

MINDMAPS FOR MARKETERS THE MONETIZATION GUIDE

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MAKING MONEY WITH MINDMAPS

Mindmaps have a lot of uses, as you've seen in the main manual. And they're easy to create and edit. But can you make money with them directly?

Absolutely!

Keep in mind that people will gladly pay for something that helps them solve a problem or achieve an important goal. The format only matters if using it is expensive or difficult. As you've seen for yourself, mindmaps are easy and cheap. And, with proper planning, they can be extremely helpful resources.

Let's look at how you can make money with them. For starters, you can...

Sell 'em!

Yes, just sell the maps, along with a simple user's guide.

This originally seemed to me like a real flyer. Would people pay for a mindmap? Was it too odd or unusual?

Turns out, the answer is yes, they will. And not just once.

In the directory containing my first commercial mindmap product, creatively named "The Map," you'll find the hideous salesletter I used to test the concept. It's actually been cleaned up a bit since then, but the text itself is exactly as originally written.

I sold thousands of dollars worth of that map, with just what you see on that page. The proof wasn't in the sales, though. It was in the response from customers. You would be surprised at how many people emailed me, telling me they had never been able to "grok" mindmaps before, but they now understood the appeal.

More importantly, a lot of them used that map to make changes in their businesses that resulted in big increases in sales and productivity.

I later included a more extensive mindmap in a product called, "The Profit Map." (Gotta love the overhyped titles I give things, eh?) The popularity of that product was further proof that folks would buy mindmap-based products after the curiosity wore off. In fact, a good percentage of the people who bought that one had already bought the original Map product. No curiosity factor at all for them.

So, yeah. They are viable products, all by themselves.

One of the big attractions is that a mindmap is something you can create and complete fairly quickly. In fact, it usually takes longer to write the accompanying user guide and documentation than it does to create the map itself.

You will probably find that the manual for it is among the quickest written products you'll ever create, and certainly easier than most. You've already got a complete outline for the thing, after all.

Test this. It's a quick and easily updatable offer you can make that could provide you with extra income and a "signature" product, while helping your customers to get more of what they want from you.

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As a side note, I should mention that the salesletter for that original mindmap uses a model you may want to copy. Not the exact words, but the approach. It's a story pitch. I just told them how I came to create the thing and why I believed it would be helpful. The story is true, and it's the sort of thing most people can relate to. Plus, it's different.

That can sometimes be a big help in adding interest, which increases sales. Something to consider as part of your test.

The second aspect that is notable about that letter is that I told people right up front that it was a test, and I didn't have any idea how well it would do. I stressed the value I saw in it, but without making any promises.

Readers respect that. Too many salesletters make promises, and not many say "Hey. Let's try it and see." That gives them permission to play, and it doesn't raise the "Hype Flag."

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For starters, you could create a mindmap product as a low-cost front-end product, to get people interested and to introduce yourself and your methods.

Do that as a 100% commission affiliate product, with a good salesletter, and you could find yourself adding new customers at a very useful rate. Make it easy to use and pack it with value, and you've got the start of an army of loyal customers.

This sort of front end product could be almost anything. The most common types are resource guides, basic training systems, and simple process maps.

The process maps are best kept to a "one problem, one solution" format. Show your customers how to get results, fast, and they'll live you.

These are also excellent ways to test interest in a subject or niche quickly. The product can be done in an evening if you're really familiar with your topic. The

salesletter doesn't have to be all that much to move a low-priced solution to a widely shared problem.

You can also create more extensive maps or collections of them as higher priced back end products.

The key to these is to make sure you have solid accompanying docs, and to include resource links and lots of embedded notes. This can make the map as much a book and a working dashboard as a guide.

A simple example of this is in that same original offering, "The Map." If you load that, you'll see a node labeled "Included Reports." Click on any of those and the PDF it links to should load in Acrobat Reader, ready to read or print.

Those reports, by the way, total around 200 pages of bonus info you get along with this product. (I recommend taking a look through them. That stuff ain't fluff.) This is a great way to get extra mileage from your existing content, and provide more value for your customers at the same time.

You can link this way to files that are included with the product, like PDFs, spreadsheets, databases, document outlines, graphics, and even other mindmaps. You can also link to files out there on the net. Those could include video trainings, recorded webinars, downloads that are only available from within the product, Skype groups and Facebook pages... Pretty much anything that can be accessed by clicking on a link.

If you include a PDF or html page with links to the same resources, I recommend adding something they can only get through the mindmap itself, and saying so in the ReadMe document (the first thing they should read when they open the product). That will encourage them to download and install whatever mindmap software you recommend, and that significantly increases the odds your customers will use the product.

Bonus Tip: If you don't want to require your customers to download and install mindmapping software, you can use other formats. I've included a Flash format version of "The Map", called TheMap-Flash.html, which will give you an example of how useful these can be. It allows you to open and close nodes, view the notes associated with the original, and use any of the links (local or web-based) that are embedded in the editable mindmap file.

The primary restriction with these is that they can't be edited by the end user. For many purposes, that isn't an issue at all, and may even be desirable. The big advantage is that your customers will not need anything but a reasonably current web browser to use the product.

The Flash format map was created using Freemind. That's one area where Freemind beats XMind hands down. This format, by the way, is especially

well-suited to maps that link primarily to resources on the web. The map becomes the interface.

Just choose the menu option: File | Export | As Flash.

As an extra special bonus tip... You can upload these to a web server and allow people to visit them directly from a link, without having to download them. If your customers are unlikely to be familiar with unzipping files, or if you're looking for something to go viral, this may be the way to go.

If you have a little web design skill, you can embed these into more complex pages. Including sales pages.

It has a certain novelty to it that can be quite effective. And it's easy.

PRICING TIPS

Pricing appropriately is a big part of getting the most from mindmaps as standalone products. There are no hard and fast rules, and every industry will be at least a little different. The key is to consider what you want your customer to buy next, if it's an introduction-type product.

As an example, don't sell something for \$10 if your next offer is for a \$500 product. That kind of gap creates all sorts of resistance. Take it in steps, or increase the value of the initial product to where you can charge a higher price.

Or just give it away free, with a strong build-up of the value. Samples make more sense than a 50-fold jump in investment.

Either way, if you're selling it as a lead-in to a higher priced product, make sure the sales copy is consistent with the level of expertise you that would support the bigger ticket.

If it's a standalone offer, you can go with more of an impulse type sales approach. Just be sure when you write your copy that you are taking the next step (and beyond) into account.

You also need to decide the type of customer you want to attract. If you sell at \$10, and you don't make it clear up front that you're doing it just to avoid freebie seekers, you're going to get a very different customer base than you will if you add a few extra touches and position it at \$97.

One is not necessarily better than the other, but they will be very different.

Using a mindmap as a bonus allows you to increase the price of your offer. The perceived value of an interactive tool especially one that's customizable, is much higher than a simple PDF. The real value is also higher, as people tend to

learn better when they get more modes involved.

Including a useful mindmap without raising the price can sometimes increase conversion rates significantly. I recommend testing that, as the results can differ with various markets. Technical and business-oriented markets tend to put a higher value on them than most.

In those markets, the map isn't a bonus. It's an integral part of the primary offer.

You can use them as demos to sell your product. Presented this way, they're more like flow charts for a sales letter, with a bit of product outline thrown in.

The goal is to show what the product includes in a way that shows its usefulness and gets the user's imagination involved. A great way to do this is the Benefit --> Question technique. State a benefit, and then ask what that might mean to their results.

That does a couple of things. First, it gets around the problem of overhyping your product. You don't have to state anything about specific results at all. The user of the map will make their own estimates. And, because it was their idea and not your promise, they are more likely to believe those results are possible for them.

The trick to making these successful is to include them as part of the sales process, and to tell the "what" in the map. The "how" is the product itself. Use the map to show the steps they'll walk through when using your product, and to get them involved and invested. The more they visualize the results you offer, the more likely they are to buy.

This can be effective even as a very soft sell. There's no need to push with these, as the real advantage comes from the involvement itself. They walk themselves through the steps, so each click is another indication of (and increase in) their interest and commitment.

You can give these away during a sales process, but they should *not* usually be the only, or last, step in that process.

You can also use them as the visual part of a video presentation. Jeff Walker uses this approach quite effectively in his annual promotions for "Product Launch Formula." He doesn't give out the actual mindmap. He just walks people through it in a streaming video, and explains the steps as he goes.

This may be especially useful if you're the type of person who wanders a bit when doing presentations. (Mea culpa...) The structure of the mindmap will focus you, and give you a direct link to go back to if you diverge too far from your point.

In addition to the standard "also in the box" approach, there are other ways to use these as bonuses to increase sales.

If you sell digital books through any of the major platforms, you can **offer a link inside the book to get the mindmap as a bonus download**. These are called "jacket bonuses."

If you're promoting something as an affiliate, you may be able to create a mindmap that adds real value to the product. If so, **offer it to people as an extra bonus if they buy through your link and send you a copy of their receipt**.

That sort of extra bonus can be VERY effective in increasing sales.

You can add them to a product as an unannounced bonus. If you don't tell them about it until after they've ordered, that can have a significant impact on customer retention and loyalty. Just make sure it really adds THUD to the offer.

Unannounced bonuses that are lame can backfire on you. Something with real oomph, on the other hand, can be golden down the road.

If you're going to recommend products in your maps and those products have affiliate programs, **there's no reason you can't use an affiliate link**. Just make sure you put a proper disclosure notice in the manual for the map.

This can even be profitable if you **give the maps away free**. Make sure they're packed with useful resources, with links to them all, and make it something people will want to share. A few well-chosen, high-quality affiliate products can be a nice addition.

Flipping that around, you can **create giveaways like this for your affiliates** and let them edit the maps to include their own links. If they're links to your products and the affiliate can drive noticeable traffic to the download, you may find it worth your time to edit the links for them on your own.

Hit the right topic, and this sort of resource map can be something that generates cash for you for a long time. Especially if you post it to the web and regularly update it.

Another approach is to create the map yourself and **give it to a few affiliates to give to customers who order through their links as a bonus**. Let them tailor it if they want.

And, of course, you can **put clickable banner ads in your mindmaps**. Blatant ads aren't a surprise to anyone in free content. If they're tightly targeted around the topic of the content, they can be very effective.

In more indirect ways, mindmaps can be used indirectly to increase profits. The most obvious is as a **bonus for subscribing to a list, liking a Facebook page, joining a private group, or registering at a blog.**

This could be very handy if you get a bunch of people to get together to build and distribute the same map. Link to each contributor's sign-up page, and... voila.

They can be useful as a **client prospecting tool.** Offer the map and associated docs to people who fill out an application or a request for consultation. Make sure you filter heavily based on a tight professional interest, and make the map something that really conveys your expertise.

Note: I have not seen this one done yet. I offer it as an idea worth testing.

Back to the bonus idea... Create a map related to a product in your industry and **give it to the merchant to offer to their customers.** The only string might be a link to your sign-up page or an affiliate link (the merchant's, of course) to your product.

Here's one you probably haven't seen before you read the sales page for this product: **Offer a map as a stealth bonus, just for reading about your product.**

When you first looked into this, you probably noticed that I was giving away the graphic version of one of my mindmaps. Just right-click, save as, and you've got it. Free, just for visiting.

That's another test. I'll mention the results when I have enough visitors to track them, but I can tell you the theory right now: First, I believe seeing a small part of the actual product will increase their understanding of the value it offers. Second, I suspect a few people will get their imaginations involved and see the potential it can have for them. Third, I'm pretty sure some folks will want to be able to edit that thing and fit it to their own situations.

It's simple. Engagement and understanding increase sales. And, as before, it does that without any need for hype or big promises. You actually show people what they're getting.

It should also be a great selling point for affiliates to get people to check out the salespage. "You get this cool thing whether you buy or not."

That's one of the advantages of things that can be created this way. It costs nothing to use them to test new ideas.

OTHER USES

There are plenty of other ways you can use mindmaps to increase your profits and your business assets. Some of them will be obvious, some... not so much.

I'll run through some of them here, briefly.

Product outlines: When you first start a project, a mindmap can be an excellent way to organize your thoughts and create a structure you'll use to guide you through the process. This can be anything from an extensive multi-media offering to the outline of a book or simple report.

The layout of a mindmap is perfect for this, especially in Freemind.

Whether you're outlining a book, with each main node being a chapter, or a more complicated product with a lot of elements, this can really help you to be clear on what you're doing. Putting it down in visual format has the added benefit of letting you get it out of your head and take a more objective view of the thing.

They are also useful in speeding up the product creation process. Once you have your outline, with clear listings of what will be included in each part, it's much easier to stay focused and get things done.

Main sections as the first nodes, followed by sub-sections, and including the relevant points and purposes of each.

Use the notes function liberally when creating an outline.

And save these mindmaps. They will be useful later. They're great bases for user guides, sales tools, and tracking additions and revisions to the product.

Tracking progress: Whether you're creating a product or building a complex business structure, this is an easy way to get an overview of your progress. The simplest approach is to break it down into a chronological order and add a green checkmark to each item as it's completed, along with notes of things you want to remember about each step.

Again, these can be useful as teaching tools later. If you track results from each specific action inside the map, you will build a valuable diary of your efforts. It may also serve as an objective reference for evaluating the real benefit of each activity.

Book summaries: Very much like an outline, but used as a promotional tool. This is obviously only useful for tutorial/How-to books, but it can be very effective for those. For these, flat graphics are the preferred distribution format.

Facebook page focus: Resources that you can build a fan page around that aren't posted on Facebook can be a great way to get people to visit your site. They're also a useful central focal point for discussion.

This is a very good use of the Flash-based maps we looked at earlier. You can make updates available to everyone all at once, and there is little or no support involved.

Single problem, single solution products: You can often include everything needed in a single map. The explanations can be in the notes and the resources can be easily linked.

An advantage to this approach is that you can build and edit the product as you do the research needed to find the best resources. Adding tips with the notes function is a more natural way to teach for some people than writing out long copy in a word processor.

Course dashboards and study guides: Much like the product dashboard idea mentioned earlier. This one, however, would include instructions on following the process, and a way for students to check off each step as they finish it. It's also handy to add notes about points they found useful or problematic, and to track the specific results of each step.

Teaching aids: These are very similar to the other uses mentioned throughout the course. The shift in focus to being used by a teacher to demonstrate something to a student is subtle, but it will show in the way you present the map.

These are most useful when incorporated into videos or live presentations.

Training for Virtual Assistants: Break your work process down into steps, outline it in a mindmap with the necessary links, and give it to new VAs. Go through each step of the map with them.

Documenting the actual flow of things can go a long way toward making them more productive. It also gives you a clear accountability tool.

Add-on to physical products: Books, gadgets, self-help videos... Nearly anything technical or educational can be improved by the addition of an easy to use mindmap. For these, it is almost a requirement that you include the Flash or flat graphic maps. Editable mindmap files are a nice add-on, but don't expect many of your customers to install software to use them.

Infographics: The exported JPG or PNG versions of mindmaps can be the basis for useful and effective infographics. You would use the empty spaces in the canvas to add any notes, and can easily paste the map itself into a larger graphic with titles, tips, and URLs.

For this, it may be useful to display small sections of a given map as separate parts of the overall graphic.

Sampler (Music, blog, whatever): A free giveaway that links to various files can be handy. Again, this is a good use for the Flash maps mentioned earlier.

Getting feedback: If you want to get comments from your customers while they're using your product, just put a link to a comment form or an email address in the map, in a conspicuous place. Give a clear call to action, such as "Had a great idea? Email me!" or "Comments, critiques or suggestions? Click here to tell us about them."

SUMMARY

For nearly every information or training-based process or topic, there is a way to use mindmaps. And their value as process control and improvement tools is pretty clear by now.

Take some time in the next few days to pick a part of your business you'd like to improve, and start mapping. Even if the ideas are vague when you start, putting them down in visible format will help clarify them and get you into a channel that can lead to regular improvement.

Or think of a single problem people in your market share, and create an outline of what they'll need to do to fix it. You may find this to be a surprisingly easy way to create a new product and a new income stream.