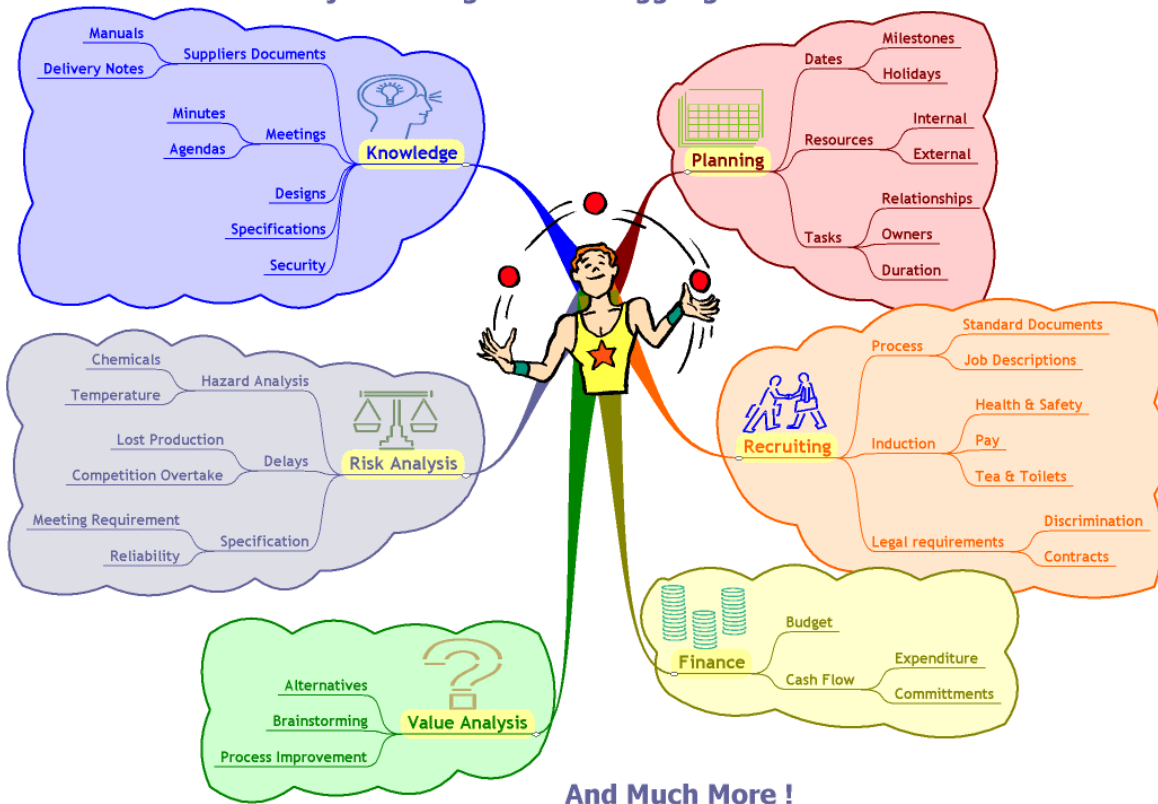


Project Management is Juggling All This



MINDMANAGING YOUR PROJECTS

ARE YOU CONSTRAINED BY YOUR PROJECT TOOLKIT? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR NEW WAYS TO INVOLVE THE TEAM IN THE PROCESS? DO YOU NEED A COMPLETE VIEW OF THE DATA? ANDREW WILCOX ARGUES MIND MAPPING AND MINDMANAGER CAN HELP YOU IMPROVE COMMUNICATION, SPEED UP PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENABLE YOU AND THE TEAM TO ACCESS PROJECT KNOWLEDGE IN A COUPLE OF CLICKS.

Creating and managing projects is something we all do. Sometimes we think we have control of everything (organising our files) and sometimes we feel as though we have very little (team member in a multi-national new product launch). In fact neither is quite

true. Actually it is not control that matters. What matters is having quick access to correct and full information, a process to make sure everything is covered and the ability to share this information rapidly with all parties. It does not matter where you are in the team, everyone needs the best possible view and insight into their role and responsibilities in the project. In your best projects you know Why, Who, Where, When, What and How everything is and your stakeholders can understand this information as well. This article seeks to show how Mind Maps and MindManager can help you get the picture, share the information and be in control.

Tony Buzan started Mind Mapping in the mid-seventies. He wrote several books, had a TV series and created a very large and wide variety of people who use his techniques. He is still preaching his message and was recently interviewed on early evening Radio 2. Even Johnny Walker said his son believes he got a first class degree because he used mind maps.

Tony's basic proposition is that mind maps have a central idea out of which radiates the details. Mind maps should be colourful, organic and pictorial. This helps you to memorise them and one of mindmappings first successes was with students. The map above created with MindManager goes some way to following these principles. You can see more information and examples at Tony Buzan's web site

www.mind-map.com. Mind maps are now being used to:

- § Write books
- § Plan events
- § Overview processes
- § Plan interviews
- § Prepare presentations

By people ranging from preachers, students and teachers to senior managers in multi-nationals companies and government organisations. This article however will focus on how to use maps in projects and you will note I have taken a more conservative approach with the maps.

MindManager software was created by Mindjet (www.mindjet.com) ten years ago and has been distributed for many years in the UK by M-Urge (www.murge.com). There are 270,000 users worldwide and the number of users has doubled annually for the last five years. MindManager takes the original concept and gives the PC user the ability to create maps in a structured way and use them within the Microsoft environment. The graphics are handled for you, inserting or clicking adds branches, and links can be made to external documents. You do not have to draw anything unless you want a new symbol. The style of the map is controlled by various toolbar functions. You can have very organic maps littered with symbols or just plain text on lines. What you are actually constructing is a database, which is visualized as a map. Branches can have symbolic codes, colours and highlighting which can be used later to control views or output to other applications.

The added value of MindManager is the depth of detail you can give to branches and the branch relationships. Branches can have notes containing text, tables, pictures and hyperlinks. They can turn into paragraphs, chapters or web pages. I am writing this in MindManager. They can have dates, resources, priorities and hyperlinks. Finally the map can be converted to a Word document or PowerPoint or a Web Site. Or it can be synchronised with MS Project and Outlook and exported to other project managers via MPX files. Aah! there seems to be some key project items in there.

I have used MindManager daily for the last six years to help me with projects, writing articles, specifications and facilitating meetings, training and coaching. I would now like to share with you three examples of its application to projects.

- § Task Breakdown
- § Agenda & Minutes
- § Information Access

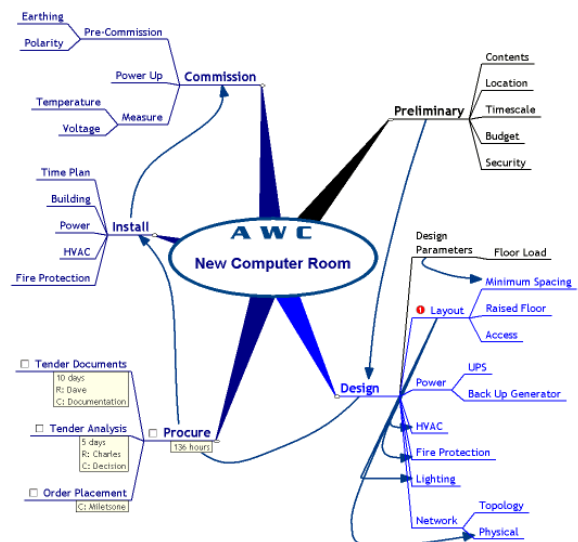
TASK BREAKDOWN

Creating the task breakdown and relationships is key to good project start. There are many ways of

doing this, from covering a wall in "post its" to direct entry into your project planning tool. MindManager is a very effective tool which lies somewhere between the two. You can get the creativity of the post-its by adding task branches as they occur to people in a brainstorming meeting. Having a PC projector is better than huddling around a monitor or taking it down on paper or flipcharts and creating the map after the meeting. Alternatively everyone brainstorm individually and the facilitator then combines the maps and shares the result on-line or at a meeting. Structuring this information is easy. Branches can be dragged and dropped, whole assemblies can be dragged to different positions, and tasks can be numbered and sorted. Members of the project team in different locations can enter information using the built in conference facility from remote locations.

Now you can start adding more information: known dates, estimated durations, task owner, priorities and categories. The project map (Figure 1) outlines a project for building a new computer room. In case you are wondering maps are normally read from 1 o'clock going clockwise. You can add relationships and other important data such as dates and resources. For the "Procure" stage I have exposed these task details. In the application a task pane displays the data for the selected task and provides one of the data entry methods. When you have a large number of tasks, the level of detail exposed on any branch can be controlled. So just one stage can have all its task exposed. Alternatively sub-projects can be turned in to new maps with a link to the parent project. The task links between certain tasks have been shown. These are added in MindManager using the branch relationship tool.

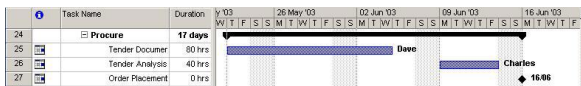
FIG. 1 COMPUTER ROOM PROJECT MAP



After synchronising with Microsoft Project a full project time plan is produced. Figure 2 is a cut out from the plan. It shows the Procure summary task and

its tasks. All the task names, timing and resources have passed to the project plan. If changes are made to the tasks, then after synchronising the changes will be visible in the map. Once synchronised MS Project becomes the master for certain pieces of data: dates, resource and duration. But percentage complete can be changed from MindManager and new tasks added.

FIG 2. PROJECT PLAN SNIP



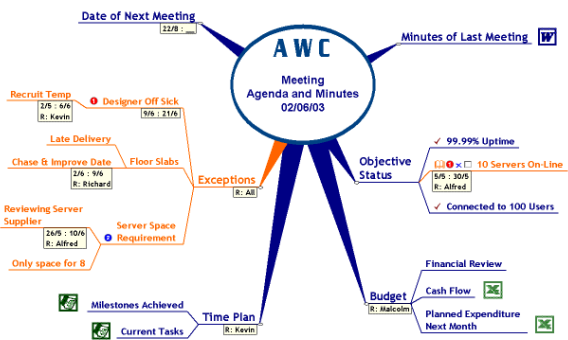
Don't just use MindManager to create a project, use it to monitor project progress. You can import a project at any stage, and then using the Power Select function you can look at Bill's tasks or the late ones etc, and input the missing tasks. This gives a very different view to a time line or the critical path analysis view of the project. New risks and opportunities will be spotted. Any amendments made in the map can be synchronised back to the project plan.

Of course there are many other uses of MindManager for projects: risk analysis, trouble shooting, process outlining and I am sure you can think of some more.

AGENDA & MINUTES

Using a map on a conference server works well for an agenda. The meeting owner outlines the agenda and includes their key points and links to relevant documents. An email tells the team the agenda is now available on the conference server. Then everyone can add their key points and document links. This gives the team the opportunity to review documents before the meeting in their latest state.

FIG 3. AGENDA AND MINUTES



At the meeting the agenda map (Fig 3) is projected for everyone to see. Information is added as the meeting progresses (shown in orange) and the hyperlinks to relevant documents give immediate access to the relevant documents. Particularly important is the addition of actions, persons responsible and dates. Commitments are then clearly

visible at the end of the meeting leaving no doubt as to who is going to do what. Finally the meeting the map is made read only and if necessary exported as a Word document to be distributed. A small section is shown in Fig 4. The table is automatically generated by MindManager. The bullet points are branch notes.

FIG 4. WORD VERSION OF MEETING

Meeting Agenda and Minutes 02/06/03

1 Minutes of Last Meeting

2 Objective Status

2.1 99.99% Uptime

2.2 10 Servers On-Line

Start date: 05/05/2003	End date: 30/05/2003
Priority: 1	Duration: 3 day(s) Completed: 80%
Resources: Alfred	Categories: Hardware

- HP2040 Series require more space between units for heat dissipation
- HP are considering supplying HP2060 at same price, which will solve problem
- Otherwise a building extension is required

This meetings map can be shown at the next meeting and the completed actions ticked off. Those not completed can be copy and pasted in to the current meetings agenda for later discussion.

Meetings run with this aid: go faster; reach conclusions and the actions happen.

MANAGING YOUR DESKTOP

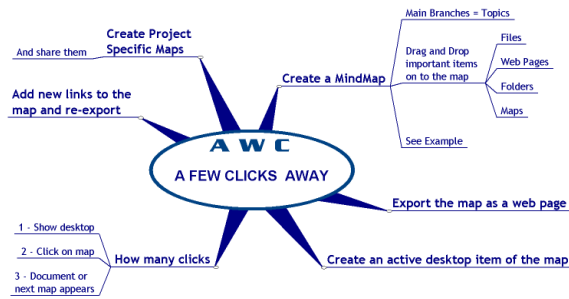
How many clicks does it take you to get to important documents/files/websites?

Would you like to be able to access them from your desktop and get to them in 3 clicks?

Here's how:

Creating the map is easy. First add the topic branches, for instance Company Documents, Regulatory, Specific Projects, Third Party Information etc. Then have MindManager in half your screen and the relevant information source on the other half. The information source can be a folder of files or a web browser. Then drag and drop the documents, folders and web sites to the relevant topics. You can drag a complete folder of files and then order and group them as is best for you. You can drag and drop urls from the browser by clicking the icon to the left of the url.

FIG 5. CREATING A DESKTOP MAP



When you have too many items on the map, create a child map. I have maps for individual projects and processes, others maps for external information company templates and standard documents.

To make the top map visible on your desktop, export a web page version from MindManager and then link an active desktop item to that web page. Right click on an empty part of your windows desktop and you will see what I am writing about. Arrange on your desktop to suit.

If you would like colleagues/clients/suppliers to use this web page, pack and deliver it to a web server and give them the url. They will of course need to have the rights to access all the linked documents.

FIG 6. EXAMPLE OF A DESKTOP



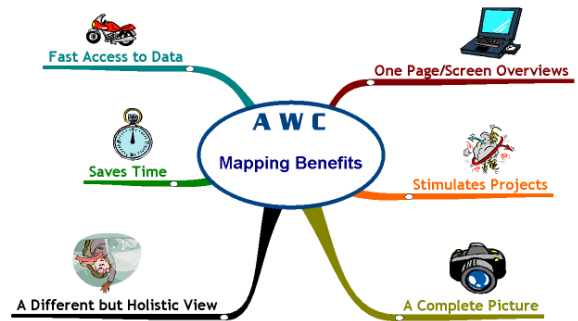
A real desktop map might have 50 or more items on it and links to another 10 maps. You decide what goes on the map but the file location remains the same. These maps become your personal view of your business.

FINALLY

These examples are just a starter for ten. MindManager software is also able to export information to PowerPoint and Outlook, create extensive web sites and has a range of project specific templates. There are a number of companies creating add-ins to MindManager, many focused on its project application. The best example of this is MindManuals (www.mindmanuals.com) who have created a complete project guide. This takes the user through the project process, provides them with starter templates and prompts the user continuously to think

carefully about the project. Another MindManual application takes a map of a project and converts it in to a web based report that includes a time line. The url at the end of the article includes links to many other solution providers. M-Urge now has a portfolio of products, which integrate with MindManager including document creation, document management, process mapping and project manager.

FIG 7. BENEFITS



Using MindManager will give you a new insight, increase your creativity, reduce the risks and help to make sure all the bases (branches) are covered in your projects.

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