

## **Making a Visual Map Step by Step (an excerpt from *See What You Think! How to Work Better and Faster with VisiMap*)**

Making a visual map graduated to the computer in the 1990's and has never looked back. I'm going to use VisiMap to demonstrate. I'll show you how to use it in more detail later: for now you can follow along with a pen or pencil in hand if you like.

We have to start by picking a topic. For our first map, our subject is one we know well – ourselves and our various roles in life. A good first step is to create a central picture or image. Visual mapping frequently combines words and images to activate both sides of the brain. You can produce a polished drawing if you're an accomplished artist, but you can simply draw a primitive cartoon or even a stick figure.

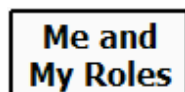


Here is a topic with a central image:

I wish I actually looked like this but I don't. It doesn't have to be a mirror image.

Now it's your turn to try. Your image could be a face, a stick figure or even a symbol that represents you. Place your paper sideways as you start if you like, so that you have lots of space to branch out. Don't worry about your drawing ability. Just draw the way you did when you were five years old.

If pictures intimidate you too much – just start with words.



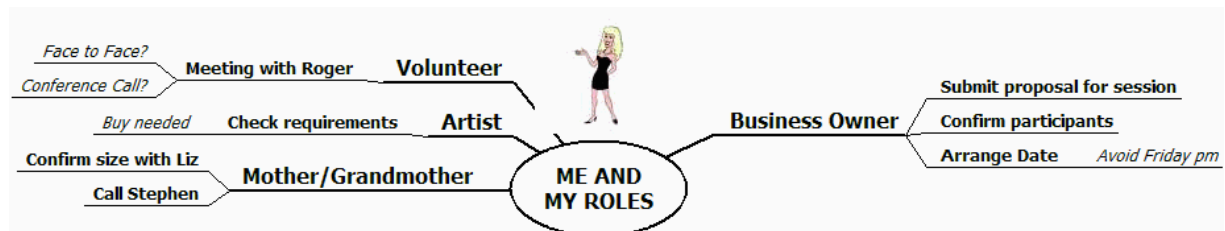
Now I am going to think of my roles in life. I am a business owner, a mother and widow, a grandmother, an amateur artist, and a volunteer. To show this I have created branches radiating from the central picture.



Now it is your turn to add branches to your central image. Put a word or two on each branch. Take your time and enjoy this stage. See if you can come up with at least four roles.

Now I'll look at further aspects of my roles. As a business owner, I have to plan for a meeting in a nearby city. As a grandmother, I have a two year old's birthday fast approaching. I also haven't talked lately to the son who is teaching in Hong Kong. I have enrolled in an art class, but I need to check on my supplies. My successor on a volunteer board wants to sit down and discuss the coming year.

The map states roles; but if anything useful is going to happen, I have to take action. Looking at each role in turn, I can immediately think of things I have to do.



It didn't take long for me to make connections and activate possible courses of action. Since a map visually represents how your own brain works and make associations, you may find that you can use visual mapping to plan more quickly and document the process as you go.

## Map an Agenda

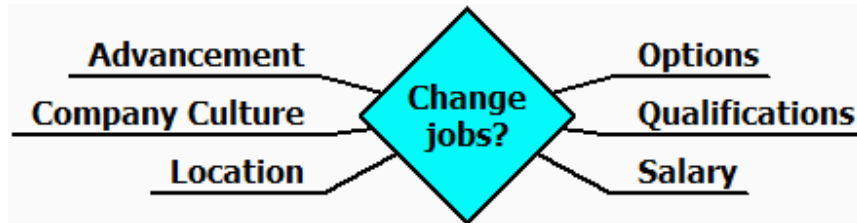
If you have to chair a meeting at work or for a volunteer organization, quickly map the main points of the meeting. You can add the names of persons responsible for reporting, times for each item, desired action to be taken. Minutes follow naturally from the mapped agenda. As the items are dealt with, you can briefly note the result or follow up action and the person who will undertake the job. Try mapping some agenda items now using a map something like this one.



## Map a Decision

Perhaps you are considering a change of location or job. What are the options? What are the likely costs? What other aspects must be considered? Transportation?

Accessibility? Security? Convenience? Try a map now.



## Map What Matters

What would you like to accomplish? At the end of your life, what would you like to look back on? What are the things that you consider to be most important? What are your highest priorities? Are your current activities, routines and habits accomplishing what matters? Try it!

## The Benefits of Visual Mapping

Now that you have tried mapping several different topics, you probably have a better understanding of the differences between a linear and a visual approach to creating and recording ideas. Visual mapping lets you see both the forest and the trees. Not only do you have an overview of the essential aspects of your topic, but you can also see the individual ones and how they overlap and connect. Visual mapping stimulates your imagination.

Vision is not something we create through analysis. “What if” scenarios on spreadsheets show us implications of particular courses of action, but they don’t necessarily produce the big picture. Vision is something we see. We form a vision by using the right side of the brain’s rich imaginative capacity to create a picture of something as though it were already accomplished. We see the patterns, we hear the music, we feel the texture, we taste success. Doing something as simple as doodling in colour transports us to an image world. We travel to the “Imagy-nation”.

Visual mapping is fast and fun. People who use visual mapping on a regular basis report that they see things more clearly, work faster and generate more energy. They find themselves making innovative suggestions and getting to the essence of problems. They join the ranks of people who “get it” It’s much more than putting some doodles on a page and making funny lines branching out in all directions. When you use visual mapping regularly, you jump start your brain and take advantage of the full range of cortical skills and use a whole brained approach to thinking. You have moved from an industrial linear model where ideas move in a straight line, to a non-linear model, where ideas radiate from a central point and build connections to other points in an enormous network of relationships.