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MindJet MindManager X5 Pro

An XML-enabled tool to help teams plan projects, giving access to a wide range of data sources

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By **Dave Bailey** [25-03-2004]

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Released in early March and priced at £199 + VAT, version 5.1 of MindJet's Mindmanager X5 Pro is the latest update to the vendor's enterprise organisation and planning software. With core tablet PC support and backwards compatibility with earlier editions, the new version improves what was already an effective planning and collaboration tool.

The software offers computerised tools to create "mind maps", and is designed to allow project members and workgroups to share and collaborate on information through a visual medium.

A mind map starts off with a central topic, which the user spins off into main topics and then sub-topics to build a full mind map. After using the brainstorming mode, we found it easy to use the drag-and-drop interface to make fairly complex maps. Hyperlinks can be added to the map, and these can point to web sites, files, email addresses or topics.

The biggest change since the 2002 version was the introduction of XML functionality earlier this year, enabling sub-topics to access back-end data from databases, Google searches and Rich Site Summary (RSS) news feeds.

Installing the package on a laptop running Windows 2000 Professional took under five minutes. The software can also run under NT 4.0 with SP6a applied, and Windows XP. There is also an X5 mobile version that allows users to merge maps with the desktop version.

There are three modes in X5 Pro. These are a brainstorming mode that allows ideas to be entered quickly and a rough map to be speedily produced for

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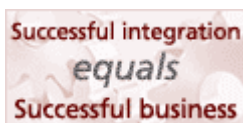
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further elaboration and refinement; a review mode, where comments can be added and tied to specific user names; and finally, a presentation mode for looking at the finished map using the whole screen.

The software integrates with the four Microsoft Office applications: Word, PowerPoint, Outlook and Project. In Word, selected paragraphs can be exported directly to X5 Pro if the two applications are running simultaneously. In X5 Pro, export to Word gives a .Doc file containing a bulleted list of the mind map.

Content can also be exported as a PowerPoint presentation and there are settings to customise this export. Customised exporting to HTML is also possible and the software allows exporting to PDF through the print interface using the MindManager PDF Writer. However, items such as hyperlinks are not kept live.

The main export functions are to Microsoft Project and Outlook. Sub-topics can have task information associated with them, such as priority, start and end dates, percentage completion, duration and resources. These are exported to Project using the latest Microsoft Project Export (MPX) file format, version 4.0. However, X5 Pro also integrates with other project management software such as Pert Chart Expert, SureTrack, WBS Chart Pro and Project KickStart, among others. With Outlook, email messages, appointments and even entire folders can be sent to X5 Pro.

The new edition of the software can read maps from the earlier 2002 version without any changes to the maps, though maps created using fragments of third-party add-ins may need updated versions to process older map fragments.

Price: £199 + VAT

Contact: MindJet 01604 638 666

The Verdict

MindJet MindManager X5 Pro



MindJet's MindManager X5 Pro can help individual users plan projects, but the main advantages stem from its use of XML, which allows teams to access information from a range of sources including corporate databases and news feeds. It requires some thought to realise the full benefits, which can be substantial.

Pros: XML support; tight integration with Microsoft Office, especially Outlook; compatible with older 2002 version.

Cons: Windows only.

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