Whitepaper

Mindjet for Projects: Creating the right environment for Project Success
Introduction
The trouble with projects, more so than ever before, is that they involve managing huge amounts of information with any number of different people who use a variety of different formats to supply that information. This creates several problems to running a successful project – goals and objectives can be confused or lost, different platforms encourage ineffective collaboration, and it is difficult to take a holistic view of project progress.

To successfully tackle this overload of information, project managers have to find new methods of bringing project data together in a way that allows everyone to clearly see the project structure, key processes, resources and timelines.

Finding this new, better way of working, however, is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Projects vary greatly so the solution needs to be capable of bringing together the various formats and datasets into one common platform – enabling all parties to easily view, update and collaborate with the information in real-time. Mindjet for Projects is an easy-to-use software solution that does just this.

At the centre of Mindjet for Projects is Mindjet’s MindManager 2012 suite, which visually connects information and ideas in the style of an information or mind map. This allows project managers to instantly see the entire project whilst still being able to delve into the detail. Through visualisation, the solution has been specifically designed to become the information hub for optimising users’ existing processes and provide a visual framework spanning the complete project. It gives project managers a more efficient way to conquer information overload, develop strategies, simplify project planning, brainstorm concepts and collaborate with team members.
Visualisation: A New Way to Work

Using visual representations of information related to a concept, project or idea is increasingly being seen as a vital tool in improving processes at all levels of an organisation. Most existing information platforms offer the user a means of interacting with these in a linear manner from left to right and from top to bottom. However, several pieces of research into the science of the mind tell us that this can be ineffective as people often scan the page as a whole.

This means that people also like to take in information presented in a radial, graphical or non-linear way or in a combination of these forms. As a means to visualise the complexity of a project, this approach is perfect and allows project managers and their teams to clearly see the bigger picture. Visualisation is at the heart of everything Mindjet does and Mindjet for Projects is no exception.


Capturing creativity

Perhaps not surprisingly given its visual approach to interaction, Mindjet for Projects is also an ideal tool for brainstorming, an important element of any project. This could be right at the beginning when you're deciding on the best way to implement a project or when looking at how to overcome issues that arise.

Conventional office tools lend themselves to recording information in a linear manner, which could be a quick flow of information captured by hand on whiteboards, Post-It notes or flip charts. But when you come to revisit this array of notes it can be very difficult to draw links and interconnections between the insights and ideas. These more linear ways of coming up with and recording concepts can lead to creativity being stifled and ideas lost or recorded incorrectly.

Visualisation can aid participants in establishing relationships between concepts and how they fit into the scope of work of the project. Mindjet for Projects allows users to arrange ideas and thoughts in a manner not unlike spider diagrams. Team members can input ideas into MindManager at the click of a mouse, which can then easily be rearranged and added to as required. There is no need to spend time writing up notes and devising the connections between actions and ideas – it is recorded as it happens and tasks and responsibilities can be updated into the project plan.

Mindjet's visualisation software, then, not only helps to stimulate creativity, but is also accessible to time-pressed project teams, the results of which can ultimately help drive success and impact the bottom line.
Project Optimisation: Align Goals and Commitments

Within a project team, it is natural for members to have different ways of working, using different formats. The problem with this is that it makes it very difficult for the team as a whole to have easy access to all of the relevant information and therefore get a sense of where the project is going, understand the overall goals and see what each person’s commitments are.

Mindjet for Projects is a collaborative platform that brings all of this information together in one place so that anyone can quickly and easily track and manage project deliverables, from concept to completion. Team members can plan out and track their work using the map structure, linking to any relevant documents (emails, Word, Excel, PowerPoint) whilst being able to view the work of others in the same format. Through secure online folders, a project team can all work from a single map or from the same folder and view all files relevant to that project.

All parties can gain an overview of the project status by monitoring progress in real-time and get a better understanding of how all of the various project elements fit together. It also allows the team to quickly see impacts associated with ad hoc delays or adaptations to the scope of work.

There are a number of features built into the solution, which aid in the project execution, monitoring and process optimisation. The goals of a project can be mapped out collaboratively at the beginning of a project, ensuring that everyone is clear on what they are and when certain milestones have to be reached. Moreover, the project lead can record responsibilities, review start dates, due dates and the resources allocated to the project for anyone to view at any time. Utilising the Gantt View, they can drill down to see what resources are available, who has too many tasks and who is in a position to take on more activities to drive the project on. Project managers can also keep a scorecard of issues, action items, deliverables, due dates, owners and risks – helping to create a project organisation chart that can be tracked in a visual way.

“It’s just fantastic to be able to visualise a project and to very easily help people identify what needs to be done and who’s responsible.”

(Brian Meyer, Project Manager, Webex)

In turn, team members can view the areas that they are responsible for and report their own performance and project status. If they are falling behind, for example, they can display a red flag to alert their manager and colleagues – helping to reduce the number of unwanted surprises and keep the project on track. Meanwhile the Resource Utilisation feature allows key stakeholders to see over or under utilisation of resources – helping avoid risks and delays.

By working in this way, Cisco WebEx saw the efficiency of their project management improve by 20 per cent because they had a better view into project information and improved communication between stakeholders.
Platform for Collaboration: Working Efficiently as a Team

Whilst each project team member might be working in the same format, effective team communication still requires a collaborative platform from which information can be shared – regardless of where or when people are working. If this isn’t in place there’s a very real risk of losing sight of the overall project.

Mindjet for Projects is the first software package of its kind to combine a visual productivity application with a comprehensive collaboration platform. It is perfectly placed to communicate complex issues to all of the relevant parties involved in a project, in a format that they can easily understand and engage with. In addition, the online service means that this way of working can be extended to anyone who needs to view documents relevant to a project and add their own contributions, irrespective of their physical location.

This collaborative platform is called Mindjet Connect and helps to facilitate a more transparent working environment for team members by allowing online folders to be created, in a secure environment. The MindManager information maps then exist on the Mindjet server and can be accessed at any time by any member of the team, thus allowing all participants to interact with each other and make changes and updates.

When in a map, the software has additional functions to aid collaboration such as the Project Dashboard. This allows every designated user involved in the project to view up-to-date information, for example the overall status, budget estimates or connect to key project assets such as charge requests, issues and status reports.

There is also built in security that allows the manager or project owner to set access controls and permissions to members, at file, folder, account and role levels. The presentation Mode allows the project team to present complex information in a more collaborative way, quickly and efficiently.
More productive project meetings through collaboration

A key element to the success of any project is identifying and overcoming any delays and communicating this to the team. If team members work in silos and no one has an overall view of progress (or hold ups) the necessary steps to correct deficiencies or reconcile time lags can’t be made. This can delay the project and potentially increase costs. However, with the project team working together on the same platform, everyone can immediately see what progress has been made, potential problems and flag areas of concern. With Mindjet for Projects, all this can be done in real time making it an especially powerful tool when it comes to update meetings.

The ability to track all project deliverables and cross-reference this with costs and current progress against the original plan. It is ideal for keeping team members and senior management fully informed of the project status and can deliver significant time savings. Surveys across several industries show that Mindjet can increase productivity by up to 25 percent by making meetings, common communications and project management tasks more efficient and effective through collaboration.

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Continuous Improvement: Standardise for a Holistic Approach

Everyone involved in a project needs to be on the same page working towards the same end; it may sound simple but research by the Standish Group has showed that over 80% of projects are unsuccessful, either because they are over budget or late, or a combination of both.

The problem arises from the vast amounts of information we have to deal with on a daily basis. It is very easy to record this in an unstructured way that is difficult to effectively share with others on a project team, because they too have worked in their own unstructured way. For example you might save all relevant documents on to your PC desktop, whereas your colleague has everything stored in his email system.

The quality of project delivery will correlate directly with the level of detail and information that can be integrated and built into the plan from the outset, and that is constantly referred to and updated. The problem is, data on scope of work, stakeholder expectations, project ideas and timelines, cost breakdowns and resource demands will often reside in many locations and in many formats.

For example, if a member of the senior leadership team is running a takeover bid, he or she may find the accountants involved prefer to view the numbers on spreadsheets, the legal team examine and draw up contracts in Word or PDF and the marketing department deliver presentations using PowerPoint. Without a unifying system, that can accommodate all of these formats, there is every chance that information will be lost during the time-consuming marrying up of platforms, and in managing these vast amounts of data it is easy to be overwhelmed.

Being able to aggregate this disparate information and documentation is key to project success, but without the right solution in place this is an almost impossible task. It is often difficult to organise this information in a manner that enables project managers to get an overview of the project and clearly see the necessary connections and relationships between them, whilst still having easy access to the necessary detail. This can result in an inability to accurately predict costs, foresee potential risk factors and take a truly holistic view of project requirements.
Mindjet for Projects establishes a project framework to ensure all processes, measures and management criteria can be viewed and executed consistently. Project data, irrespective of source or format, can be held centrally and visualised collectively. The time savings achieved by allowing everyone involved to become more productive by gathering all the relevant information together in one place where it is easy to upload and quick to retrieve, are significant. Research across many industries has shown that this alone can improve project management efficiency by 25 percent – through a better view of project information and improved collaboration among stakeholders.

“It provides a picture of a project in one page, allowing us to switch between macro and micro views of the project rapidly.”

(Max Osterlund, Executive Director in the IT advisory department, Ernst and Young, Oslo, Norway)

The Mindjet software is accommodating, easy to use and offers a way for project managers to standardise their approach. What’s more, users do not have to reinvent the wheel every time a new project is undertaken. The solution offers an array of standard templates to save time during the project set-up phase, ensure consistency, as well as enabling users to develop their own customised maps and set them as a template to suit their particular way of working.

Improve project management efficiency by 25 percent through a better view of project information and improved collaboration among stakeholders
Mindjet for Projects example templates

Fishbone analysis map template

Risk management map template

Event planner map template

SWOT analysis map template
Mindjet for Projects

Mindjet for Projects is ideal for anyone heading up or contributing to a project – irrespective of its size or complexity. It is proven to deliver success through the standardisation of the way people process, measure and manage projects and project data. It facilitates a consistent approach to Project Process, Measurement and Management and helps organisations dramatically improve the quality of project delivery through visualisation and collaboration.

Mindjet for Projects is designed to be usable after minimal training and time spent understanding the tools and its approach. It is the perfect accompaniment for any successful project manager. The proof of the effectiveness of this way of working lies in the logarithmic growth of Mindjet since its inception in the mid-1990s – with sales up 28 per cent last year in the UK alone and it is now the leading player in its field.

Mindjet’s software is used by 2 million users worldwide with clients including CISCO Webex, Capgemini, ABB and Ernst and Young. Indeed, 60 per cent of the companies in the Fortune 100 use Mindjet software.

For further information and to download a trial version of the software visit: www.mindjet.com or call +44 (0)20 8231 7600

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1 Standish Group Report (2006)
2 'The Value of an Hour' research report, conducted by Mindjet (2010)