

A great tool to organize multi-step projects – MindManager

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Almost every project you are going to work on involves multiple steps. The better you can organize and manage these multi-step projects, the more efficient and effective you will be. In this post, I want to share a very cool program I've been using for a number of years.

When I was practicing law, I used to work with a partner who organized all of his cases on one MS Word document. Whether it was a client opinion letter or a huge litigation, each project had one document and he would go through and write all of the steps on a different line. Once each step/task was completed, he would write a small "x" to the right of the task.

All of us who worked with this partner considered ourselves very fortunate to have the luxury of working with a partner who actually had a document that contained all of the steps. Unlike working with other litigation partners--many who simply had the entire litigation process in their head and didn't feel the need to reduce it to paper--the benefit of having a map of the case on a single document was tremendously helpful. This was in 2003, and technology has come a long way since.

Over the past few years, I have been relying heavily on a fantastic software program called MindManager (made by MindJet), which allows you to "map" (similar to the process of diagramming/branching) multi-step projects onto a very user-friendly software program. (If you're interested in this type of thing, check out www.mindjet.com).

It allows you to modify and change these maps in so many ways that make it easy to "see" what most people try to store in their heads. The process of mind mapping is becoming extremely popular because it engages both the analytical side and visual side of the brain. It's hard to explain, but if you try it, you will quickly understand how it adds a completely new dimension to the way you view your projects. I have tried many project management software programs, and MindJet is liberating in a way I have never experienced. It

Had the partner I worked with a few years ago used something like this, our dinky case management documents would have been taken to a whole new level. We would have been able to collaborate, highlight, add tasks, color code, delegate more easily, and have fun with a whole bunch of other features.

But it goes much beyond organizing multi-step projects. You can also use it to brainstorm, give presentations, manage your to-do list in a visual manner, and simply "dump" everything that is lingering in your head that you need to get down on paper.

Since I am no longer working in a law firm, I don't know if this type of software has yet caught on. But it's only a matter of time before it does because it makes complex, multi-step projects much more manageable. For lawyers that spend much of their days managing multi-step projects, this could truly be a lifesaver if you are the type of person who likes to see everything laid out in front of you.

I have only used MindManager and recently learned that they have a number of other programs (such as online collaboration tools, which could be good for multi-office collaboration), which I hope to try soon. But if this intrigues you, check it out - they have free trial downloads.