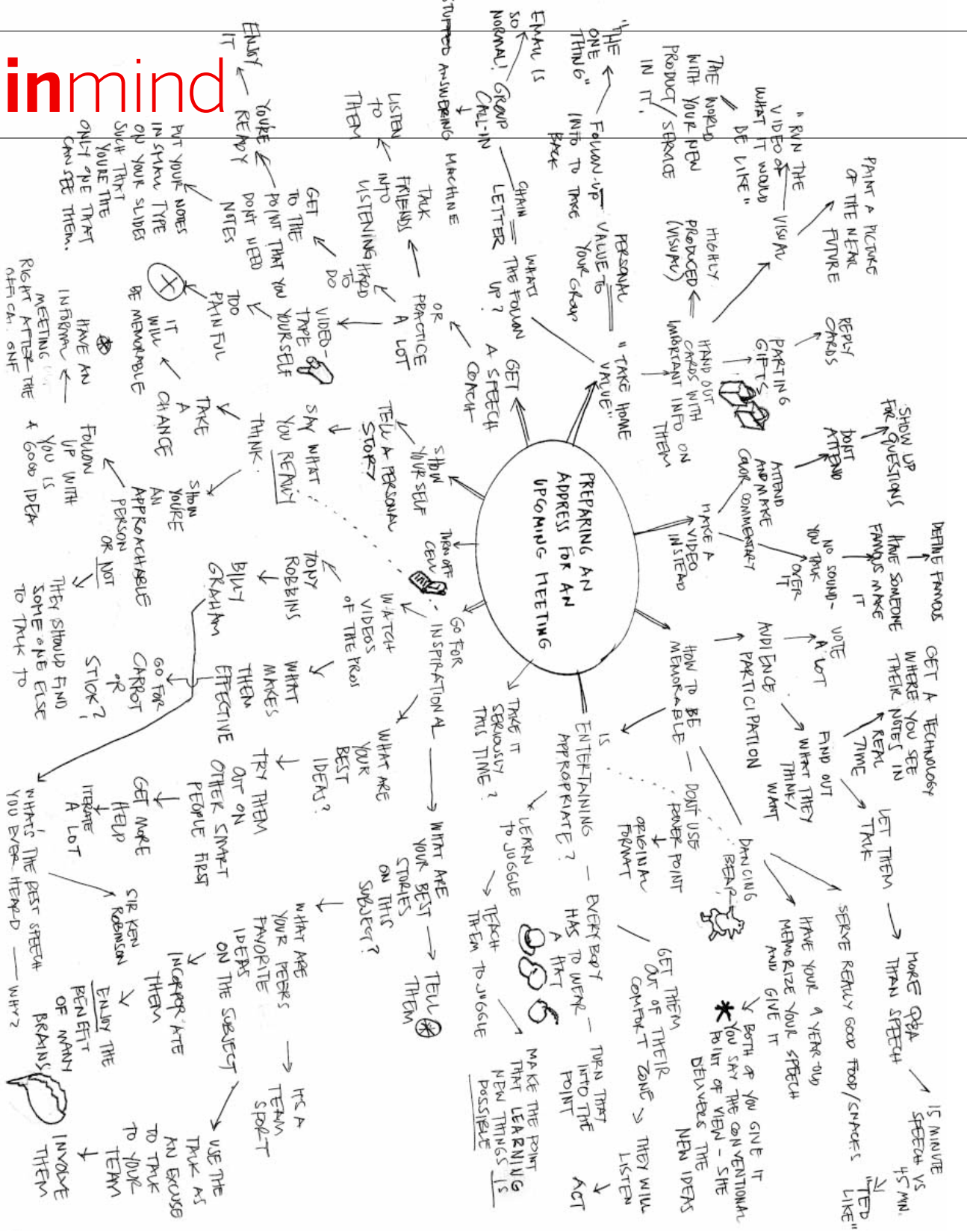

David Kelley, founder of IDEO and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, uses mind maps to foster creativity. Mind maps are a popular thinking tool in Silicon Valley. Here's why: "When I want to do something analytical, I make a list. When I'm trying to come up with ideas or strategize, I make a mind map. Mind maps are organic and allow me to free associate. They are great for asking questions and revealing connections between seemingly unrelated ideas. I start in the center with the issue or problem I am working on and then as I move farther away I get better and better ideas as I force myself to follow the branches on the map and in my mind. The cool thing is that you allow yourself to follow your inner thoughts, which is different than making a list where you are trying to be complete and deal with data."