

## Chapter 1

# Getting Organized — Visually

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Beginning to get organized
  - ▶ Seeing the depths of MindManager
  - ▶ Dealing with complexity
  - ▶ Linking to the outside
  - ▶ Sharing with other programs
  - ▶ Managing perceptions
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**G**etting organized. Who has time? Project managers and just about everybody in business are under constant pressure to get their jobs done with fewer resources, less time, and less money. Organizations are flatter. The boss is not as close to the work being performed. Cross-functional teams are all the rage. Presentations and communication are more important up, down, and across the organization. Information haystacks are getting bigger and the needle is becoming more elusive. Efficiency is needed to sort through the information. You need a solution.

Imagine that your team completes a brainstorming session. You now have a map that shows how their ideas link together and identifies the next action steps. The elements of your map link to your calendar and to your project planning tool. Peer review and external information are added. Now the map is a dynamic picture. You look at the picture and see activity status with just one glance. The map is translated and sent to stakeholders. Stakeholders get a personal presentation with information specific to their needs. The dream continues with the thought that you need only one software program to make all this happen. You wake up and find that such a program does exist — MindManager X5 Pro. Throughout the book, I refer to this version of the program simply as MindManager.

MindManager is a unique software product. The MindManager map is the visual interface. The structure of the map is designed to integrate icons, graphics, and other visual elements with text material. The layout of the map presents your information visually. A MindManager map would be a wonderful tool, even if it stopped there — but it doesn't.

## 10 Part I: Discovering Visual Organization

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The map you can create is dynamic. Links can be formed between news services, search engines, and third party vendors to feed information into a MindManager map. Does it stop there? No! The MindManager map is shared and reviewed between colleagues. Comments are captured and added to the informational content of the map.

MindManager integrates with other programs such as Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Project. The MindManager map takes presentation, exporting, and printing of the map to a new industry standard. Use an internal presentation mode to walk through the entire map in an interactive format. Microsoft PowerPoint presentations are a button click away. Complete Web sites composed of MindManager Web pages are as easy as choosing a design and saying go.

Visit [www.Mindjet.com](http://www.Mindjet.com) to get a fully functional, 21-day, free trial version of MindManager X5 Pro.

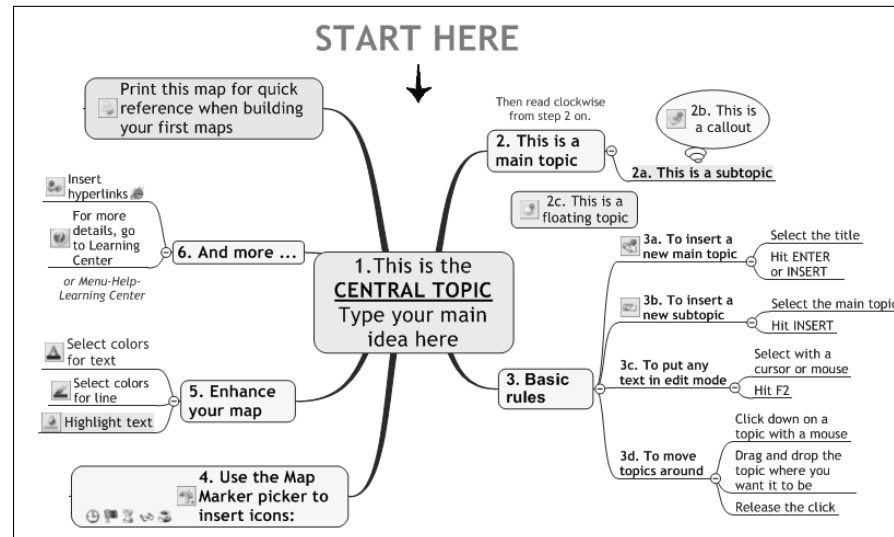
### *MindManager: An Organized Beginning*

MindManager starts with simplicity. The user interface is understandable and uses a style similar to Windows. Plan on expending only a minimal amount of effort getting your first map started. The simplicity of construction is deceptive. You may have more difficulty getting your arms around the full power and uses of the program. Microsoft Excel is similar in this way. You can create a spreadsheet quite easily and be proud of your work. Humility arrives when someone shows you just how far you can actually take the Excel program.

### *Visual organization*

MindManager is described as a *visual organization tool*. Visual organization describes the way information is displayed. Granted, an outline is visual and may be organized, but it is not the same. Try this experiment: Walk down a corridor of cubicles, taking just a second to look at each cube. Which ones strike you as being organized? You may see hobbies, school achievements, and family photos. The person's sense of humor may be obviously displayed. You gather information about a person by taking a mental snapshot of the cubicle habitat. Imagine a written cubicle description that includes an inventory of everything found and the location of each item. The mental snapshot would convey information the fastest. Our brain/eye coordination is incredibly quick when it comes to processing information. The inventory more fully describes the details of each item. Which one is best — fast conveyance of information, or a detailed description of the information? Choose the best answer — all of the above.

MindManager combines the speed of visual delivery with informative textual details. Figure 1-1 shows one of the tutorial MindManager maps found in the program.



**Figure 1-1:**  
A basic  
Mind-  
Manager  
map.

You can use MindManager's visual organization in many different ways. I want to begin by describing an excellent starting point for your road to discovery.

## *Recording your brainstorm*

Ideas come from many places, and one of the most common places is the brainstorming session. You assemble your team and each team member begins to contribute ideas. You use the Brainstorm mode in MindManager to capture all the ideas, and a MindManager map is then created. The generated ideas become MindManager topics. Refer to Figure 1-1. The topics are grouped together and new topics are added as headings. A productive brainstorming session can generate hundreds of ideas and, therefore, topics. MindManager makes it easy for the team to organize, reorganize, and re-reorganize the topics. Text and graphic notes can be added to each topic for further clarification.

## *Analyzing problems*

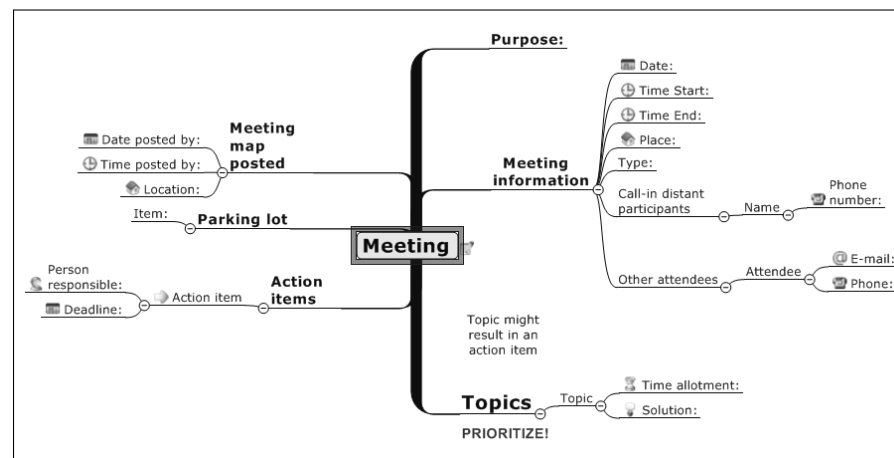
The big picture is easy to see with a MindManager map. The details are not locked in a linear list or outline. All the elements of a problem are visible in

## 12 Part I: Discovering Visual Organization

the map, and external sources of information, such as a Google search, can be included in the map contents as well. The result is an excellent high-level view of a problem. Links between the problem issues can be identified using symbols, icons, graphics, and colors. You continue to add topics as you investigate, work through, and solve the problem. The finished map delivers a complete perspective of the problem and solution.

### *Taking meeting notes*

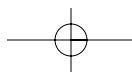
MindManager includes several suggested templates, which can easily be modified to meet your needs. The template shown in Figure 1-2 is a meeting template. A MindManager meeting map is a planning, note taking, and action follow-up tool. You set the agenda in the map and then send it to team members for review. Review comments are added to the map, and notes are taken in MindManager. Links to Outlook are created after the meeting to schedule individual tasks. A presentation of key meeting items is made and sent to the boss. MindManager makes all of this easy. The template is filled out in minutes, using the template wizard. Did I mention that MindManager has more wizards than *Lord of the Rings*? You can even make your own wizards. The wizards hide among the templates, and they appear only when you activate one.



**Figure 1-2:**  
A blank meeting template.

### *Setting up project tasks*

A great many MindManager users are project managers. MindManager is ideal for such a tormenting activity. Work breakdown structures are a standard topic layout found in MindManager. Work breakdown structure tasks are a project manager's building blocks. You enter task information into a topic using the



*task info* menu. The previous examples identified team brainstorming and meetings. Either activity can result in work to be assigned and accomplished. The MindManager map shows percent complete and priority as an icon attached to the topic. The task information can be sent to Microsoft Project and/or Outlook. However, it's not necessary to have either of these programs to make MindManager a useful project management tool.

## Chain Linking

MindManager lets you visually connect your ideas. MindManager can link a map to a map, a map to the Web, a map to other programs, or a map to documents. The links are discussed in the following sections.

### *Linking map to map*

Maps can get quite large if you pack all of your information into just one map. Links are used between maps like transporter beams are used on *Star Trek*. Click on the link symbol and you are whisked to a different map. The map-to-map links are useful in breaking down a topic into more detail. If you have a high level of detail, you may need another map. Individual topics can each contain a link. For example, I am currently working on a large device development project and I have 27 map-to-map links.

### *Linking to the URL world*

A MindManager topic may need clarification or additional information, or it may be a gateway to somewhere else. URLs are the vehicle, and any topic in a MindManager map can connect to the Internet. The amount of information contained in a MindManager map grows exponentially with the addition of Internet URLs.

### *Linking to other programs*

A MindManager topic can initiate the start of another software program. The program can run in the foreground and look like a part of the map. When I test different parts of a software product, I use this feature and have the various modules structured as topics. Each topic activates a specific module, which ensures that I am accessing all the modules as I perform the testing.

## 14 Part I: Discovering Visual Organization

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### *Linking to documents*

The key to a good map is having the right information available. Sometimes, text notes associated with a topic are the way to go; other times, a link to a specific document works better. Almost any format works, as long as you have the necessary programs on your computer.

You have been developing your map up to this point. The basics of topics, icons, graphics, links, and so on have been added, but the potential for your map is far from realized. Now you can bring in topics from the outside.

### *Information Inclusion*

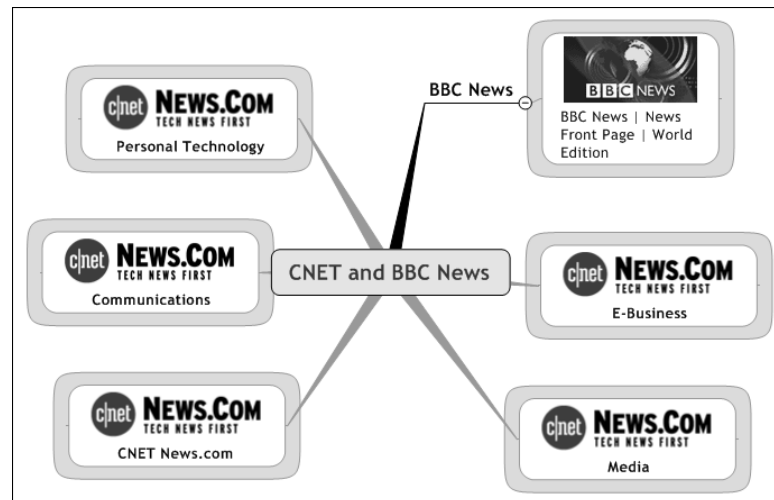
MindManager is an information vacuum. New Web technology has expanded the number of ways you can get information. MindManager handles both the acquisition of the information and the organization of the information. Information quickly gets added to a MindManager map using news feeds and search tools.

### *News feeds*

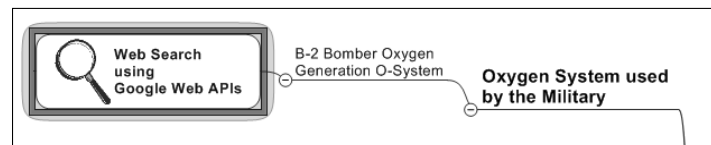
How much information is easily available? A bunch. The question then becomes how to organize all the information sources that are out there. Once again, MindManager has a solution. I have a map that includes news feeds from around the world from different news and information organizations. I organize them by purpose, so I have all my healthcare topics in one part of the map, and I have my technology, world, and aviation news in another part of the map. I continually refresh the news feeds and get headlines from each type of source. Sample news feed services are provided in MindManager. Figure 1-3 shows sample news feeds included in MindManager.

### *Searching*

A MindManager map may contain a section on a competitor. A search feed is added to search the Internet for competitive product information. The topic immediately preceding the location of the search feed gives the search criteria. You refresh the search feed to obtain the latest information. A Google feed is provided with MindManager, though you have to sign up with the Google service to make the feed work properly. However, the price is definitely right — free. Figure 1-4 shows an example of how a search criteria is set up. The Google search would look for “B-2 Bomber Oxygen Generation O-system.” The search result may be a knock on the door from the FBI wanting to know why you are looking for classified information.



**Figure 1-3:**  
Sample news feeds  
in Mind-  
Manager.



**Figure 1-4:**  
Google search  
setup.

## *Building on the Strengths of Other Programs*

MindManager does not pretend to be the ultimate program. It knows its own limitations and lives by the old credo “if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em.” For tricky tasks that are beyond its own capabilities, MindManager interfaces with Outlook and Microsoft Project.

### *Microsoft Outlook*

The MindManager to Outlook link is very strong. Appointments, contacts, notes, and task information are exported, imported, and synchronized between programs. The number of uses for this tool are staggering. Here are just a few of them:

## 16 Part I: Discovering Visual Organization

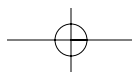
- ✓ **Keep track of travel information.** Link Outlook calendar dates and tasks to MindManger topics that identify the reason for travel.
- ✓ **Create a map with all your monthly bills.** Attach the credit card company URLs to the topic. Use Outlook's task list as a reminder of when to pay each bill. After a bill is paid, Outlook updates MindManager and generates the next month's due date for MindManager — all of which happens automatically. One glance at the MindManager map, and you know the status of all your bills.
- ✓ **Tie a map to an Outlook calendar.** Your team has tasks to perform and deadlines have been established. You make a map directly from your team meeting map to identify each person and the expected completion dates. The team uses Outlook, so the tasks are in each person's calendar. Each day, you refresh your map to see whether tasks are being accomplished as expected.
- ✓ **Connect to a contact list.** You have developed a MindManager map as an emergency contact list. The map has different groupings depending on the type of emergency. A master list of all personnel is kept up to date in an Outlook contact list that you link to, so you simply refresh the MindManager map and the necessary contact information is there.

### *Microsoft Project or other MPX project tools*

MindManager is a great tool for determining what tasks need to be completed in order to have a successful project, but it has no tools for actually developing a schedule and determining the start and finish dates for those tasks based on task dependencies, external constraint dates and resource availability. You must use project management scheduling software for this purpose.

With MindManager, you can export your map directly to Microsoft Project, the most widely used scheduling and project management software on the market today. You can also create a Microsoft Project Exchange (MPX) file from your MindManager map. This file can be read by all the other popular scheduling software packages, so you can use whichever package is standard at your company or is simply your personal preference.

You can also import project files (either directly from Microsoft Project or via an MPX file from other applications) back into MindManager along with schedule dates and resource information in order to create status reports or prepare for meetings. MindManager also includes itself in the Send To . . . options on the Project File menu so that you can create a map from a subset of project tasks directly from Project itself. This feature is particularly useful if you want to report on only currently active tasks.



## *Presenting MindManager Map Information to Others*

The MindManager program presents map information in three ways. The first is an internal presentation mode. The second exports the map information in outline form to a Microsoft Word document. The third uses map information to create a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

### *MindManager presentation mode*

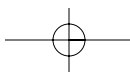
You can project the MindManager map on a screen with the MindManager tool screen present. You must do all the opening, closing, and moving around on the map, which is rather cumbersome. MindManager presentation mode makes it easy. The map is interactive. When you click on different topics in the map, MindManager moves to those topics and opens all the subtopics. The previous topic closes automatically. Links are active and operational. You can enter topics, icons, and other map elements while in this mode, which works well when you are working with your team.

### *Export to Microsoft Word*

You may want to change the format of MindManger from the visual organization style to a linear outline. When MindManager exports map information to Microsoft Word, an outline is created based upon the level of the topic. You can specify export characteristics that structure the export using Microsoft heading characteristics. The outline contains topic information and any associated text. A MindManager map can also import from Word to make a visual organization representation from a linear outline.

### *PowerPoint presentations*

I like to make PowerPoint presentations from MindManager maps. You can specify PowerPoint styles and other output preferences. How easy is it to make a presentation? Very easy. Click the PowerPoint icon, and that's it! Your MindManager map is transformed into a professional-looking presentation. The export-to-PowerPoint feature is an excellent choice any time you want to present all or a portion of your map information to someone else.



# 18 Part I: Discovering Visual Organization

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