queries.</li> <li>• Filtering: Easily filter maps to see only relevant information.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily view and update all related Outlook items, emails, notes, tasks or meetings – allowing you to manage priorities and track progress against clear objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlook Dashboards: See related Outlook items, emails, contacts, notes, tasks or meetings, in the context of your map, without having to switch applications.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage transaction and case closings more effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task info allows each task that makes up a closing to be assigned a deadline and one or more resources and to provide alerts if running behind or overdue.</li> </ul>

<b>Manage Tasks and To-do Lists</b>	<b>How Mind Mapping Can Help</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage and track detailed task information including deadlines, priorities and percentage of completion to ensure you are on top of all your tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task Information and Roll-up: Track deadlines, progress, assigned resources and priority of tasks. Roll-up task information into a master task or project to see overall timeline and progress.</li> <li>• Tasks will automatically change colors to notify you of tasks that are at-risk or overdue.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customize the view of your tasks by priority to ensure no tasks fall through the cracks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filters: Filter tasks by priority, progress, or risk level in a single view.</li> <li>• Visual markers can show what tasks are priorities, the order in which specific actions need to take place, etc.</li> </ul>

<b>Communicate More Clearly</b>	<b>How Mind Mapping Can Help</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplify client communications and information management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual map: enter information quickly and organize logically. Represent complex concepts in a visual manner for easier understanding and retention.</li> <li>• Present and share your ideas and plans</li> </ul>

Communicate More Clearly	How Mind Mapping Can Help
	directly from the map and capture input from your client as you go. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slide feature: Quickly create a slide show from your map.</li> <li>• PowerPoint Export: If you prefer to present in PowerPoint, export your map to PowerPoint and save time creating content.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate more engaging client meetings shows you understand their issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take notes and capture key insights during your call to improve communications and rapport with clients.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping an audit trail of all communications and activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively document the notes and content of meetings and resulting actions within a single map.</li> </ul>

## Creating Templates

Most mind mapping products allow you to create templates for recurring use. For example, if you use a mind map each time you do an estate plan, or a closing argument, these are examples of outlines you may wish to save as templates so that you don't have to start from scratch each time. Spend an hour creating standard templates and save a week this year.

Map parts lend themselves to the easy creation of standard templates. For example, many routine aspects of Richard's practice (legal research, deposition outline, argument preparation) begin with the insertion of a template which pre-populates sub topics (e.g. facts, issues, rules, analysis, conclusion). As you conduct online research, you drag and drop text and links directly into the map and a topic is created. These attachments and hyperlinks facilitate the storage of legal research directly in the legal analysis, providing for contextually relevant research storage.

Standard templates provide a backbone which is organized, and provides a place to hang your custom skeleton, and your meat on those bones. Once inserted, you can immediately turn to fact and research gathering, saving your results in a visually intuitive and easily accessible map.

## Mindmapping for the iPad

It should come as no great surprise to you that there are excellent Mindmapping applications available for the iPad. To be sure, these applications are not a substitute

for full powered mind mapping software. However, there are significant advantages to spending the 20 minutes necessary to completely master these applications, and spend \$7.99 to purchase the application. These advantages include:

1. The application is highly portable, and boots up immediately. This greatly expands the opportunities you have to mind map when you are away from your regular computer or laptop. In this regard, they are particularly useful on the weekends to capture and organize your thoughts during those moments of clarity.
2. Your iPad maps will import and export to most of the popular desktop mind mapping applications. This allows you to cross platforms and get started on iPad maps and then expand and manage them with your desktop application.
3. iPad mapping is an excellent collaborative tool, allowing you to brainstorm with a client or colleague without the need to be fighting a computer. When you're finished, pressing a single button sends a beautiful image or text version of your map through your e-mail. If the recipient also has an iPad, editing and evolution of the map can take place seamlessly.

There are several critically acclaimed applications, including iThoughts which is pictured below. If you own an iPad and would like to get started mind mapping, we recommend that you purchase these inexpensive and high-powered "apps."

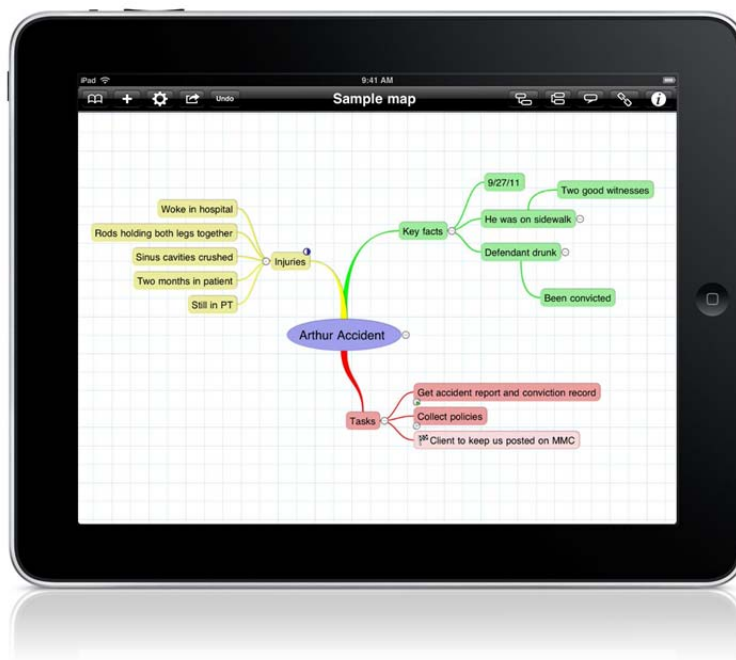


Figure 11

There is more information available [here](#), including a video about mind mapping on the iPad. As the developer of iThoughts says, "I think that there is something 'intangible' about manipulating your ideas 'physically' with your fingers - it seems to make the whole experience richer. Can't put my finger on it - if you pardon the pun!"

## Other Resources

Below are some other articles and relevant websites and blogs that you may find interesting:

- MindMapping for Lawyers Website - <http://www.mindmappingforlawyers.com/>
- Leadership for Lawyers: Mind Mapping - [http://leadershipforlawyers.typepad.com/leadership\\_for\\_lawyers/2005/09/mind\\_mapping.html](http://leadershipforlawyers.typepad.com/leadership_for_lawyers/2005/09/mind_mapping.html)
- Mind Mapping Corporate law - <http://www.professorbainbridge.com/professorbainbridgecom/2010/04/mind-mapping-corporate-law.html>
- LegalMarketingBlog.com: Software & Gadgets to Die For - <http://www.legalmarketingblog.com/marketing-tips-marketing-tools-software-gadgets-to-die-for-ii.html>
- Mapping Out Success: <http://www.callawyer.com/story.cfm?eid=904491&evid=1>

## Conclusion

Mind mapping is an incredibly useful tool that can allow you to simplify your daily practice, particularly if you are a visual person, which most of us are. By clearly seeing all the parts and parcels of your case or transaction, in a flowchart format, you can more easily see gaps and missing pieces, and organize your thoughts. Mind mapping tools range from free to a few hundred dollars on average, but can save you untold amounts of time and energy, resulting in a pretty significant return on investment.

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