2019 Mind Mapping Software Trends Survey

Learn how your peers are using it and the benefits they're leveraging from it

Insights

Advantages

MIND MAPPING SOFTWARE

Best Practices

Opportunities

PRESENTED BY XMind ZEN

The State of Mind Mapping Software 2019

As the nature of work and mind mapping software tools continue to evolve, they appear to be as relevant to each other as ever. That's the conclusion of the 2019 Mind Mapping Software Trends Survey.

Executives and knowledge workers depend on mind mapping software to help them brainstorm, plan and manage projects. They use it to collaborate and innovate. It is an essential tool to help them work creatively, productively and effectively.

Survey objectives

- Shed light on the ways in which business executives utilize mind mapping software to enhance their work.

- Help people who are thinking of investing in it to clearly understand what it makes possible.

- Help you understand how your peers are using it and the benefits they're experiencing as a result.

Research highlights

Here are some highlights from the 2019 survey:

Productivity increase from mind mapping: On average, mind mapping software helps busy executives to be 30% more productive in their work. During the last 8 years, that number has held steady at 20%. So this represents a significant increase.

Creativity increase from mind mapping software: The largest percentage of respondents said it increases their creativity by 30%.

Major time savings for mind mapping experts: Expert users of mind mapping software say it saves them an average of 7 hours per week - the equivalent of almost a full day of work.

Expert users get the biggest payoff: Survey responses clearly show that expert users of mind mapping software are able to leverage the biggest benefits from it. Training to achieve mastery in the use of mind mapping software DOES pay off!

Here's what this year's data shows:

- Expert users save over 7 hours a week using mind mapping software, twice as much as the average for all users.

- Over half of expert users (51.2%) say it's essential for distilling information and reaching clarity faster

- A majority of expert users (48.8%) say mind mapping software has made a significant impact on their work, while over one-third (39.5%) call its impact "revolutionary."

- 86% say it helps them tackle complex tasks that they may have otherwise avoided if they didn't use mind mapping software.

Wishing you all the best in 2020,

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The Mind Mapping Software Blog
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The survey results

## What is your level of experience with mind mapping software?

The majority of respondents (60%) reported that they were either intermediate or experienced/advanced users of mind mapping software. Only 7.5% identified themselves as beginners, while over 32% said they were expert users, a 9% increase from 2017.
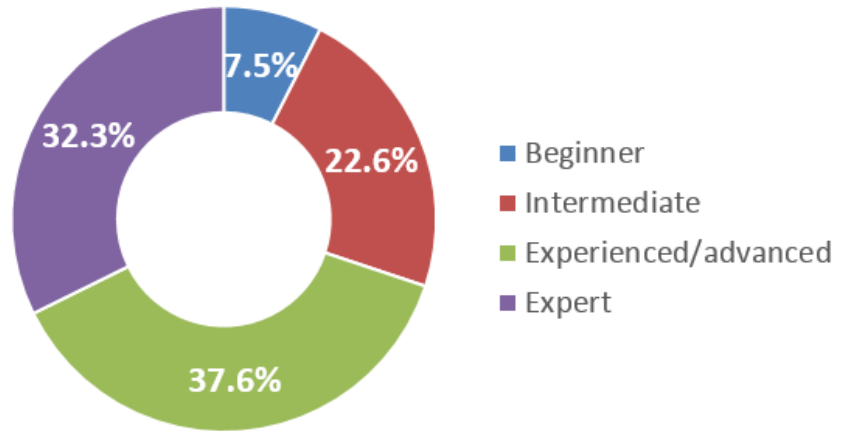
Approximately how many hours per week does your mind mapping software save you, compared to conventional methods of planning and brainstorming?

Respondents to the 2019 survey continued to give mind mapping software high marks for its ability to save them time.

18% of all survey respondents said it saves them more than 7 hours a week, up 1.3% since the 2017 survey. Another 13.5% said it saves them 5 to 7 hours a week, an increase of over 2% since the 2017 survey. The biggest percentage of survey respondents (24.1%) said it saves them an average of 3 to 5 hours per week. Following close behind, 20.3% of respondents said it saves them 2 to 3 hours per week.
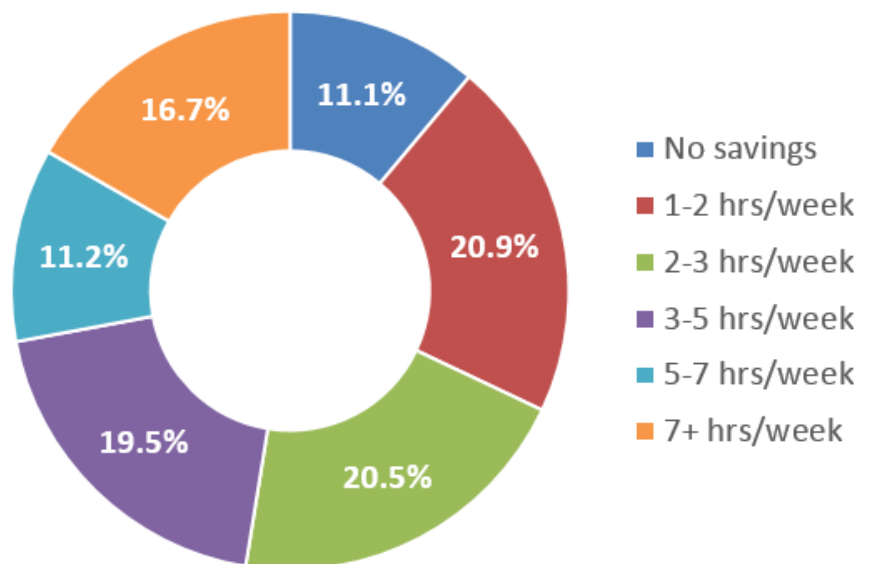

Part of the reason these results vary so widely depends upon how each person is using mind mapping software. Some of them live in the software most of their workday, managing projects, brainstorming and collaborating. Other users, in contrast, may only use it once a day or a few times a week as their workload and projects require.

Over one-third of expert users of mind mapping software (37.2%) said it saves them over 7 hours a week. In contrast, beginner-level users cited an average 1-2 hour increase.

These results clearly show that learning how to use mind mapping software more effectively can have a major payoff in your productivity and efficiency.

What is the single biggest benefit you have experienced from using mind mapping software?
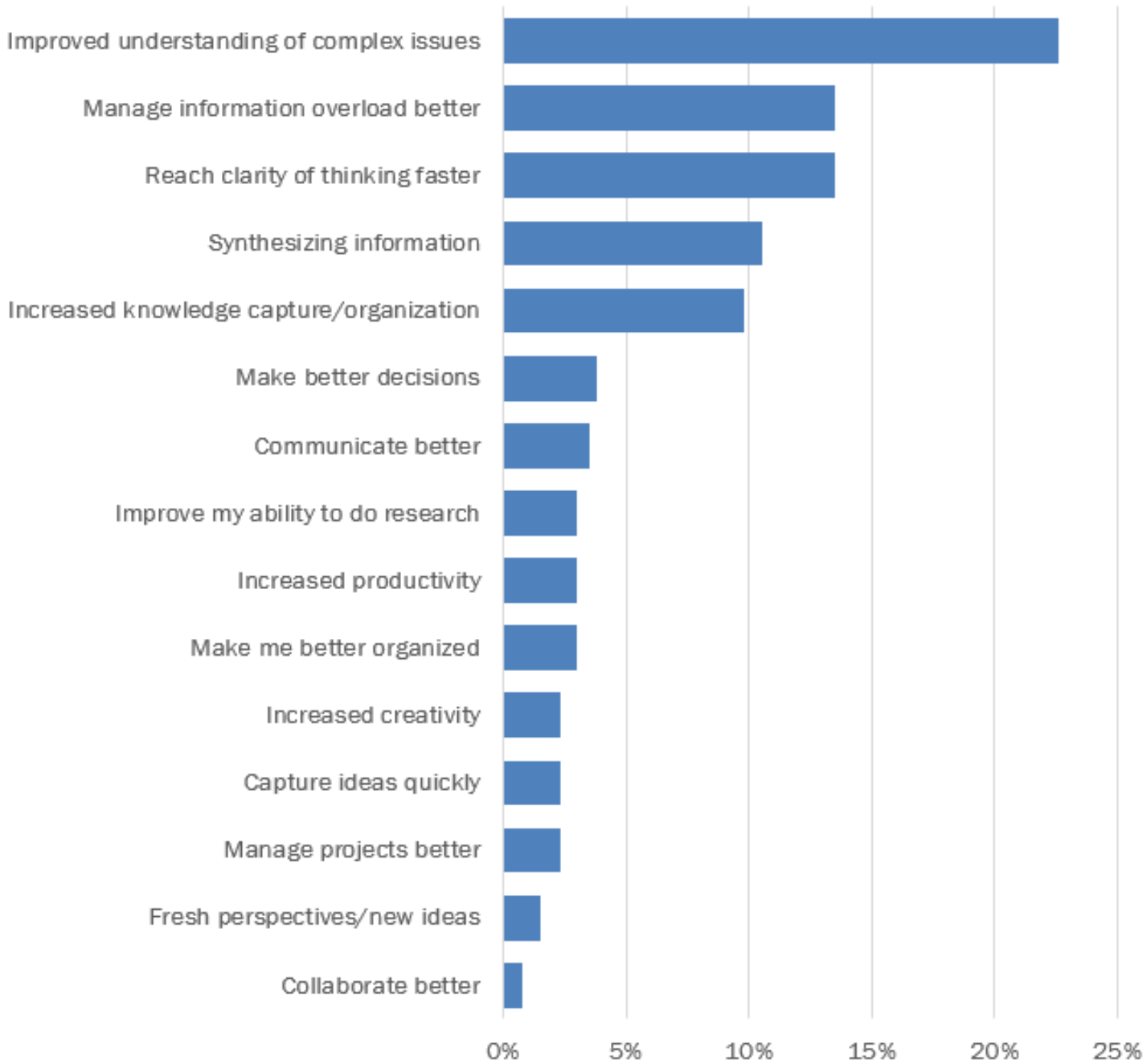
This question gets to the heart of the value of mind mapping software. It explains why its users tend to be so prodigiously productive and effective. As you can see from the bar chart, mind mapping software is used today in a myriad of business applications.

Here are the top five answers to this survey question, in declining order of popularity:

1. Improved understanding of complex projects/issues (22.6%)
2. Manage information overload better (13.5%)
3. Reach clarity of thinking faster (13.5%)
4. Synthesizing information (10.5%)
5. Improved knowledge capture/organization (9.8%)

How does this ranking compared to the 2017 survey results? In both cases, "improved understanding of complex projects/issues" remained number one.

Improve knowledge capture/organization, which was number two in 2017, slipped to number five this year.

Reach clarity of thinking faster was number three in both 2017 and 2019.

Expert users of main mapping software provide another useful perspective. These are the people who are getting the greatest value out of this type of productivity tool. Their top-five ranking includes these benefits:

1. Manage information overload better
2. Improve knowledge capture/organization
3. Synthesizing information
4. Increased productivity
5. Reach clarity of thinking faster

Managing information overload remains a huge problem for knowledge workers. It's interesting that expert users of mind mapping software selected it as their number one benefit. The feature set of modern mind mapping software does, indeed, help busy workers and executives to separate the wheat from the chaff and organize their thinking very effectively.

The top benefits cited by survey respondents have one thing in common: They are focused on higher-level thinking tasks that require a tool that can help them to capture, organize, distill and communicate their thoughts and ideas efficiently.

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

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

1. Knowledge management (69.2%)
2. Creative problem-solving (58.6%)
3. Strategic planning (53.4%)
4. To do list (48.1%)
5. Project management (47.4%)
6. Capture ideas/group brainstorming (42.9%)
7. Writing reports/outlining content (41.4%)
8. Decision making (39.1%)
9. Give presentations (38.3%)
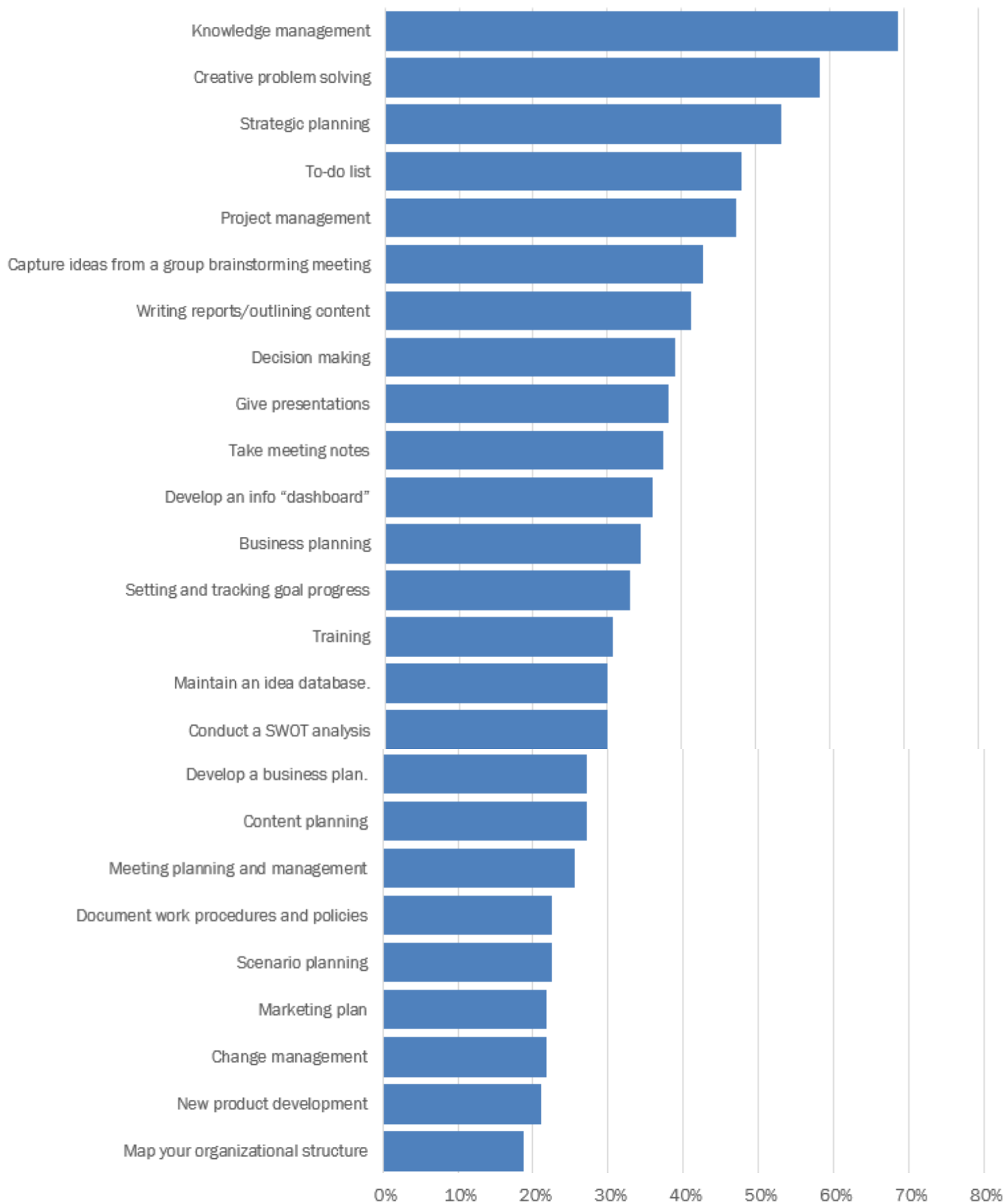10. Taking meeting notes (37.6%)

Project management, which was the number-one ranked application of mind mapping software in 2017, dropped to number five this year. Knowledge management, which was number two in 2017, experienced a 17% increase in popularity from 2017 to 2019 (69.2%).

One interesting pattern in this year's data is that four of the top five applications of mind mapping software involve large amounts of information, knowledge and data: knowledge management, creative problem-solving, strategic planning and project management. The only one in the top five that could be considered a "lightweight" application would be the to-do list (number four).

Once again, these are applications that speak to mind mapping software's value as a tool for gathering information, organizing and distilling it, and sharing it with others.

If you are considering investing in mind mapping software, this data is invaluable to make the case for it. If you are already using it, the responses to this question should reveal additional ways in which you may be able to benefit from it.

Category	Percentage
Knowledge management	68%
Creative problem solving	58%
Strategic planning	53%
To-do list	47%
Project management	46%
Capture ideas from a group brainstorming meeting	42%
Writing reports/outlining content	41%
Decision making	39%
Give presentations	38%
Take meeting notes	37%
Develop an info "dashboard"	36%
Business planning	34%
Setting and tracking goal progress	33%
Training	31%
Maintain an idea database.	30%
Conduct a SWOT analysis	30%
Develop a business plan.	27%
Content planning	27%
Meeting planning and management	25%
Document work procedures and policies	22%
Scenario planning	22%
Marketing plan	21%
Change management	21%
New product development	21%
Map your organizational structure	18%

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

Results from the last 3 surveys revealed that users of it average a 20-30% productivity increase.
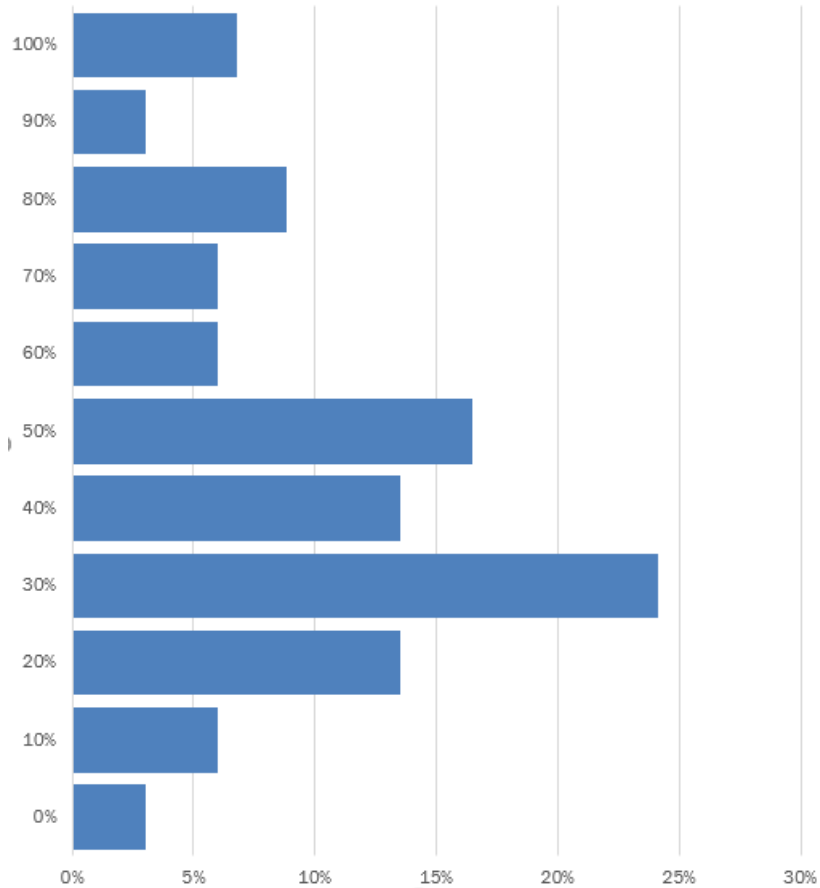
Respondents continue to estimate similar increases in this year's survey, with 24.1% of respondents saying it increases their productivity by 30% and 13.5% reporting a 20% increase.
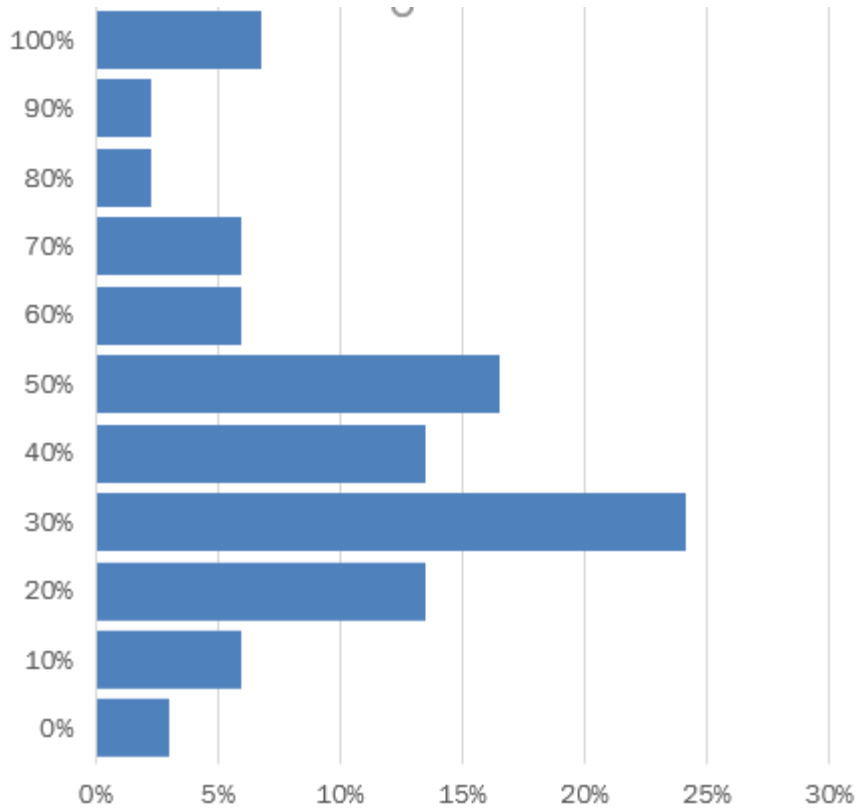
How much of a CREATIVITY increase have you experienced from using mind mapping software?

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.

The average increase reported by 2019 survey respondents was 30%. up 6% from 2017. On both sides of that, 20% and 40%, 13.5% of re-

spondents agreed that it helped them achieve those levels of increase.

## To what extent does your mind mapping software help you to…

Starting a trend I kicked off in the 2017 survey, I wanted to learn more about the specific benefits of mind mapping software that you have ranked high in past surveys. It's an opportunity to "go deeper" into specific applications and their benefits.

Here's what you had to say:

...Distill information and reach CLARITY faster?

Reaching clarity on key business issues is clearly a priority area for users of mind mapping software. 40.6% of respondents said it helps them "significantly." Another 15% said it's essential. Just over half of expert users (51.2%) said it's essential in this role, with another 30.2% saying it helps them "significantly."

Clearly, this is one of the most important benefits of mind mapping software.
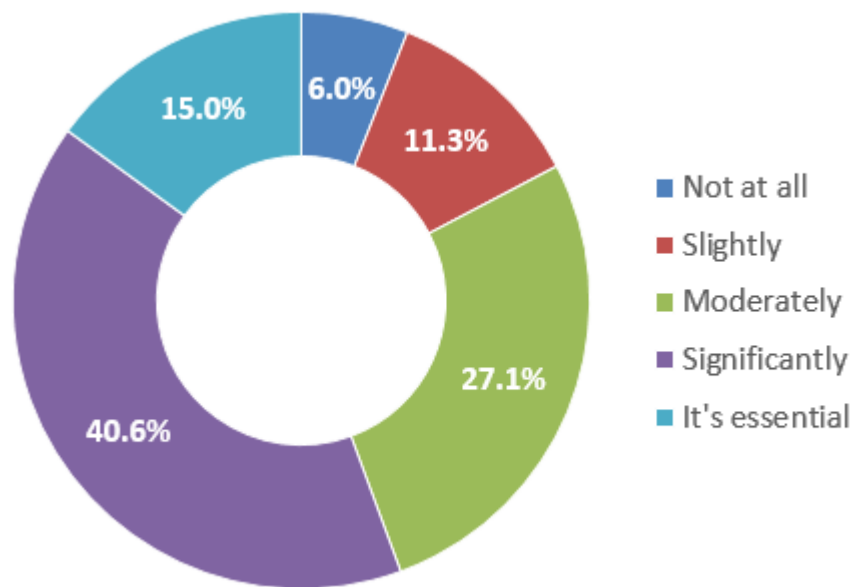
### ...SHARE YOUR IDEAS with greater clarity and impact?

Over 61% of users of mind mapping software said that it helps them present their ideas with greater impact to a "significant" or "essential" degree. The mind map format IS eye-catching. That makes it a powerful tool for presenting
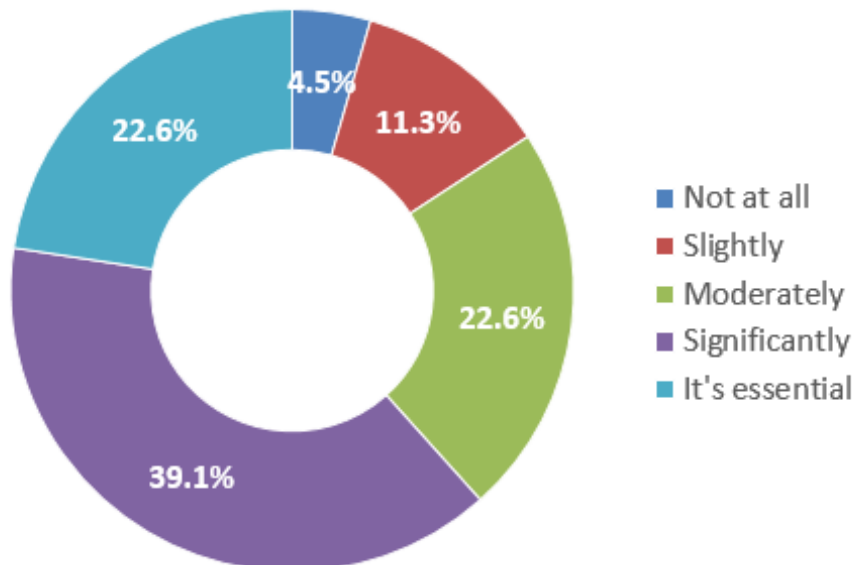
ideas directly, or for exporting your mind map as an image for inclusion in reports and presentations.

...MANAGE PROJECTS more efficiently?

From 2017 to 2019, the percentage of survey respondents who said mind mapping software "significantly" helps them manage projects more efficiently increased significantly: from 34.9% to 45.9%. In contrast, beginners didn't see quite as much value in it: 40% said it provided them with moderate value, while another 30% said it makes a significant difference.

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Significantly
- It's essential

4.5% 8.3% 24.1% 45.9% 17.3%
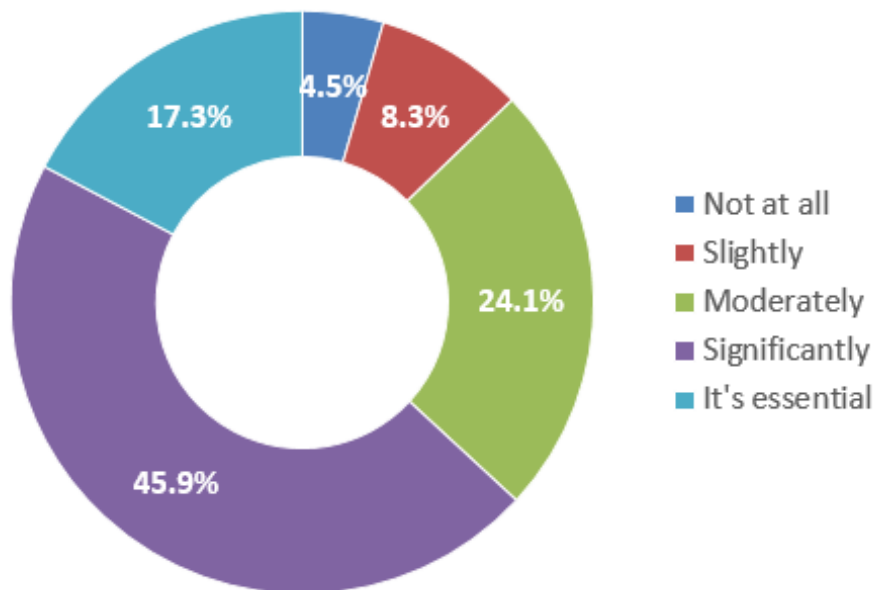
Why the increase? During the last two years, leading developers of mind mapping software have been significantly expanding the project management functionality of their tools - as well as making them easier for the average user to utilize in this important role.

STREAMLINE
your project management with mind maps

...Improved your DECISION-MAKING?

By enabling you to create a flexible visual canvas of pros, cons and other information, you can use mind mapping software to make better informed decisions. That's definitely reflected in this data! 35% of 2019 survey respondents said it "significantly"


- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Significantly
- It's essential

2.3% 11.3% 24.8% 42.9% 18.8%
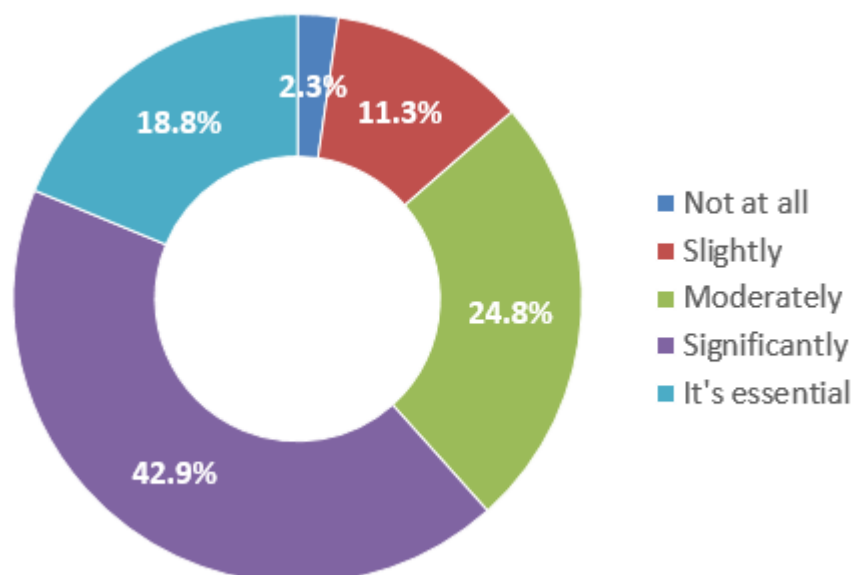
improves their decision-making, while another one-third (33.5%) said it did so to a "moderate" extent.

...COLLABORATE more effectively with others?

Collaboration was another area where the percentage of users rating mind mapping software as "moderately effective" made a significant increase, from 28.4% in 2017 to 33.8%.

Once again, I think the difference-maker has been the rise of a new generation of web-based mind mapping tools, plus desktop applications slowly but surely adding collaboration tools directly, or through integrations with tools like Slack.
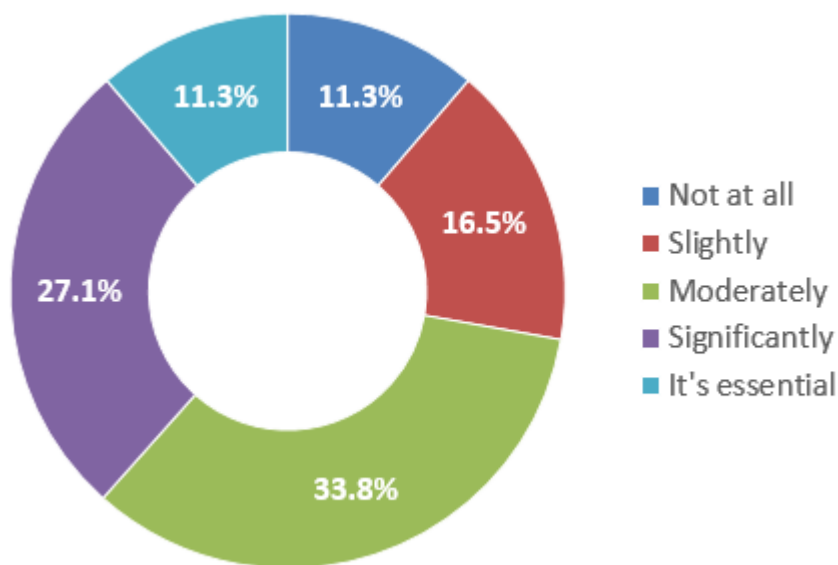
...Generate and capture IDEAS more efficiently?

The role of mind mapping software as a tool for capturing, improving and evaluating ideas seems to be on the upswing. In 2017, only 23.7% of of survey respondents said it was "essential" in that role. In 2019, that number has skyrocketed to 36.1%, with another 40.6% stating that it helps them do this to a "significant" degree.
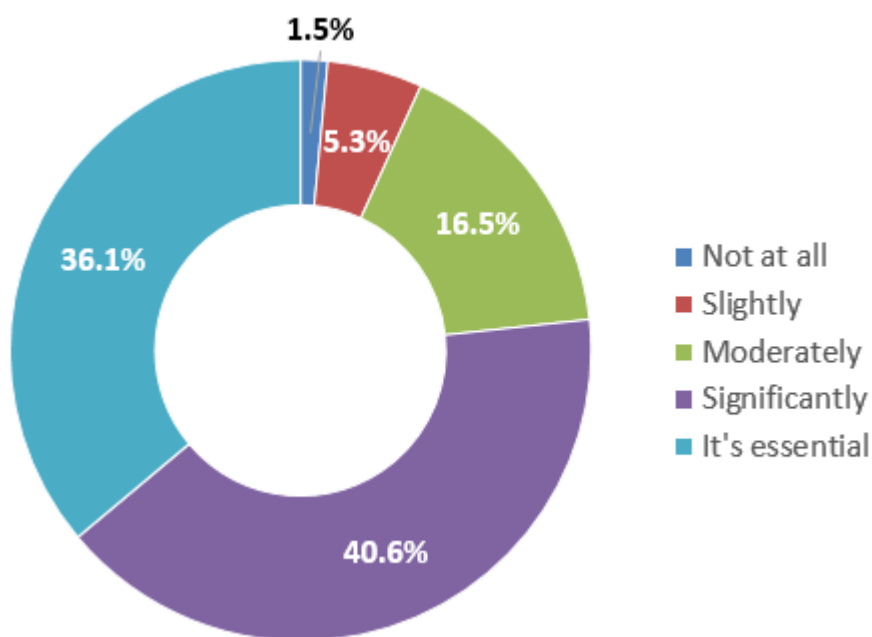
...Give you a COMPETITIVE EDGE in your career?

I believe strongly that equipping yourself with advanced thinking tools, visual or otherwise, can help to give you an edge in your career. Businesses today need the ideas of their people like never before. At the same time, the number of opportunities to advance have diminished, as companies have delayered and leaned out their structures.

That means savvy executives need every edge they can get. Mind mapping software is one of those tools.

35.3% of survey respondents said it helped them "moderately" in this area, with another 21.8% stating that it gives them a "significant" edge. In contrast, beginners were inclined to evenly rate it as providing no competitive edge or a moderate edge.
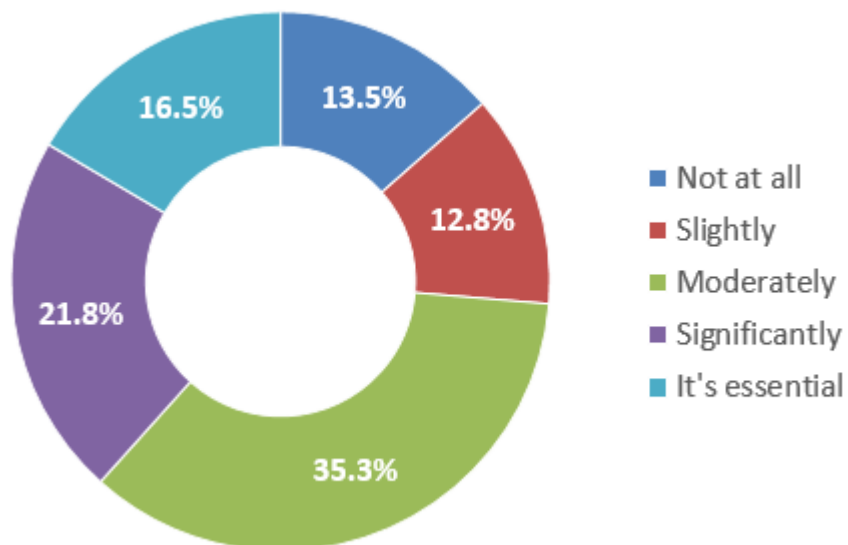
In a vivid contrast, 53.5% of expert users said it's either essential or helps them significantly in this area. In their minds, there's no question - their mind mapping software is definitely a difference-maker.

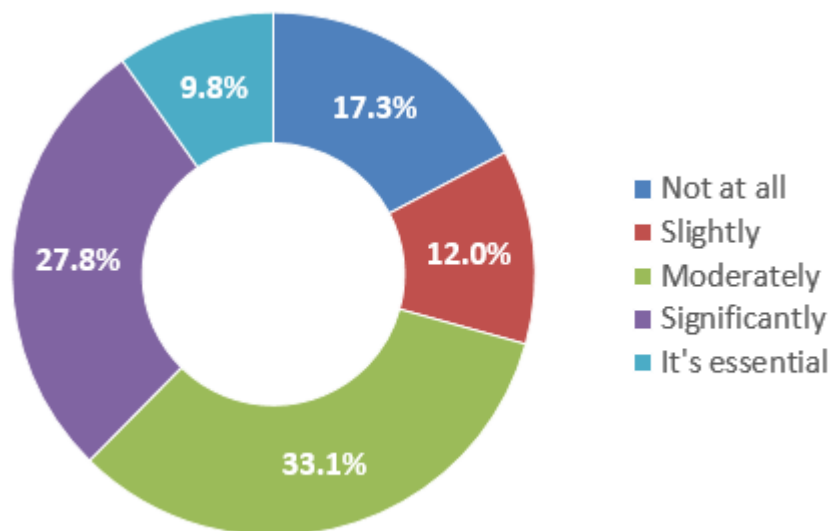## ...Identify the ROOT CAUSES of business problems?

Once again, response to this question from survey respondents was lukewarm. Only 35.3% of respondents said it helps "moderately" in this role, an increase of 2% from 2017. Perhaps this is because so few of the mind mapping software developers enable users to create

fishbone (Ishakawa) diagrams, the essential visual tool used to identify the root causes of business problems.
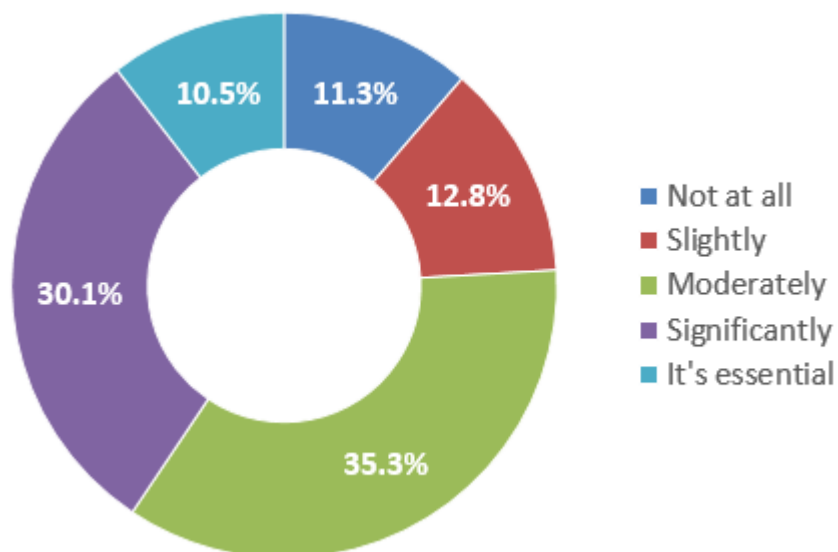
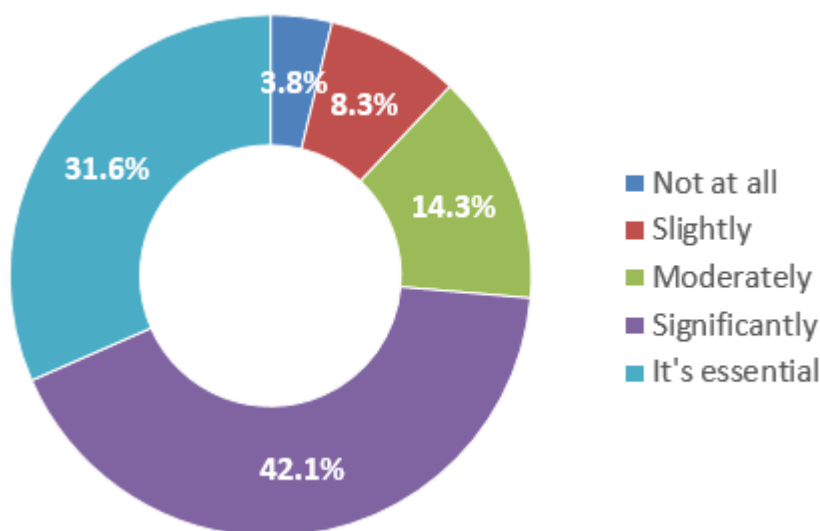## ...DIFFERENTIATE YOU in the minds of your boss and senior-level executives?

I've always considered mind mapping software as a tool that differentiates me to my boss and senior-level executives - part of my "secret sauce" that enables me to think divergently, look at challenges from multiple perspectives and to plan effectively.

In 2017, your answers were somewhat lukewarm to this question. But two years, later, your responses are trending up-ward. 27.8% of you said it helps "significantly" to differentiate you (up from 20.7% in 2017) and a full one-third of respondents (33.1%) said it helps them "moderately" (up 9% from 2017).

Pie chart values: 9.8%, 17.3%, 12.0%, 33.1%, 27.8%

Legend:
■ Not at all
■ Slightly
■ Moderately
■ Significantly
■ It's essential

...Think more CREATIVELY?

This is another question where your responses have shown a sig-nificant uptick during the last two years. In 2017, 28.8% of respond-ents said mind mapping software is essential in this role; in 2019, that number has increased to 31.6%. Similarly, the increase of users who find it to be a "significant" benefit in this role jumped 10 points, from 32.6% in 2017 to 42.1% in 2019.

Pie chart values: 3.8%, 8.3%, 14.3%, 42.1%, 31.6%

Legend:
■ Not at all
■ Slightly
■ Moderately
■ Significantly
■ It's essential

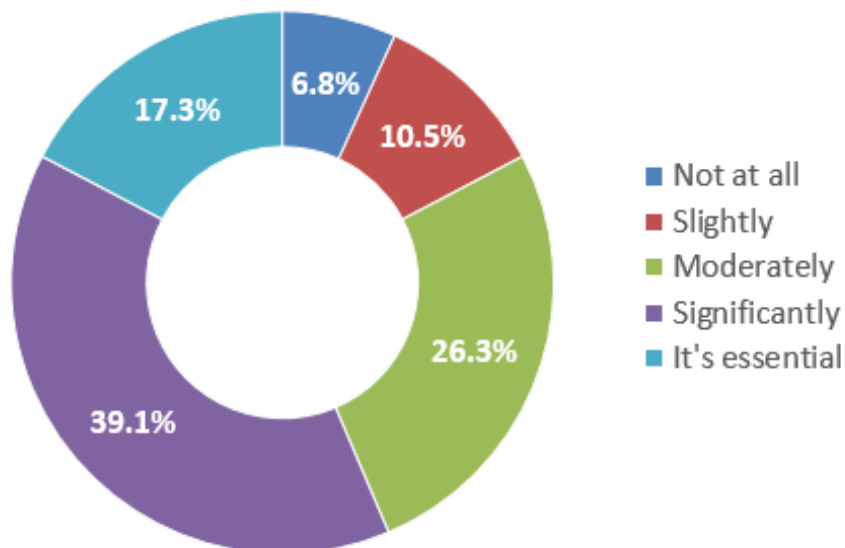## ..Create high-quality PLANS and REPORTS?

Curiously, the percentage of respondents who called mind mapping software essential in this role dropped, from 16.2% in 2017 to only 7.5% in this year's survey. Both signif-icant and moderate rating s showed increases that averaged 7% points each.

In contrast, 14% of expert users say it's essential to help create high quality plans and reports; another 46.5% say it's an essential aid in this role.

...See OPPORTUNITIES that weren't visible before?

This has always been another big benefit of mind mapping software, in my opinion. The fact that you can arrange and rearrange map topics at will enables you to experiment with different arrangements of information - which can help you see connections and opportunities that weren't visible to you before.

Legend: Not at all · Slightly · Moderately · Significantly · It's essential

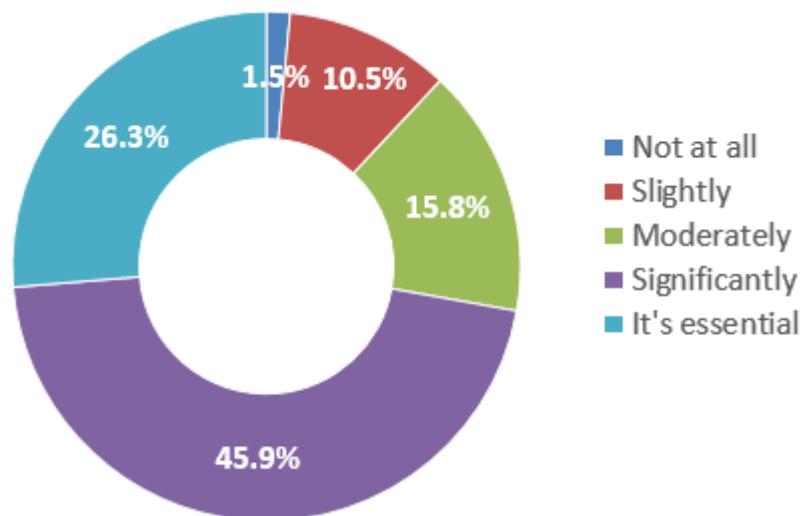Chart values: 6.8%, 10.5%, 26.3%, 39.1%, 17.3%

Fortunately, a growing percentage of you seem to agree with this assessment: 17.3% of you say it's essential in this role (up 3% from 2017), while another 39.1% say it's a significant benefit (up nearly 4% since 2017).

Once again, experts see this benefit more clearly than anyone else: Over one-third of them (34.9%) say it's essential, and almost half (44.2%) see it as a significant benefit.

...Make innovative CONNECTIONS between pieces of information?

This question is closely related to the last one. Being able to reorganize the elements of your mind map at will enables you to see connections that weren't previously visible. Nearly half of you (45.9%) agree, with another one-quarter of you (26.3%) calling it "essential" in this role. Those numbers are up 8% and 3% over 2017, respectively.

Legend: Not at all · Slightly · Moderately · Significantly · It's essential

Chart values: 1.5%, 10.5%, 15.8%, 45.9%, 26.3%

Once again, expert users see this as a very significant benefit of mind mapping software: Nearly half (41.9%) say it's essential, while another one-third (32.6%) say it's a significant benefit.

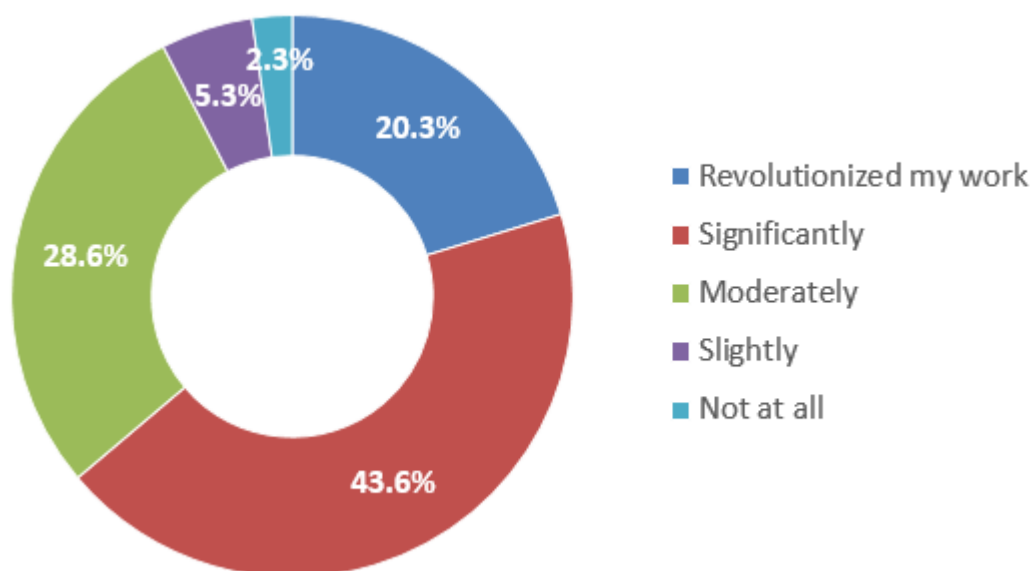## ...Reach CLARITY on key business issues faster?

40.6% of survey respondents say that mind mapping software has significant value as a clarity-enhancing tool. Another 15% say it's essential.

These answers were fairy middle of the road compared to expert users, who rate mind mapping software highly for this capability: Almost one-fourth (23.3%) say it's essential, plus another 41.9% say it helps them "significantly" in this area.

Chart data:
- Not at all: 6.0%
- Slightly: 11.3%
- Moderately: 27.1%
- Significantly: 40.6%
- It's essential: 15.0%
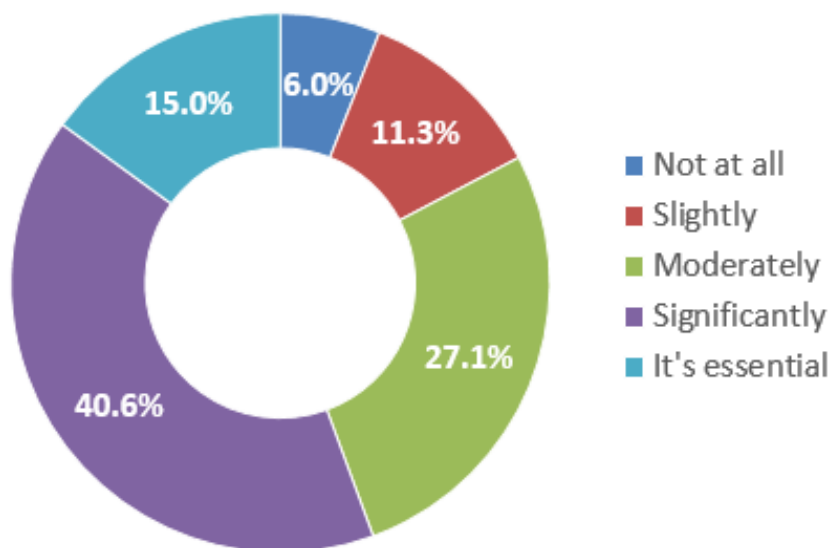
To what extent has mind mapping software changed the overall way in which you work?

This is intended as a bigger picture question. You're using it as a tool to get work done more efficiently, productivity and creatively. But how much is the tool impacting the way in which you work? In a word, it has a BIG impact:

Chart data:
- Revolutionized my work: 20.3%
- Significantly: 43.6%
- Moderately: 28.6%
- Slightly: 5.3%
- Not at all: 2.3%

One out of five survey respondents (23.3%) say it has a "revolutionary" effect on their work (up nearly 3 percentage points since 2017), plus another 43,6% - nearly half of all respondents - said it makes a "significant" impact on their work.

Expert users are even more enthusiastic about it, with just over one-third (39.5%) calling it "revolutionary" and almost half (48.8%) citing its "significant" impact.

The lesson continues to be clear: The more you know about using the advanced ca-

pabilities of your mind mapping software, the bigger the impact it's likely to have on your work.

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

I started to ask this question in the 2011 survey, because I was convinced that a really excellent tool changes the way you look at projects. If it's capable, flexible and powerful, I theorized, you would be more likely to dive into complex or ambiguous projects. Without that tool, you would step back from such challenges.
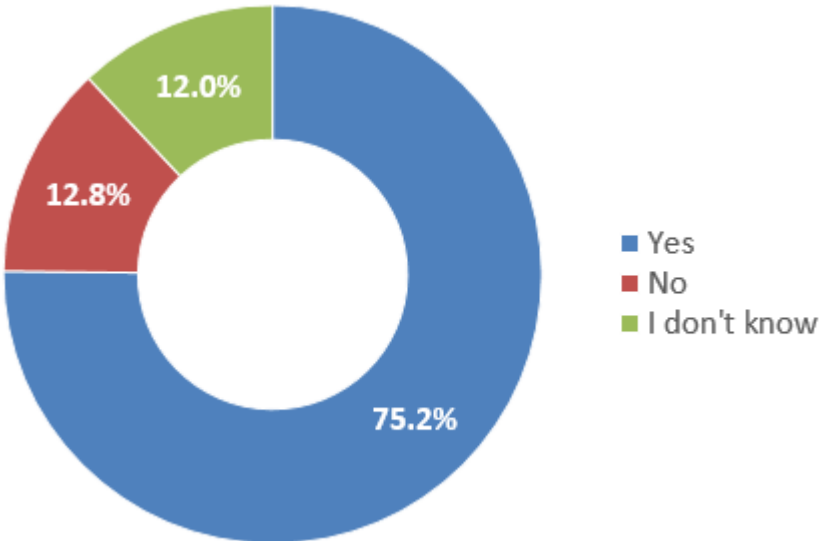
According to your survey responses, that's even more true

12.0%
12.8%
75.2%
■ Yes
■ No
■ I don't know

than ever. During the last 3 surveys (2011, 2015 and 2017), your "yes" answers to this question hovered in the mid-60% range. In 2019, that has jumped to 75.2%, a remarkable increase. For expert users, the responses are even higher: 86% say it does help them tackle more complex tasks.

If you didn't have mind mapping software, would you be able to produce the same quality of work?
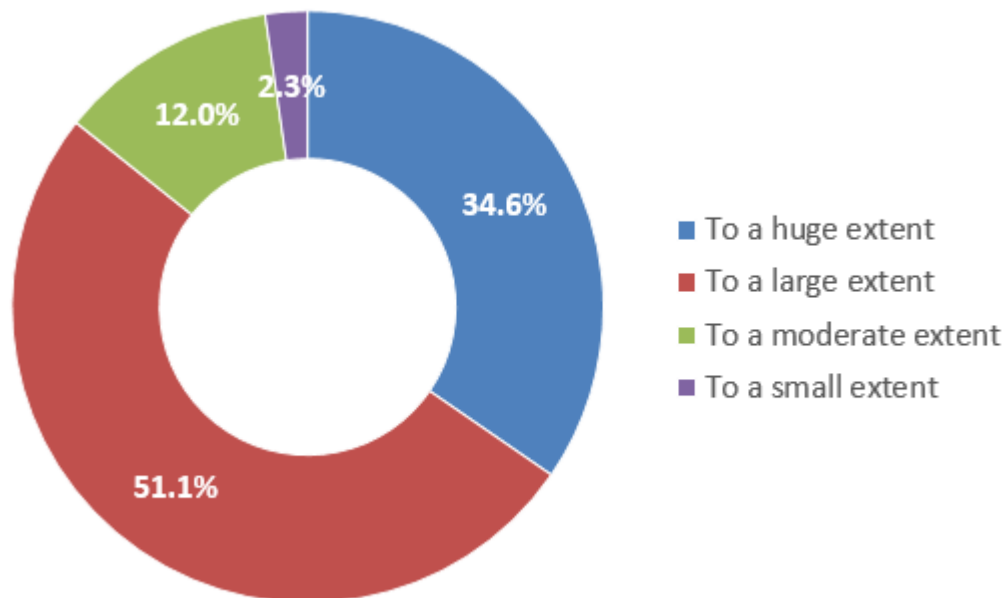
The responses to this question have remained roughly steady during the last decade. This year, 60.2% of you said that "no" you wouldn't be able to produce the same quality of work without mind mapping software.
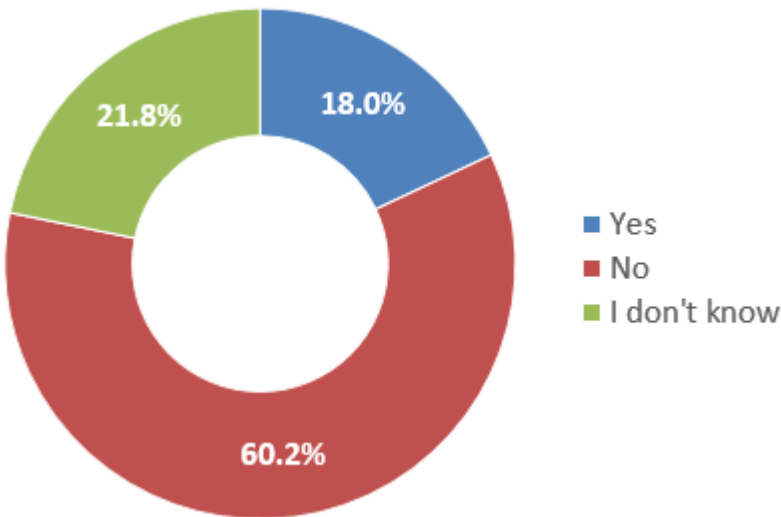
That compares to 60% in 2017, and the high 50s in 2015 and 2011.

21.8%
18.0%
60.2%
■ Yes
■ No
■ I don't know

To what extent does mind mapping software help you do a more thorough job of THINKING and PLANNING?

The responses to this question showed remarkable increases between 2017 and 2019. 34.6% of respondents say it helps to "a huge extent" in this role, with just over half (51.1%) calling it a "large" benefit. Those numbers are up nearly 10% compared to the 2017 responses.

Legend:
- To a huge extent — 34.6%
- To a large extent — 51.1%
- To a moderate extent — 12.0%
- To a small extent — 2.3%

The responses, as expected, are even higher for expert users: 97% say it helps them do a more thorough job of thinking and planning to a huge or large extent - amazing!

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Mind mapping software is well positioned to be the solution of choice for visualizing and working efficiently with vast quantities of information.

This is a new question for 2019, as I continue to try to uncover new insights into what makes mind mapping software unique and special in your productivity and creativity toolkits.

Legend:
- Strongly agree — 61.7%
- Somewhat agree — 28.6%
- Neutral — 7.5%
- Somewhat disagree — 1.5%
- Strongly disagree — 0.8%

As the nature of work evolves, mind mapping software, too, is evolving from a "one-trick pony" (radial and one-direction facing visualizations with one central topic) to multi-faceted "Swiss Army Knives" that can help busy knowledge workers and executives to view their
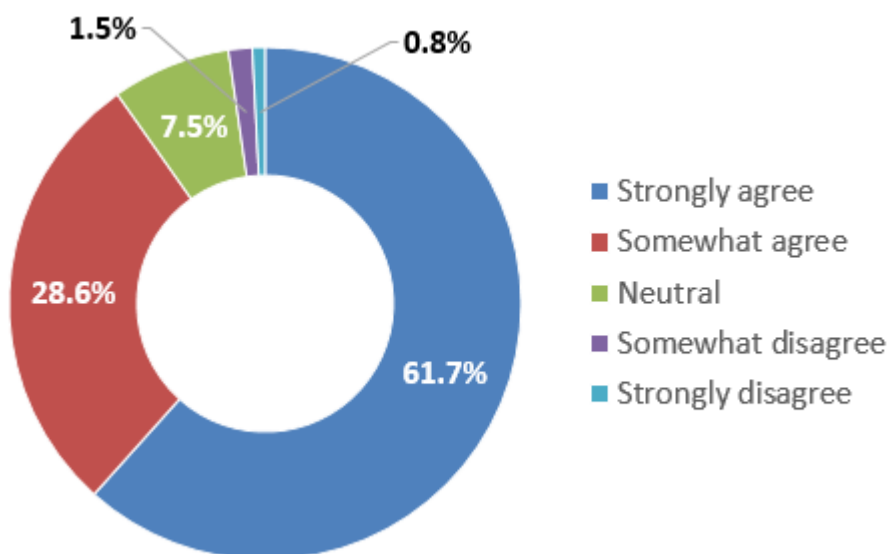
knowledge, information and data from multiple perspectives.
Considering this changing role, it made sense to ask you how mind mapping software is fulfilling it. Here's what you had to say:

Nearly two-thirds of you (61.7%) strongly agree with this statement, with another 28.6% somewhat agreeing with it. Only roughly 10% were neutral or negative toward it.

In your opinion, how effective is mind mapping software as a dynamic information dashboard?

Another new question. Clearly, mind map dashboards aren't a new phenomenon, but this year's survey seemed to be an excellent opportunity to determine just how useful they are in today's business environment.
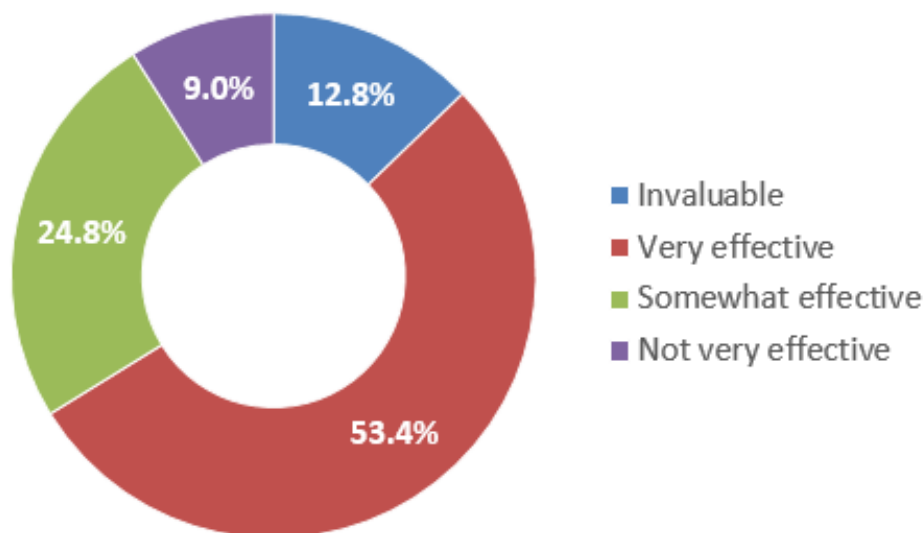
For those of you who aren't familiar with the concept, a mind map dashboard is like the functional equivalent of the dashboard in your automobile, which centralizes a lot of real-time data about its condition and performance in a convenient visual summary.

In much the same way, a mind map dashboard can be customized to provide you with one-click access to your most frequently-used tools, files and resources. Depending upon the program in which you create them, they can also display data, such as spreadsheet cell ranges. In all cases, the idea behind a mind map dashboard is to speed access to everything you need to be productive and effective in your work.

Here's what you had to say about the importance of mind map dashboards: Only 12.8% called them invaluable, but just over half of you (53.4%) said they're "very effective."

In contrast, 20.9% - almost twice as many - expert respondents called dashboards "invaluable" while another 48.9% say they're "very effective." 16% of experienced users called them invaluable, and another 58% declared them to be "very effective."

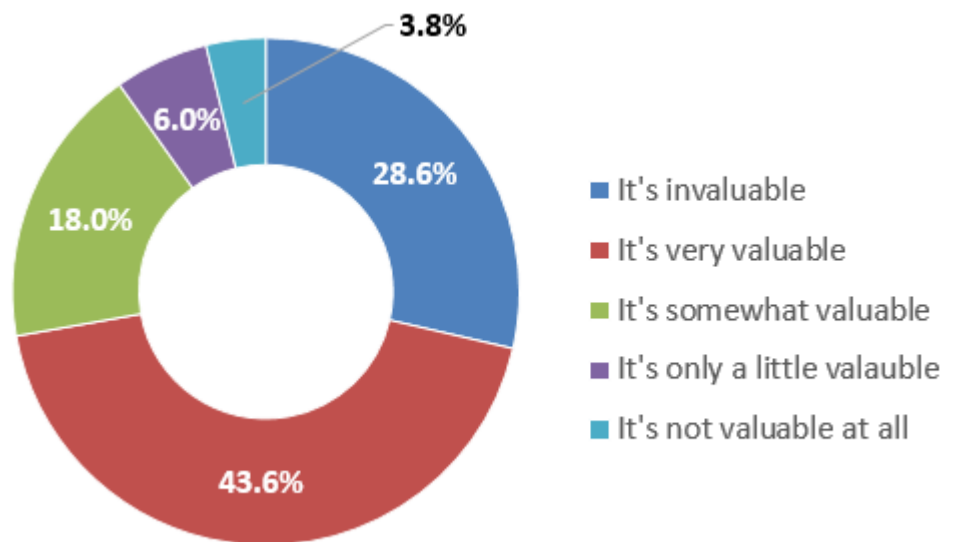How you can elevate your productivity with **DASHBOARD MAPS**

Clearly, dashboards are tools that many of you can benefit from.

To what extent does mind mapping software make data, information and knowledge more relevant and useful to you and others?

Another new question, designed to dig deeper into the real value mind mapping software provides to its users.

Clearly, creating mind maps cannot be an end unto itself. It must add value to the data, information and knowledge it displays - transforming it or increasing its utility or value to you or others with whom you share it.

- It's invaluable
- It's very valuable
- It's somewhat valuable
- It's only a little valauble
- It's not valuable at all

So how well does mind mapping software do this important job? Quite well, based on your responses. Nearly one in five respondents call it "invaluable," while over half (58.6%) say it helps "to a large extent."

How valuable is it that mind mapping software enables you to view your information from a variety of perspectives (such as diagram, kanban, timeline and other views, filtering tools, etc.)?

In recent years, software developers have been adding new views for capturing, analyzing and presenting information. Flowchart diagrams, timeline views and—most recently—kanban views (popularized by web-based applications like Trello) have become part of their toolsets. So it seemed like an excellent opportunity to ask the users of these advanced tools what they think of all of this visualization power—is it valuable to them or not?

Over one in four survey respondents (28.6%) indicated that it's "invaluable" to them. Almost half (43.6%) rated it as "very valuable."

Just over one-third of expert users (37.2%) call this capability "invaluable," while another 44.2% rated it as "very valuable."
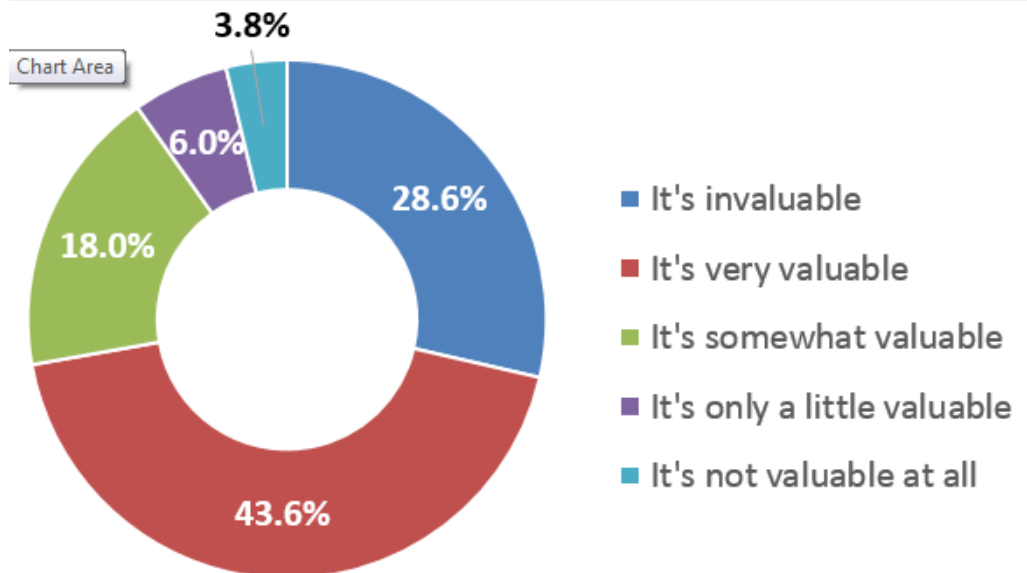
To what extent does mind mapping software help you to manage information overload?

One of the things this survey reveals is that its users don't view everything it does for them with rose-colored glasses. Their responses to this question is a case in point. I would have expected the majority of respondents to say that it's invaluable in this role. Instead, the majority of them (51.1%) believe it's only "somewhat" helpful. A full 10% are convinced that it has no impact on their ability to manage information overload.
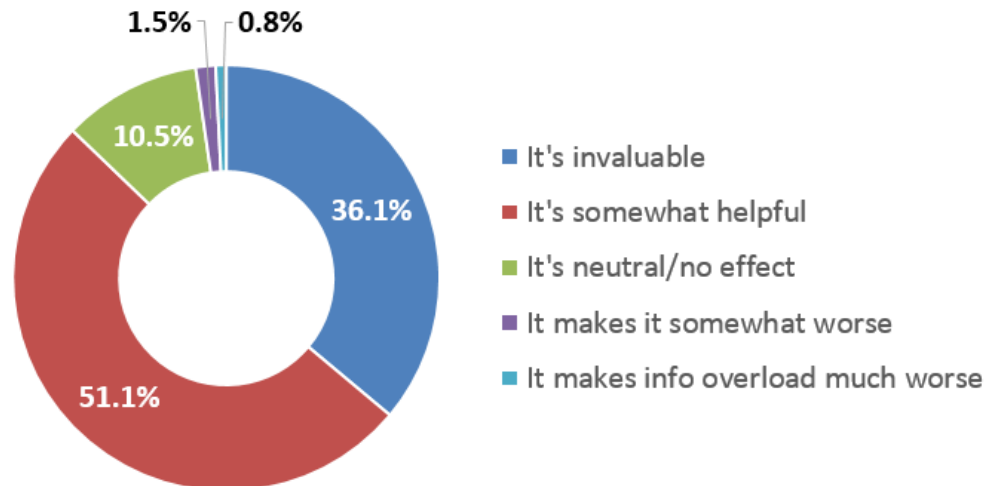
Nearly half of expert users (44.2%), on the other hand, consider mind mapping software to be "invaluable" in their daily battle against information overload. A slightly larger number (46.5%) only think it's "somewhat helpful" at preventing this scourge of productivity.

THANK YOU!

Thanks so much for helping to make this 2019 Mind Mapping Software Trends Report another eye-opening experience!

I wish you much success in 2020 with mind mapping software!

Best Regards,

Chuck Frey
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The Mind Mapping Software Blog
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Questions?

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Chuck 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 asone of the world's leading authorities on mind mapping and visual thinking. Chuck has also authored numerous resources designed to help business people use it better, including:

- Power Tips & Strategies for Mind Mapping Software, the definitive collection of tips and best practices for current users of mind mapping software. It is currently in its fourth edition.
- Multiple e-courses on how to use mind mapping software, with a special emphasis on popular business applications of it.
- The Mind Mapping Software Comparison Chart, which compares the features and functionality of 11 popular mind mapping programs, side-by-side, in a convenient dot chart format.

For more great information, trends, reviews and thought-provoking insights into all aspects of visual thinking, please sign up for my free e-newsletter today!
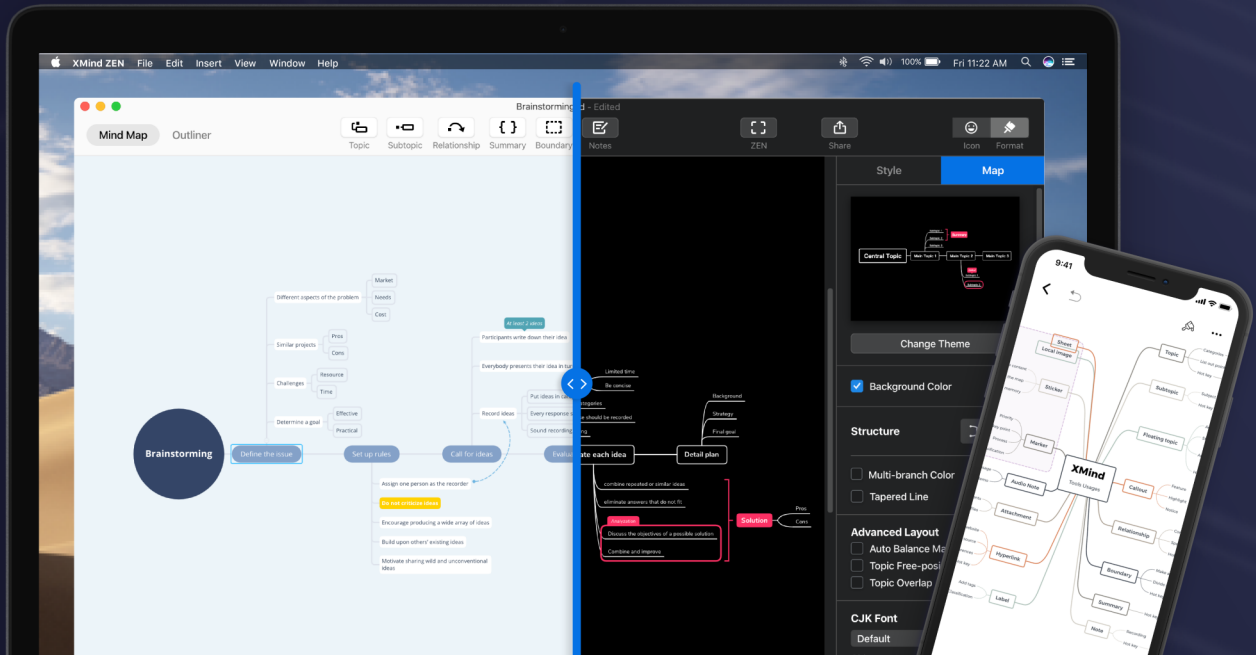
STYLES AND THEMES

The fishbone chart, matrix, timeline, the org chart to enrich your mind maps. Various branch shape like the hexagon, capsule, circle etc. to emphasize your thoughts.

ZEN MODE

If you want to get perfect results, ZEN mode allows you only concentrate on one mind map. This way all your energy will go into it and you will accomplish it perfectly.

DARK UI

Dark UI brings you a comfortable way to focus on mind mapping, and helps you quickly turn the interface to dark at night time.

OUTLINER

Outliner is ideal for managing lists, organizing facts and ideas, and for goal and task management.