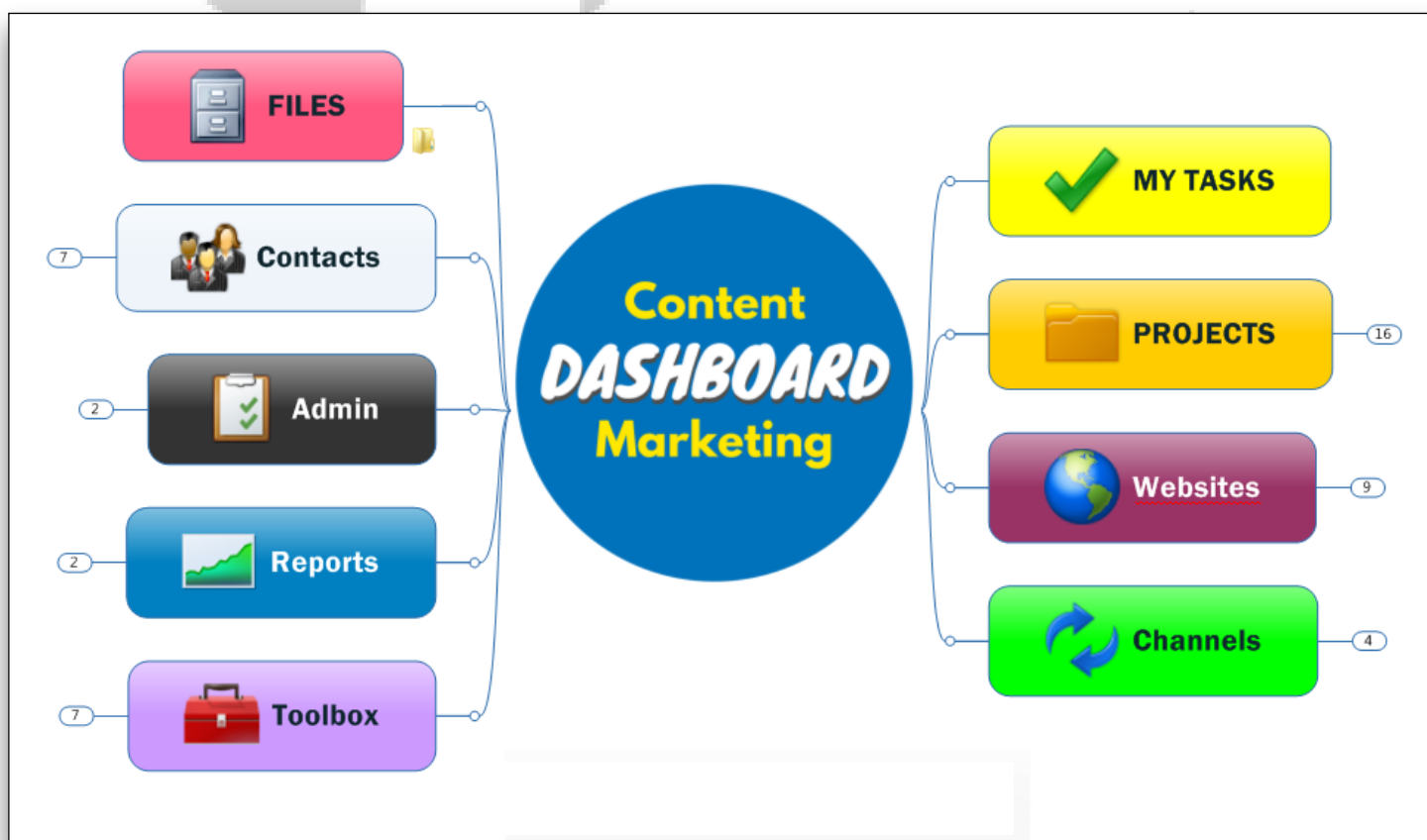


How a content marketing dashboard map can supercharge your productivity

Save time, reduce stress and be more productive than you ever thought possible.



by Chuck Frey

mindmappingsoftwareblog.com



Are you a marketer struggling to keep up with your day-to-day duties, plus trying to manage and grow a new content initiative? Here's a visual planning tool that can help you stay more focused on what matters and vastly increase your productivity: a dashboard mind map.

As part of the [2015 Benchmark survey](#) conducted by the Content Marketing Institute, respondents were asked if they could improve their capabilities in one content marketing area, what would it be? Eighty people responded that they needed help with developing processes to help them scale their content marketing efforts. This placed it in the top five concerns respondents wrote in response to this question.

Clearly, you're not alone in feeling overwhelmed.

According to a Forrester Research study, the emergence of electronic information is increasing by about 200% per year. As a result, the same study indicates that executives spend up to 25% of their work time searching for files and information. Imagine searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack - only the haystack is doubling in size each year.

One solution to information overwhelm is to use tools that can help you get better organized and simplify routine tasks. A dashboard mind map can help you in both of these important areas.

What is a dashboard mind map?

In much the same way that the dashboard on your automobile consolidates all of the key data you need to operate it in one convenient location, a dashboard mind map gives you a similar at-a-glance view of the information and data that is most important to you. It also contains links to all of the tools and information you must use on a daily basis - all in one convenient and flexible visual format.



Why is a dashboard map useful to content managers?

Speed: Dashboards give you a way to take a “50,000-foot view” of your work, so you can see what needs your time and attention.

Organization: Dashboards organize all of the key assets you need in one location, making it easy to access them whenever you need them. Plus, you can organize them in a way that is most useful to you, and refine it as your needs change.

Time savings: Using a tool like this can save you many hours of time and frustration that you would otherwise waste navigating to and searching for the information, assets and resources you need to do your job effectively.

At first, this may sound like an insignificant problem, but look at how the time wasted on information searches can add up over a year's time:

Scenario #1

1 minute per search x 30 per day = 30 minutes/day

30 min./day x 250 work days/year = 7,500 min.

7500 min. = 125 hours = 6+ work days/year

Keep in mind that this is a conservative estimate: A small number of searches will take significantly longer than 1 minute.

Scenario #2

Another frequently-cited study estimates that knowledge workers invest an hour a day searching for the files and resources they need. Let's apply the same math:

1 hour/day x 250 work days/year = 250 hours

250 hours = over 12 work days/year

A well-designed dashboard can eliminate that

problem by providing you with shortcuts to your most frequently-used tools and files.

Flexibility: As new things come up, you can easily add them to your dashboard – without destroying its structure. It's also free-form, enabling you to add any kind of item with any kind of information attached to it. That's powerful, because it enables you to create a very personal tool that does a supreme job of meeting your unique needs. For the most part, it does this without forcing you into its way of doing things, which is really quite remarkable, when you stop to think about it.

Focus: By centralizing and simplifying the routine things that you need to keep track of, the dashboard map frees up mental bandwidth so you can do a better job of focusing on what really matters.

This is something that remarkably successful people tend to do. Think Steve Jobs and his iconic black turtleneck sweaters. By not having to worry about what he was going to wear each day, he believed that he could devote more thinking power to strategic decisions regarding Apple.



Think of the dashboard mind map as a functional equivalent of Jobs' monochromatic wardrobe.

Instead of searching for files and clicking through hierarchies of folders, you could be getting more important work done with fewer distractions.

David Allen, author of *Getting Things Done: The Art*

of *Stress-Free Productivity*, compares our brain's short term memory to computer RAM. The more you think about, the more of your working memory gets used up in thinking about trivial things, like "where did I put that file?" Declutter-



ing your workspace (including your computer screen) is one way to free up psychic RAM and make more room for deeper thinking.

Creating a mind map that gives you single-click access to the information and resources you need can help you get more done and think better.

Mind mapping software: The ideal tool for creating dashboards

Mind mapping software is particularly well-suited to creating dashboards for a number of reasons:

- Mind maps can incorporate links to files, web pages, individual e-mails and other maps, giving you the ability to have access to the "bigger picture" yet in a single mouse click, access a deeper level of information and data.
- Branches of your maps can be collapsed or expanded as needed to show as much or as little detail as you need. Like the linking capability of mind maps, a collapsed branch can hide the details of a particular part of your dashboard, yet with a single mouse click you can expand it and view a greater level of detail.
- Topics and sub-topics can be added, deleted and moved around with complete freedom, to meet your changing information management needs.
- Map markers can be added to mind maps to show the relative priorities of different tasks in your dashboard, to add emphasis to critical items and to filter the contents of your map based upon them.



Mind mapping software: The savvy executive's secret weapon

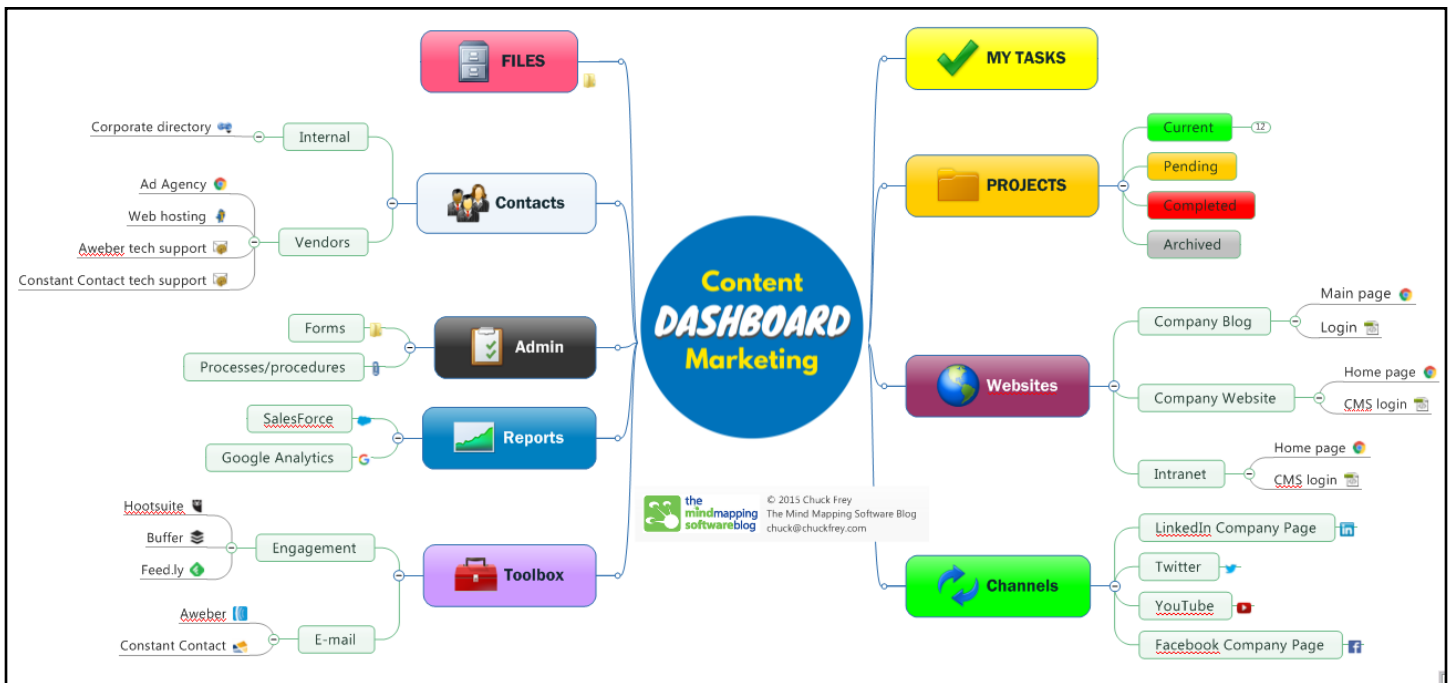
Research conducted by Chuck Frey of [The Mind Mapping Software Blog](#) proves that this type of productivity tool can have a significant impact on executive productivity.

In three surveys over the span of a decade, users of mind mapping software estimate it **increases their productivity by 20-30%**. That's the equivalent of gaining another working day per week!

Here are some other findings from his 2015 survey:

- Nearly half of respondents say the complexity of their work has significantly increased in the last 5 years.
- 51% of respondents say mind mapping software helps them "significantly" to distill information and reach clarity faster.
- 41% of respondents say it saves them 2-5 hours per week.

What to include in your content marketing dashboard

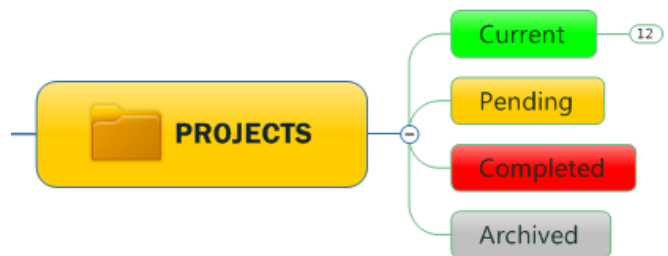


What, specifically, should you include in a dashboard mind map for managing your content initiatives? Here are some ideas, which are also visually presented in the image above:

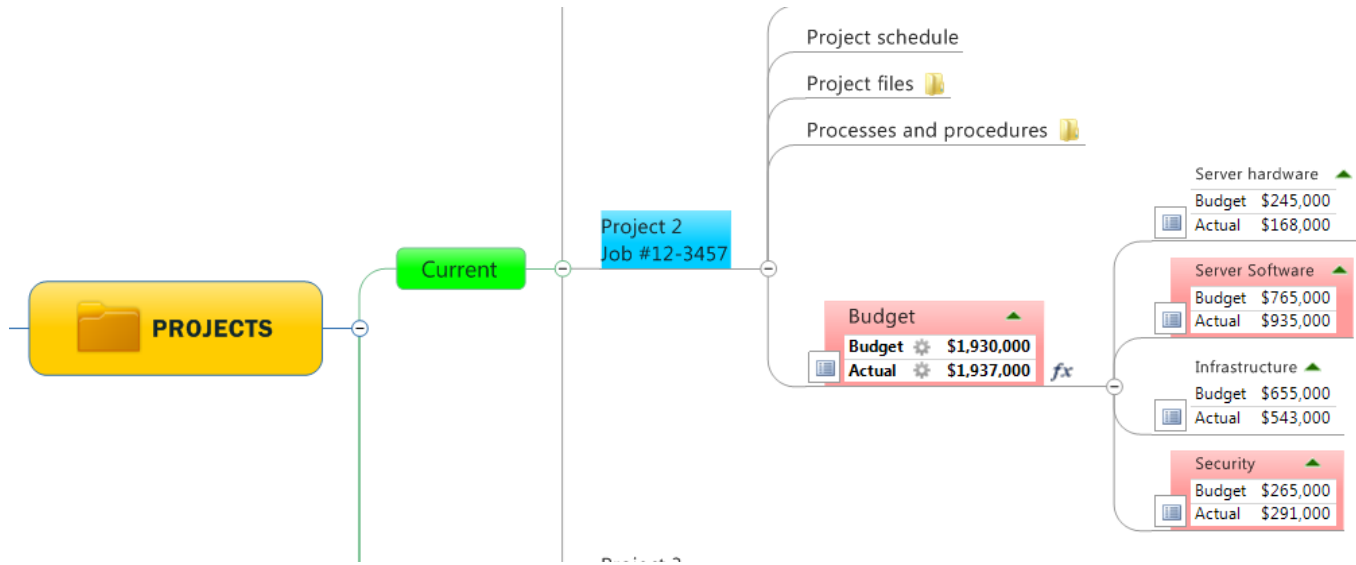
My tasks: This is your personal to do list, which you can customize as needed. Mind mapping software enables you to turn topics into tasks, including data such as priority, start and end dates and percentage complete. You can also use topic colors to designate urgent or pending tasks. You can devise your own system to highlight critical tasks that you must get done.



Projects: This is where you keep details related to the major content projects you're working on. Notice the current/pending/completed topics, which have a color scheme similar to a traffic light. Current projects are ones you are working on right now. Pending projects are those that are temporarily halted; you may be waiting for specific information or approvals to resume action on them. Completed projects are just what they sound like.



What to include in your content marketing dashboard

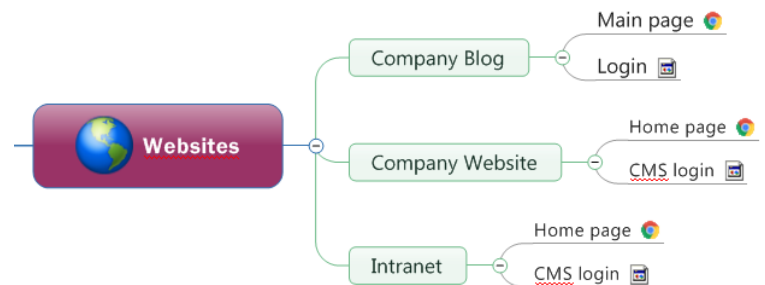


One of the projects has been built out with a group of subtopics that illustrates the types of project information you can include in a dashboard map. You can easily create links to:

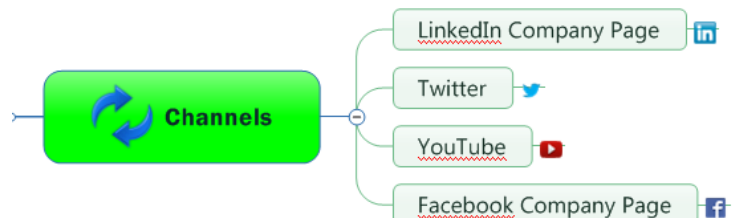
- Any type of file (including links to project mind maps)
- Folder links
- Links to individual e-mails
- Web page links
- Spreadsheet ranges
- Calculations (only on certain programs, such as MindManager and MindView)

Archived projects are included in the dashboard map because sometimes you need to refer to information from an old project. They contain files that you may need to access. You can keep them one click away using this topic.

Websites: These are the web properties that your organization owns. These may include your company website and blog, intranet or other sites to which you contribute content. Within each of these topics are subtopics that enable you to quickly access the home page of each of these website as well as their login pages. If there are other important pages that you visit frequently, you can include links to them, too.

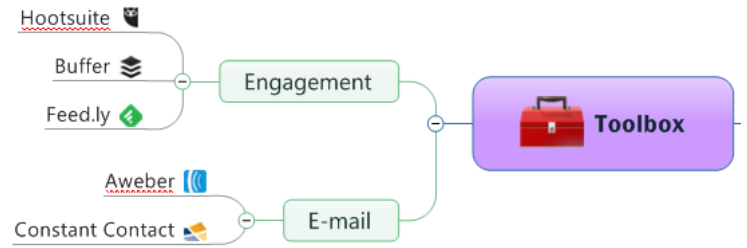


Channels: This section of the dashboard map provides you with links to all of the major social media channels and communities where you are communicating with your target audiences. As with the other sections of the dashboard, this one can be customized to suit your needs.

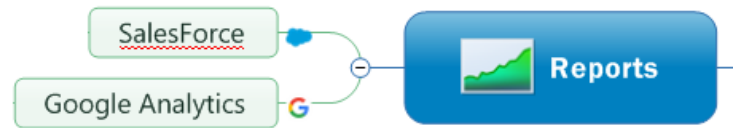


What to include in your content marketing dashboard

Toolbox: As a digital marketers, you use many tools and online services to manage your work. From analytics and social media monitoring tools to e-mail service providers and digital asset management applications, you must remember many URLs and logins. This section of the dashboard map centralizes all of this important information in one place, saving you hours of time.



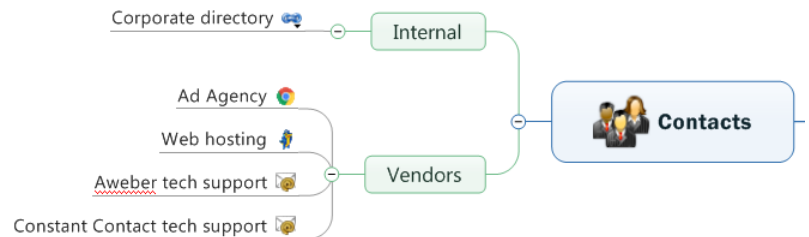
Reports: Use this branch of your dashboard map to give you single-click access to key reports you need to manage for your content initiatives. I've included Google Analytics and Salesforce.com here, but you can populate with the links that make the most sense for your work.



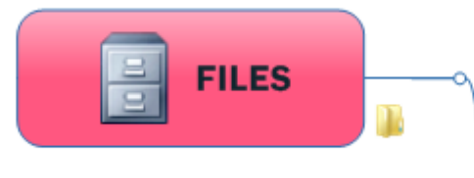
Admin: Every job requires you to use paper or online forms to collect information about your work, including expense reports, paid time off requests and timesheets. In addition, many jobs include a work manual or a set of processes and procedures that you're required to follow. This section of the dashboard map shows how you can use a combination of file attachments and URL links to quickly access these important resources.



Contacts: Use this branch of your dashboard mind map to collect links to your internal telephone directory, people you frequently contact such as your team members and key vendors, plus emergency numbers.



Files: Have you ever wasted time digging through deeply-nested hierarchies of folders on your computer or a network drive, searching for the one file you need? It's a common experience for knowledge workers.



No more. With this branch of your dashboard map, you can create links to file folders on your computer and your organization's network drives that will save you many hours of time and frustration.

Make this dashboard map your own

I encourage you to think about the major divisions of your work and your responsibilities, and then create first-level topics that correspond to them. **Don't worry about getting it right; you can always edit, rearrange and add to your dashboard map at any time.**

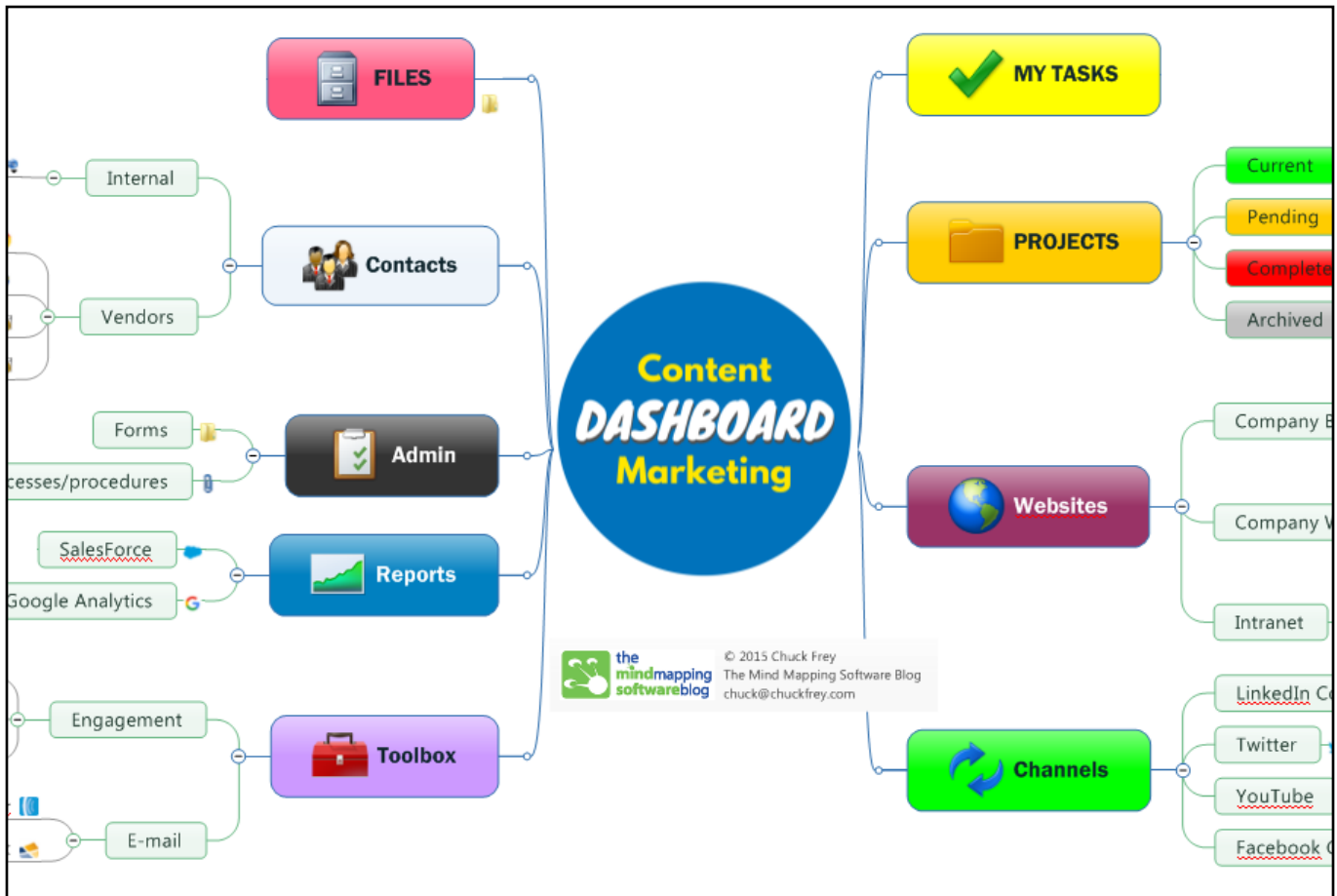
Expect this to be an iterative process, until you have something that works really well for you. Don't be afraid to experiment!

To help you get started, I've conveniently made this dashboard map available for you to use as a template - or starting point - to create your own.

If you don't currently own mind mapping software, I suggest that you download a free copy of XMind. It's a well-designed program that I frequently recommend to new users of mind mapping software. Then download and open this mind map and customize it to meet your needs.

If you already own mind mapping software, you can download this template here:

- [MindManager](#)
- [XMind](#)
- [iMindQ](#)
- [iMindMap](#)
- [MindGenius](#)



Download this dashboard map and customize it to meet your needs

Get connected!

If you found this report to be valuable, then I urge you to sign up today for my Mind Mapping Software Update and Visual Thinking Digest e-newsletters:

Mind Mapping Software Update: This e-newsletter is sent out whenever I publish a new post on this blog (once every 1-2 weeks)

Visual Thinking Digest: This e-newsletter is an executive summary of the latest news, insights and developments in the fields of mind mapping, diagramming, sketching and other forms of visual thinking. I can't possibly cover all of these stories in the blog, so I publish this executive summary report every Monday that summarizes them and links to them. It's a curated list of the 5 most important articles and announcements in this space, plus one resource that I recommend you check out.

Get smart about visual mapping and visual thinking tools and techniques now!



Click here to receive free updates

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'the mindmapping softwareblog'. At the top left is the logo, and at the top right are navigation buttons for 'mind mapping', 'diagramming', and 'visual thinking'. Below the navigation is a blue header with the text 'Visual tools and strategies for business success' and a 'SEND TO A FRIEND' link. The main content area is dated 'November 12, 2015'. It features a sponsor banner for 'Mindjet' promoting 'MindManager 2016 for Windows'. Below this is a section titled 'New on the Mind Mapping Software Blog' with a link to an article about 'Thoughtflow app'. To the right is a 'Featured Products' sidebar with 'MindGenius 5 NOW RELEASED!', 'iMindQ FREE TRIAL', 'MindView 6 TRY IT FREE', and 'XMind 6'. At the bottom is a 'QuickStart E-course: Now Free!' banner with a 'GET YOUR FREE E-COURSE!' button.

The screenshot shows the 'Visual Thinking Digest' e-newsletter for November 30, 2015. The header features the title 'Chuck Frey's VISUAL THINKING DIGEST' with icons for mind mapping, diagramming, sketching, and visual thinking. The main content is dated 'November 30, 2015' and includes three articles: 'MindGenius doubles down on mind mapping', 'iMindMap 9 is launched with new fast capture mode', and 'How organizational charts can help flat organizations'. Each article has a small blue icon and a brief summary of the content.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Chuck Frey at chuck@chuckfrey.com.

About the author

Chuck Frey is the author of [The Mind Mapping Software Blog](#). He has written numerous articles and reviews about mind mapping software, and is widely regarded as one of the leading experts on visual mapping and visual thinking.

Chuck has also authored two popular e-books focused on mind mapping software:

- *Power Tips & Strategies for Mind Mapping Software* is a collection of tips and best practices for current users of mind mapping software
- *The Mind Mapping Manifesto* was written to help executives who have not invested in mind mapping software to understand its applications and benefits, and the amazing productivity increases that it offers.



In addition, Chuck serves as the Director of Online Training, for the [Content Marketing Institute](#) (CMI), which is focused on helping marketers understand how to employ this type of strategy in their organizations.



What is content marketing?

Here is how the Content Marketing Institute [defines](#) content marketing:

"Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action."