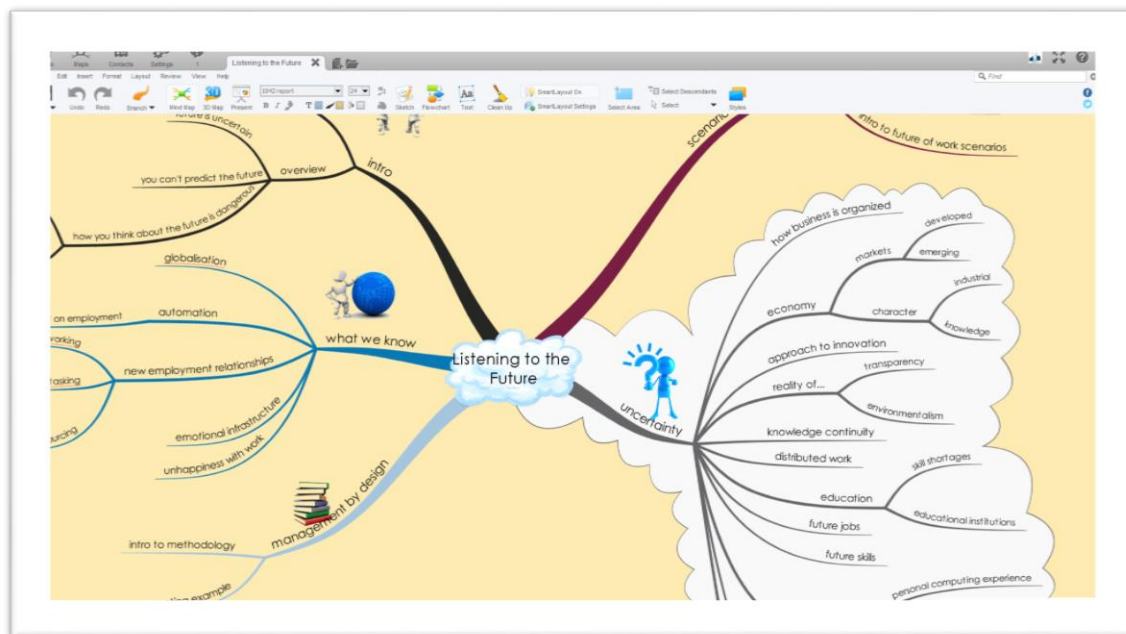


# Mind Map Application Market Update

## Market Overview

With the rise of mobile devices, the number of mind mapping tools has risen in recent years, yet only a few should be considered enterprise-ready. Mind mapping tools have evolved from simple drawing tools into complex environments that include collaborative authoring, project management, quantitative model building, dashboards and integration with third-party tools, particularly Microsoft Office, the Google platform and various file sharing systems like Dropbox and Box.

The leaders in this market, Mindjet, Think Buzan, TheBrain and MatchWare (not covered in this report) have now advanced to the point that enterprises need to select tools that fit well with their infrastructure, security and collaboration models. Although mind mapping is often driven by personal preference, a proliferation of tools can result in information and knowledge exchange issues that are best avoided by standardizing on one tool, and if more than one is needed, tools that offer complementary capabilities.



## Scope of this Report

Four of the top mind map tool vendors recently updated their apps, their cloud-based services and their platform support. This report covers the latest releases for industry leaders Mindjet, Think Buzan, TheBrain and new entrant toketaWare.

## Industry Analysis

## Differentiated Features

Each mind mapping tool offers its own unique features that go well beyond the simple drawing of diagrams. Many tools, from Microsoft's Vizio to ConceptDraw's Mindmap authoring application, facilitate the creation of maps. Although most of the apps attempt to adhere to Tony Buzan's basic mind map drawing approach, many offer extensions that help those creating mind maps move from brainstorming to planning, and from planning to execution. Many of the tools now include proprietary collaboration models and repositories that create basic shared spaces for small teams, but these collaboration features potentially become complications in large enterprises trying to manage infrastructure, security and knowledge exchange.

### ThinkBuzan: iMindMap 7



Given that Tony Buzan invented and popularized mind mapping, a tool by the creator's company would be expected to be compliant with the methodology, and be perhaps the best of the tools. Buzan doesn't disappoint on either point. Sometimes inventors of visual templates on paper don't execute well when transforming their techniques to software. Buzan, however, knows this is a business and it is his business. A second rate tool would undermine the company's mind map training revenue, so solid

development investments have led to a tool that not only produces beautiful images, but one that also introduces innovative user interface elements that make map creation and node management organic and contextual. The iMindMap software increases the credibility of the company and the underlying approach to organizing thoughts. As a pure mind mapping tool that includes the visual flair so evocative in Buzan's book, none of the other tools even comes close.

Buzan also recognizes that apps can't be bound by the pen-and-paper origins of mind mapping. ThinkBuzan, the development branch of the Buzan empire, have invested heavily in collaboration over the last couple of iterations leading to a well-managed sharing environment for iMindMap users. In addition to sharing, innovative features like iMindMap's branch art, 3-D view and highly contextual menus make iMindMap the premier mind map creation tool.

Also unique to iMindMap is the chameleon function, which shifts the interface to comply with the user's experience expectation rather than those of the platform. Mac users, for instance, occasionally using a PC can switch the UI to match their OSX interface with one click—a nice feature that other software developers should start considering.

## Mindjet: MindManager 14, MindManager for Mac



Where iMindMap has always offered users a more creative looking environment, MindManager has always come across as all-business. With MindManager 14, Mindjet reinforces that perception with better Microsoft Office integration and new tools for

managing the work that comes out of mind mapping exercises.

The most significant update to MindManager is the addition of properties within topics. These properties can be used as input to calculations at higher levels of the map. Conditional statements create a dashboard.

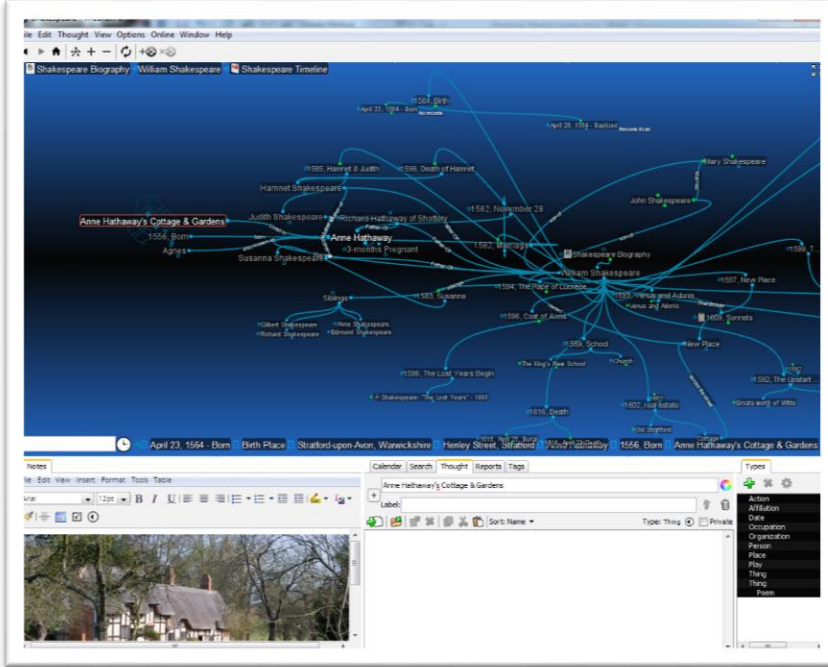
Unfortunately, the implementation of the property feature is clearly a first version. Property management works only on individual topics. There is no database of properties to call upon to add pre-defined properties to new topics. Many use cases for this feature appear to be in areas that would evolve, rather than being pre-planned, at least at their onset, which will require some very diligent work on the part of mind map dashboard developers. Mindjet should invest in developing a more robust user experience for the addition of properties and the management of those properties within the environment.

MindManager remains the most Microsoft Office-capable product on the Windows platform, with strong integration with Outlook, particularly for task management. Mindjet has also included strong native SharePoint integration as an internal alternative to its own collaboration environment. Drag and drop from Microsoft Office now supports contacts, tasks and e-mail. For those with large, unruly maps, a new reporting function helps offer a structured view to aid navigation.

Although iMindMap includes task management, MindManager offers strong project management support within the tool, as well as interfaces to Microsoft Project and the company's own ProjectDirector. A very cool decision-making tools turns brainstorming into analytical tradeoff sessions.

A major weakness for Mindjet is the lack of a consistent experience across platforms. The Windows version of MindManager is clearly the flagship product, while support for the Macintosh is adequate, new features, like properties, don't yet appear in that product, though file compatibility isn't an issue.

## The Brain Technologies LP: TheBrain 8



Unlike the other tools in this report, maps created in TheBrain are never intended to be printed. Rather than being a mind map drawing or documentation tool, TheBrain is much more of a mind map database.

In its latest iteration, TheBrain 8, the development team focused on application speed improvements and user interface

updates rather than entirely new features. For the first time, TheBrain users can integrate icons into their thoughts from a built-in icon library (rather than capturing one from the web or elsewhere via the clipboard). They have also added templates and tag libraries. Tags are an important differentiator for TheBrain, as they enhance the already multi-dimensional features of the product with a new ways to organize, and then visualize, thoughts.

Much needed in TheBrain, and now available, is the timeline view. Like other "views" in TheBrain, this is really a listing of nodes found in the multi-use working area in the lower right of TheBrain environment. It falls into the same area as other "reports." "Views" and "reports" find themselves in quotes because neither fits the traditional definitions. Given that TheBrain is primarily intended for realtime interaction, its "reporting" is really an aid to navigation rather than something to be printed.

Although TheBrain can be used as a traditional brainstorming tool, its real value is as an extended, interactive repository of thoughts, ideas and activities. Most mind mappers create discrete apps for each project or activity, except where it comes to work like personal time management. Unlike tools ultimately aimed at paper, TheBrain offers the potential for a holistic personal knowledge and information environment, and it can do the same for functions, teams or projects. A function might, for instance, create a Brain that would include all of its practices, along with projects, personnel capabilities, resources and other items that normally require cross-referencing and coordination.



TheBrain also goes well beyond competitive tools with its Team (TeamBrain) and Enterprise (BrainEKP) versions which create shared spaces where team members can easily contribute thoughts, attachments, calendar entries and other content to TheBrain's repositories. Where other products support team collaboration on a file, TheBrain supports collaboration as a repository.

### toketaWare iThoughtsX



Long known as the developer of the best valued and most frequently updated mind mapping app on iOS, toketaWare's Craig Scott has ventured onto the desktop with iThoughtsX. Although toketaWare delivered a consistently quality app on iOS, the lack of a full application meant that iThoughts often served as the intermediary between other platforms. With

iThoughtsX toketaWare brings to market a very focused product designed for creating mind maps, and sharing them in a wide range of formats.

iThoughtX doesn't offer its own collaboration space, but it integrates nicely with the companion iOS apps for iPad and iPhone. Unlike other tools that have gone far afield of the basics of mind mapping, iThoughtsX offers a clean, focused environment with a minimum of distractions that can be learned and applied quickly. The platform is limited by its Mac-only client.

### Collaboration Features and Approach

Like many mobile apps and cloud-based services, all of these mind mapping tools offer some type of collaboration. Collaboration ranges from simple file integration with tools like iThoughtsX (Dropbox, Box, WebDAV, etc.) to proprietary file sharing and synchronization environments like those available from TheBrain, ThinkBuzan (iMindMap Freedom) and Mindjet (Mindjet Files). The later two essentially store maps on their own servers and make them available as an alternative to opening a local file. Both services synchronize files with their service and make them accessible across platforms and to multiple users. ThinkBuzan also offers a web-based editor.

All of these approaches potentially fragment the collaboration experience. Many firms don't permit the use of Dropbox or Box for external file sharing, forcing

knowledge workers to skip around corporate security policies in order to collaborate. File storage and synchronization from the vendors can create environments filled with multiple, disparate storage locations and incompatible files. The proliferation of systems can also cost organizations more money than necessary because individuals who choose tools that work best for them often can't negotiate beyond their project or function. For enterprises employing a central repository like SharePoint, the alternative collaboration environments confuse users and increase costs.

Web-based tools can also cause issues within enterprises when they don't meet security needs, and therefore may expose important company information on non-approved platforms. They may also introduce unintentional productivity loss as infrastructure level scanning and blocking may make certain sites unreliable from within enterprise-controlled locations.

Organizations that want to collaborate effectively need to ensure that their enterprise mind mapping tools comply with infrastructure, security and application models. They should work effectively with their productivity-suite of choice, allow for easy saving of files to common, approved repositories and use collaboration models that ideally don't require client-side deployment of an application. One approach to collaboration would be third-party meeting software for controlling a limited number of authoring seats. For performance and feature support, authors, however, will likely want client-side licenses. Those products need to conform to distribution and security protocols, and ideally, create files that can be easily shared with those not using the clients.

ThinkBuzan exacerbates this issue with the integration of DropTask, an interesting and useful visual task management system, but one that requires additional investment on the client side, as well as a subscription to DropTask Pro (\$6.50 and month or \$65/year) for full integration. It is not bad that ThinkBuzan integrated iMindMap with DropTask. It is expected for vendors to define new, differentiated partnership opportunities. Unfortunately, for large enterprises, these tools and deals create a break with traditional, supported software like Microsoft Office. If employees, staff or partners find these new tools viable and useful, then IT needs to insist that data standards be met at minimum (for instance, integration with DropTask and Office tasks, especially if Office tasks are used in the organization for assigning work).

## Business Positioning and Strategic Investments

TheBrain, ThinkBuzan and others in the market remain clearly focused on mind map related creation tools and training; Mindjet, however, has ventured into new territory with the acquisition of Spigot, a company that sells software for facilitating innovation challenges.

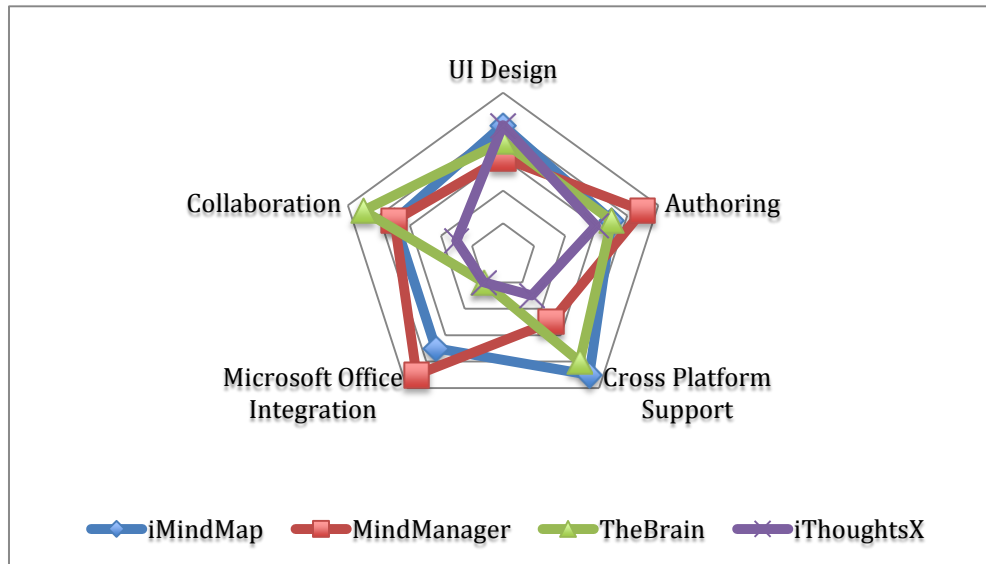
This major strategic investment for Mindjet portends a significant evolution of the competitive landscape as drawing developers move into higher-end, more sales and

support-intensive applications. The evolution of the market beyond drawing, documentation does make sense, as mind mapping has always been viewed as a key tool for innovation brainstorming and the organization of ideas into action. Not only can Mindjet’s MindManager be used by individuals to document their challenges, the evaluation criteria can also be captured in a mind map, and that criteria used directly to evaluate solutions suggested through Spigot. It is possible that Mindjet will eventually offer MindManager as a front-end dashboard for Spigot challenges and evaluations.

## Recommendations

- Organizations should treat mind mapping applications as first class tools that require formal evaluations for infrastructure compliance and business requirements.
- Mind mapping should be designed into the collaboration experience, thereby creating a set of requirements for how individuals and teams within in the organization plan to work together.
- Make sure that staff is adequately trained in mind mapping techniques in order obtain the best use of products.

## SpiderSnap Product Evaluation Criteria and Results



**UI Design:** Effectiveness of user interface to permit rapid learning and easy access to features.

**Authoring:** The ability of the product to author a visually intriguing mind map.

**Cross Platform Support:** Access to file-compatible mind maps across Windows, OSX, Chrome, Linux, iOS and Android.

**Integration:** How well does the product integrate with Microsoft Office, SharePoint or other productivity suites or platforms.

**Collaboration:** Does the product offer collaboration features, and if so, are these features open and well integrated with other collaboration platforms.

## Resources

**Mindjet:** <http://www.mindjet.com>

MindManager, \$299US

**ThinkBuzan:** <http://thinkbuzan.com>

iMindMap Ultimate, \$245US

**TheBrain:** <http://www.thebrain.com/>

TheBrain Pro, \$219US

**toketaWare:** <http://toketaware.com/>

iThoughtsX, \$60US

*Prices for various product configurations, services and add-ons available for all products on the respective vendor websites.*

## Other Enterprise Relevant Mind Mapping Products

MindMeister, MindMesiter Pro: <http://www.mindmeister.com>

Matchware MindView 5: <http://www.matchware.com/>

ConceptDraw Office 2, MindMap 7: <http://www.conceptdraw.com/>

Mindomo, Mindomo Professional: <http://www.mindomo.com>

*Visualizing knowledge.* Daniel W. Rasmus. KMWorld. October, 2013.

<http://www.kmworld.com/Articles/Editorial/Features/Visualizing-knowledge-92017.aspx>

## About the Author

Daniel W. Rasmus, the author of *Listening to the Future*, is a strategist and industry analyst who helps clients put their future in context. Rasmus uses scenarios to analyze trends in society, technology, economics, the environment, and politics in order to discover implications used to develop and refine products, services and experiences. His latest book, *Management by Design*, proposes an innovative new methodology for the design workplace experiences. Rasmus's thoughts about the future of work have appeared recently in *Chief Learning Officer Magazine*, *Government eLearning!* and *KMWorld*. Rasmus is an internationally recognized speaker. He has addressed audiences at CeBIT, The Front End of Innovation, The National Association of Workforce Boards, ProjectWorld, KMWorld, The CIO Association of Canada and Future Trends. He writes regularly for *Fast Company*, *iPhone Life* and *PopMatters*. Rasmus is the former Visiting Liberal Arts Fellow at Bellevue College in Bellevue, WA where he continues to teach strategy and social media.

