

Say goodbye to Excel

What are the tools that keep a project afloat and on track? This month Malcolm Raymond from the Enex TestLab looks at project management software.



Regardless of the amount of programs available to assist in project management, many people are still taking a very informal, unstructured approach to managing projects.

Sure, a very simple project could be represented by a basic timeline on the back of an envelope or on a whiteboard, but what happens when times/dates change and a staff member (ie resource) that you've selected for a task is not available on a particular day?

When tasks get more complex it seems managers make a move into software tools such as an Excel spreadsheet to help with some of the planning and scheduling. However, for even quite simple projects there are now a number of project management software solutions available that will greatly assist in the planning and tracking of the project so that the manager is aware of the project status at all times and can make adjustments when issues arise.

When you start to consider large projects that require a significant amount of investment, the use of software project management tools are necessary to help maximise the project return on investment and lower the project risk.

Additionally, many large corporations undertake projects with geographically dispersed team members: with the move to outsourcing in many industries, the team members may even be in different countries. In these situations additional features need to be provided by the project management tool, and several products also have a range of work collaboration features.

WHAT IS PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

Project management can be defined as a methodical approach to planning and guiding project processes from start to finish. Normally the processes go through five stages: initiation, planning, executing, monitoring and closing.

Project management can be applied to almost any type of project and, in particular, it is widely used to control the complex processes of software development projects. The planning stage is critical in order to complete a project within a certain timeframe, usually with defined stages and with designated resources. Normally project planning divides the activity into stages such as setting objectives (that should be measurable), identifying deliverables, planning the schedule and making supporting plans. These supporting plans may be related to: human resources, communication methods and risk management.

For this review we have looked at projects from @Task, Computer Associates, eProject, Microsoft, Primavera and TASKey. We have examined these products based on their abilities to manage such things as project tasks, costs and resources, as well as aid communication and collaboration between all parties.



@TASK

We were one of the first users to get a glimpse of the latest version of the @Task Enterprise Project Management software package. Version 4.0 is due for release this month and includes a number of new features over its predecessor v3.5.

Of note are the improvements to the user interface, which contributed to the product's ease of use. One of these new features is the tabbed navigation interface, where tabs can be customised to display only the required data—the interface provides breadcrumb or trail navigation

in which each level in the context is hyper-linked enabling the user to return to previous application screens.

Also worth noting is @Task's ability to sort lists in ascending or descending order and improved information architecture.

@Task is offered as both a hosted solution or it can be installed on the user's system. We had access to the hosted system so installation wasn't required, but as described in the documentation it is database and server platform independent.

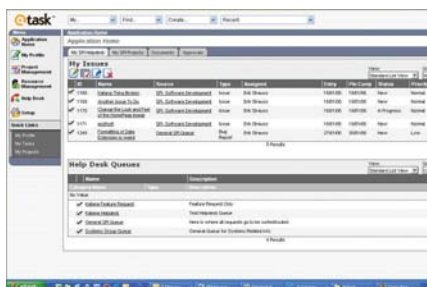
As the product has been built to open standards data can be used with other processes and applications and its modular build also allows for extensibility and development. We ran @Task on both the Firefox and Internet Explorer 6 browsers with no compatibility problems.

The opening or "Home" screen design is



About Enex TestLab

Enex TestLab is an independent testing institution based in Melbourne, Victoria, performing IT product testing for clients such as IBM, Coles-Myer, and a wide variety of government bodies. In the Labs' testing for *T&B*, they are in direct contact with the clients supplying products and the magazine is responsible for the full cost of the testing. The findings are the Labs' own—only the specifications of the products to be tested are provided by the magazine.



Product @Task v4
Vendor @Task
Phone +1 801 373 3266
Web www.attask.com
Price Install option: US\$350 per user
 Hosted option: US\$250 per user—per
 year plus 20 percent support,
 discounts for over 500 users.

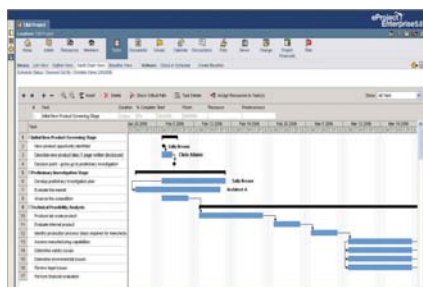
Interoperability 1/2
 Good feature set, excellent user inter-
 face, runs on most servers and supports
 the major databases. Client works with
 major browsers. A rich set of APIs
 provides integration with any application
 on any OS platform.

Futureproofing 1/2
 Very scalable and can be run in a
 clustered environment. Hosted version
 automatically upgraded.

ROI 1/2
 Relatively low cost with the option to pay
 as you use through the hosted system,
 which also reduces infrastructure costs.

Service 1/2
 No local support but forum/FAQ
 support access, phone support, and
 on-site training/consulting available for
 additional cost.

Rating ★★★★★



Product eProject
Vendor eProject
 Aust dist. Bluenova
Phone +1 206 341 9117
 08 9474 2990
Web www.eproject.com
 www.bluenova.com.au
Price Install option US\$395 per user
 Hosted option US\$39.50 per user/month.

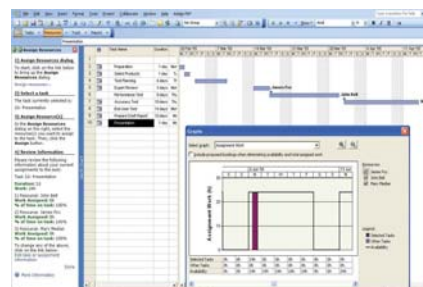
Interoperability 1/2
 Good feature set, good user interface,
 runs on Windows servers and MS SQL
 database. Client works with major
 browsers. Web Services APIs for further
 integration.

Futureproofing 1/2
 Very scalable from 10 to 10,000 users.
 Hosted version automatically upgraded.

ROI 1/2
 Slightly more expensive than @Task but
 still good value hosted version reduces
 infrastructure costs.

Service 1/2
 Local training/consultancy support all
 other support from US.

Rating ★★★★★



Product MS Project
Vendor Microsoft
Phone 13 20 58
Web www.microsoft.com/australia
Price Single user \$1033

Interoperability 1/2
 Runs on Windows 2000 or XP, good user
 interface.

Futureproofing 1/2
 Project Professional is a standalone
 product but can be upgraded by using
 Project Server.

ROI 1/2
 Relatively expensive compared with the
 other systems especially when upgrading
 to enterprise capability.

Service 1/2
 Local support from Microsoft.

Rating ★★★

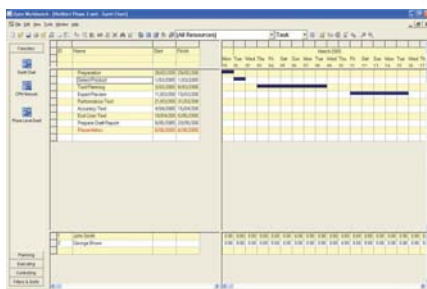
clean and uncluttered and includes four quick
 link drop downs that provide very quick access
 to key information of: "My"—Documents,
 Issues, Projects etc; "Find"—Companies,
 Documents, Issues etc; "Create"—Access level,
 Company, Project, User etc; and "Recent"
 which contains a list of recent Projects, Tasks,

Issues, Timesheets, Users and Documents.


A main navigational menu is provided on
 the left-hand side of the screen and enables
 selection of Application Home, My Profile,
 Project Management, Resource Manage-
 ment, Help Desk and Setup. The Application
 Home has a set of quick links to My Profile,

My Tasks and My Projects.

Under the Project Management section,
 selected from the main left hand menu, we
 found that setting up project team members
 and assigning project permission and tasks was
 quite straightforward. Other controls include a
 Timeline button that enables the selection of a




Product	Open Workbench/Clarity
Vendor	Computer Associates
Phone	02 9937 0500
Web	www.ca.com
Price	Open Workbench: free. Clarity: 10 users \$85,000 500 users \$500,000

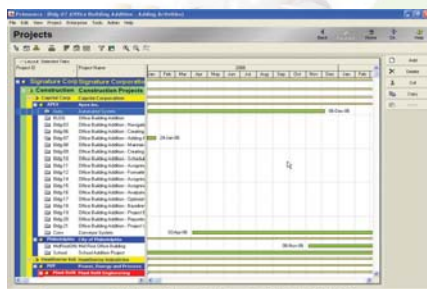
Interoperability 
Runs on Windows and Unix servers and Oracle or MS SQL databases. Client works on Windows or Mac. Good user interface.

Futureproofing 
Standalone product with good feature set. Can only be upgraded using Clarity.


ROI 
Open Workbench is free but investment required to upgrade to Clarity is quite high.

Service 
No local support for Open Workbench but active user and developer forum. Clarity support from CA at 20 percent of price.


Rating ★★★½



Product	Primavera
Vendor	Primavera Australia
Phone	03 9826 9292
Web	www.primavera-us.com
Price	Average per-user cost for 100+ users, assuming typical mix of modules, \$1000

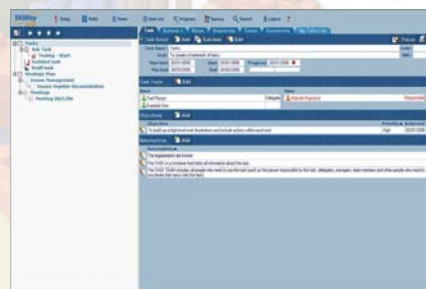
Interoperability 
Runs on Unix and Windows servers and MDE, Oracle and MS SQL databases. Client Windows, or major browsers for MyPrimavera. Very good user interface.

Futureproofing 
Very good scalability up to 10,000—plus users


ROI 
Slightly more expensive but has very good feature set, very robust and proven performance.

Service 
Local support includes 24x7 “follow-the-sun” support, access to free upgrades for 20 percent.


Rating ★★★




Product	TASKey Team
Vendor	TASKey
Phone	02 6296 1150
Web	www.taskey.com
Price	Enterprise: based on 50/50 split—supervisors to workers and includes MS Exchange Integration: 10 users \$13,431, 500 users \$186,868 ASP version \$25 setup fee per-user then \$25 per-user per-month

Interoperability 
Runs on Windows 2000/2003 Server and MS SQL, Oracle or Firebird databases. Client works with major browsers. Very good user interface.

Futureproofing 
Very scalable through support load balanced Web servers, clustered database servers, clustered Exchange servers.

ROI 
Good value offered through hosted version. Installed version is about the same as the other products.

Service 
Free support for the first year then a support charge of 25 percent. Local support

Rating ★★★½

Gantt chart, a calendar and resource grid. You can also recalculate timelines and replan the project from this section.

The Team button enables the project manager to view the Team, search for and add team members and to search and add roles. The Attachments button provides a number of features

that assist in the project documentation. These include the ability to prepare, search and view notes, prepare and view documents as well as set up new directories and documents.

Documents can be shared between users and document version control lets users checkout, review and modify (based on permission)

documents with the old version still being maintained. The Import/Export button gives the project manager control to attach a template, save a project as a template, copy a project and export in MS Project format.

A number of resource management features are provided and include functions to manage

user schedules, job functions, skills and work.

In addition the user/manager can create, approve and manage time sheets. Other resource management functions include job roles for users, capacity planning—giving resource utilisation reports identifying resource conflicts—and capacity requirements.

Setting up a new project was quite simple, this could be user defined or built from an existing template. This section also provides a button to Import a MS Project which displays a seven-step Import Wizard. The Wizard is well designed, clearly indicating what each step was and where you are in the process. We imported a couple of very simple Microsoft Project worksheets, and while they were imported easily they did seem to lose some date information, but this was easy to change, and you need to do this for a new project anyway.

Overall @Task is a fully featured project management package that covers the gamut of requirements for enterprise-level work. We were particularly impressed with the effort @Task has made in developing a standards-based, versatile architecture.

EPROJECT

eProject is available as both a hosted and licensed solution—we chose the hosted option and were up and running without installation.

Rather than being a straight project management tool, eProject has gone one step further and prepared a number of “bundled” products that include templates tailored to suit key business requirements. These “in-a-box” solutions include Project Management Office, IT Governance, Project Portfolio Management, Sarbanes-Oxley, Six Sigma and Advanced Reporting. Some of these products may be of use to organisations that want to apply more methodology and process to their business practices and also assist in moving towards achieving better governance and compliance.

When first starting eProject, a Dashboard page provides a summary of key sections of information that can be tailored to suit the individual user requirements, such as providing key summary points for executive review.

We found the interface to be clean and quite intuitive—the left hand side panel or quick dashboard includes links to the user start page, a search capability to items, workspace names and users, a Navigator or tree representation of projects/task, workspace

creation for users with administrator rights and the user’s personal calendar.

A project workspace can either be established from scratch or created using templates available from the main horizontal tool bar. For our review we used a New Product Development template supplied with eProject. The original template is customised and when saved it appears in the Navigator.

Assigning resources is a breeze—the Members button on the toolbar enables you to search for and select people to be involved in the project as well as assign their roles. Once assigned, the team members are sent an e-mail notifying them of the project and their role—a very handy feature.

By selecting Resources on the toolbar a team resources bar graph can be displayed that shows



the availability for each person selected with their availability colour coded to show if the person is allocated (blue), has additional availability (white) or is over allocated (red).

Finally, specific tasks can be assigned to the team members and they will be sent another e-mail asking them to login to eProject to view their task and their resource status is updated.

Alternatively, by viewing the project Gantt chart, team members can be assigned to tasks using a drag-and-drop process. Task dependencies can also be set this way. In addition, a baseline view can be created from the Gantt chart that enables the project manager to track and compare the project progress against the original schedule.

All projects have a range of documents associated with them and eProject provides a document-management feature that allows project documents to be uploaded for

viewing, version tracking and also approval. Team members can also modify documents to provide some collaboration.

Once a project has commenced, eProject has a number of features that help to manage the project. Overall eProject has a great user interface and feature set, and a good price although it does not display quite as much interoperability as some of the other products here.

MICROSOFT PROJECT

Project has been around for a long time and is used by many project managers. All of the other products tested in this review have some form of import/export capability to Project.

We are reviewing the standalone Project Professional but Microsoft also has an enterprise version that contains collaboration features for working with remote workers, timesheets and so on. To take advantage of these features Project Professional has to be used with Server 2003, Web Access Point and Sharepoint. The enterprise solution has been put together from a number of other existing products which means that the interface does appear to be somewhat inconsistent as you move through the various components.

The standalone version of Project has seen many changes over the years, many of which have been introduced to increase ease of use. The Project screen has a Microsoft Office look and feel with the added buttons that are project-management specific. In particular, buttons are provided to select a number of functions under the headings: Tasks, Resources, Track and Report. Each of these buttons has a drop-down list offering a wide range of alternatives.

A Project Guide pane is included on the left-hand side of the screen and includes instructions or tools to assist the user with many of the common tasks that a project manager might want to undertake. As an example, clicking on the “Define the project” link invokes a short three-step wizard to set up the project.

Because Project was only provided in a standalone version it doesn’t actually meet the scenario criteria, however, Project has been a market leader for a long time and should not be disregarded.

OPEN WORKBENCH

Originally developed as an open-source product, Open Workbench has been taken over by Computer Associates (CA) as part of its purchase of

Niku, an IT management and governance software vendor. Although Open Workbench doesn't provide some of the more advanced collaborative and other features required under our test scenario it was included in our review as it can be used with the CA Clarity product to provide an Enterprise solution.

T&B invited CA to submit Clarity for review, however, CA declined stating: "Because of the breadth and depth of the solution and the myriad of configuration options, CA does not provide evaluation copies of this software." CA did, however, provide a demonstration of the product.

Being an open-source product, Open Workbench has gained a lot of support and its site reports there have been nearly 65,000 downloads of the product. While there are similarities between Microsoft Project and Open Workbench, the fundamental difference between the products is that Project is task driven, and Open Workbench is resource driven.

Open Workbench, in common with many other open-source packages, has no formal support—you need to purchase it separately. However, there is an active forum group that goes a long way to resolving problems that novice (and some experienced users) might have, and good documentation provides product description and usage information.

In common with many of the other packages reviewed here, Open Workbench is able to import Microsoft Project files. The interface is clean with major selection groups down the left hand side including Favourites, Planning, Executing, Controlling and Filters & Sorts. The Favourites provides the selection of project views and includes Gantt Chart, Critical Path Method (CPM) Network and the Phase Level Gantt, which is similar to the standard Gantt except that it displays only the phases in a project, and not all tasks in the project's Work Breakdown Structure (WBS).

Open Workbench has an Auto Schedule

feature that calculates the work on a task to fit the availability of the person to undertake the task, even if the person is allocated to multiple projects. This is a major difference to Microsoft Project where the task is shifted to the next available time that the resource can complete the entire task.

In order to meet the scenario for this review it would be necessary to use CA's Clarity product, which provides enterprise collaboration features through a central database. Although we were unable to physically review Clarity, through the demonstration we were very impressed with the wide-ranging features that it offers. Clarity is a Project Portfolio Management Solution that enables organisations to effectively manage project portfolios.

Overall, Open Workbench is a great choice for readers who are just putting a toe into the project management water as it has good features, is free and has a great growth path due to the Clarity enterprise system.

They look a million dollars but they cost under a hundred

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Product	@Task Project Management Software	Computer Associates (CA)	eProject, Project Management Software
Distributor	@Task	CA	Bluenova
Accessibility	Runs on any operating system that supports Java.	Browser based	100% Browser Based
Calendar support	Collaborative and Multiple work calendars	Yes at a project and resource level	Native project calendar supports I-Calendar format and Outlook synchronization
Client OS supported	All OS/hosted	Windows and Macintosh	Browser based
Collaboration	Web based, with features such as automated, manual notifications, audit trails, approval process.	Through browser based project and resource modules and Clarity core module	Document management with version control, threaded discussions, polling, news boards, workflow
Database support	Oracle, Microsoft SQL, MySQL	Oracle, Microsoft SQL	Microsoft SQL
Deployment options	Installed enterprise version hosted by client. Hosted enterprise version hosted by @Task	Use CA resources, train internal resources or a mixture of internal and external	On demand (hosted software as a service or customer site installed)
Document management features	All docs version control, document preview, check in/check out, security controlled.	Integrated document management at a project and system level	Version control, check in/check out, version retention, approval routing, zip file upload, thumbnail preview, item level security.
File types handled	All	All	All
Import/export capability	Import/Export of MS Project .xml and .mpp. TSV and CSV exports of any lists in the application.	Via Clarity XML gateway	Zip file import/export for documents, .csv for most other data elements. MSFT Project sync option.
Integration with enterprise applications	All functionality in the UI is available on any platform, any language, from local or remote host.	Most Clarity implementations integrate to Financial and HR systems via out XML Open Gateway	Active Directory, MSFT Outlook Sync, MSFT Project Sync. Web Services API's for other integration.
Issue management features	Help Desk feature enables each project to be activated to track issues and customised to capture information.	Yes, using PMBOK rules	Native issue tracking with assignments, status, and user definable fields.
Mobility solutions	Hosted. WAP enabled for cell phone accessibility	Clarity client is native Web	Outlook sync for tasks and calendar
Portfolio management features	Projects, tasks, issues and financials in exec views. Milestone report, cost, budget roll ups, progress status across all projects.	Portfolio Manager module able to customise portfolio analysis portlets	Portfolio dashboards and scorecard for aggregation
Reporting formats/options	html, flash, .tsv, .csv, MS Projects, saved searches, any external reporting system like Crystal Reports through Web Services APIs	Clarity comes with native reports that can be modified or new reports built.	Canned Reports. Ad Hoc Reports, Crystal Reports. Excel, .pdf, .csv output put options.
Resource management	Detailed resource allocation reports for projects, tasks, and issues.	Resource planner module includes resource finder, capacity planning, resource requisitioning and skills management components	Full resource demand and capacity planning by resource type and name. Tracks actual versus estimates.
Scalability	Horizontally scalable and can be run in a clustered environment.	From 15 to over 20,000 end users	From 10 to 10,000 users
Security	User access level gives rights to all functional areas. Custom scopes can also be defined further	Security is role based	Item level security. Role based permissions. Fully customisable roles and security parameters
Server OS supported	Windows, Unix, Linux, OS X- Non-Platform Specific.	Windows, AIX, HP-UX	Windows 2000 and 2003
Timesheet	Timesheets supported and are customisable	Yes	Native integrated timesheets with automatic project and task data display. Real time updates to schedule.
Web client	All	Yes	Browser based.
Workflow support	Flexible workflow. Automated notifications, advanced dependency structures for projects and tasks.	Yes	Integrated workflow—customisable by module.



Primavera	MS Project	TASKey TEAM Technology
Primavera Australia	Microsoft Australia	TASKey
Flexible, configurable user interface	Fully supports Windows accessibility features	Not fully compliant
Project, company, role, user based, shift support, etc.	Extensible calendar support through defined working hours, can be associated with individual resources or groups	Users maintain their own calendar based on their ability to contribute
Windows 2000, 2003 and XP	Windows 2000 or later	IE browser based
Primavera Web browser based project workspaces become a hub for the entire team, discussions, news and e-mail integration	Shared workspaces allow users to store files centrally with others. Based on Windows SharePoint services	Matrix management capability with full task and team coordination from portfolio to action/ToDo level
MSDE, Oracle, Microsoft SQL	Microsoft SQL, Oracle	MS SQL, Oracle, Firebird
Configurable to meet technical, process, maturity needs	Standalone, or installed enterprise version using Project Server	Enterprise (internally hosted) or ASP (On-demand) hosted by TASKey
Manage work products & documents, upload/download, checkin/check out, version control, view history	Shared workspaces allow users to store files and other documents centrally with others.	URL hyperlinks to documents in task context. Can be linked to popular document management systems
Primavera native file formats, MPX, MPP	Project, CSV, Text, Excel, WebPage, XML	All IE MIME supported file types
Various: eg. MS Project (MPP,MPX,XML,XLS, XER,P3), MS Excel	Import tasks from Outlook and Excel	XML, MS Project (import), CSV Files (financial and resource information)
API supplied on request.	Microsoft Office Project Server 2003 required for enterprise intergration, connectors available to LOB systems	Integrated with Microsoft Outlook via Exchange
Create/View Project Issues, Configurable Issues Portlet, Issues Graphics, Email notification	Shared workspaces allow users to store files and other documents centrally with others.	Issues are handled in the same context as the work being done. Issues are fully integrated into task and team management
3rd party app. enables read/write access on any mobile device	Microsoft Project solution providers offer a range of add ons	Operates on mobile devices with Microsoft CE Outlook
Automatic Project & Resources Portfolios, Side-by-Side Portfolio Comparisons, range of graphs, View ROI data	Microsoft Office Project Server 2003 required for Portfolio management features	Concurrently controls multiple strategies, project, tasks and teams. Automatic real-time progress reporting
Native report writer/editor, 100+ template reports, WYSIWYG graphic reports	Predefined reports for task, resource, assignment, or cost information you want to share. Or wizard generates XML file	HTML, XML, PDF, MS Word, MS Excel, JPEG, text
Resource and skills management, capacity planning	Assign and adjust resources. Add from the Resource Pool, Active Directory service or Exchange address book. Project Pro includes resource levelling	Available at both Task and Action/ToDo level, user definable resource types and codes, people and resources separated
From 1 to 10,000 plus users	Stand alone, Server 2003 required for multi users	Supports load balanced Web servers, clustered database servers, clustered Exchange Servers.
User, role, project, function based, LDAP support	Project integrates security with Microsoft Active Directory	Security based on task team membership.
Unix/Windows 2000 and 2003	Stand alone, Server 2003 required for multi users	Windows 2000 Server, Windows 2003 Server
Formal timesheets and/or progress status, plus collaboration features	Microsoft Office Project Server 2003 required for enterprise timesheet capabilities.	Individual timesheeting, flexible costing and approval process
Yes	Microsoft Office Project Server 2003	IE 5 and above
Project process templates, administer workflow recipients, initiate project process	Shared workspaces allow users to store files and other documents centrally with others.	Dynamic structured and unstructured (ad hoc) workflow support

What to look out for

- **Scalability:** Don't invest in a project management tool that can't grow with your organisation and cope with changes in technologies over time. System upgrades should be able to be conducted transparently and with minimum disturbance to existing and on going projects, templates etc.
- **Compatibility:** The system you select must be capable of operating across your organisation. It should work with all major servers, databases and client operating systems. The use of a browser-based interface for client machines greatly simplifies compatibility issues.
- **Product features:** Consider if the product has the all of the features that you need, including the ability to integrate with your existing systems such as financial and enterprise resource planning systems. Also check that systems publicised as being fully featured have sufficient capability in each area eg document management, financial and so on, to fully meet your organisational needs.
- **Collaboration:** Organisations with a geographically dispersed

workforce have particular need for the remote workers to be readily involved in the planning, scheduling and tracking of projects. Consider the use of tools with collaboration features that include options such as forums, issue handling, calendars and e-mail.

- **Security:** Ensure it has adequate levels of security available—you are protecting all of your company's project information. The system should provide multiple levels of security including authentication, authorisation and provide audit trails. Apart from the normal security requirements for network or operating system and Web-server security the system must provide control over access rights of all user groups accessing the system including readers, administrators and so on.

- **Workflow:** Look to using a Workflow system to automate project handling through critical business processes. The workflow system should preferably be easy to use providing a user-friendly graphical user interface. A full audit trail should also be available.



PRIMAVERA

The Primavera solution is an integrated project management tool providing a number of modules that meet the needs of different team members. Primavera uses client-server architecture, is Web enabled and uses either standalone or networked databases. It works identically in single or multi-project modes, is very scalable and runs Oracle, SQL Server and MSDE databases.

The modules available include Project Management, Methodology Management, Portfolio Analysis, Timesheets, and Primavera Web to provide access via the Internet as well as a software development kit for integration with external applications. Other modules provide links to Microsoft Project as well as a project plan comparison tool.

The methodology management module enables users to create, capture and organise reusable components for use in future projects. It provides companies with a method to capture best practice using templates that can be customised. Project summaries and tracking information can be presented format using

graphics, spreadsheets and reports.

The timesheets module works through the Web allowing team members to communicate with a centralised database.

The Primavera product features a lot of functionality which is easily accessed through a very simple Home or Navigation Window. A number of different projects can be viewed at the same time and multiple projects can exist under nodes. Also, an Enterprise Project Structure (EPS) is used to organise projects into a hierarchy and each project must fit under a node within this.

When you first start working on a project the user interface seems a bit daunting, however, you are guided by very good documentation and it doesn't take long to master setting up your own projects, entering tasks and users and producing the inevitable Gantt chart.

New projects can be created in a number of ways including a New Project Wizard, from a template or through importing a file from other packages including Microsoft Project. Setting up a new project is made simple by the use of a wizard and simply consists of selecting a lo-

cation for the project in the EPS, entering the project name, defining start and finish dates, entering the project manager and selecting a resource rate type.

Once the project has been entered and is open, the Projects window is displayed showing where the project sits in a project table, a Gantt Chart view and a number of project detail tabs at the bottom of the layout of the window that provides access to a number of features including Notes, Dates, Default settings, setting project codes and how to calculate costs.

Once the new project has been created you can define where it sits in the WBS and then define activities (often called tasks in other packages) that are the lowest level in the WBS and are the most detailed unit of work that is tracked. Activities can be set up through a Wizard or entered it directly into the Activity Type Column in the Activities Table. It can also be done through a wizard which sets up the name, WBS element and activity type, enabling the selection of how the activities dates are calculated ie Start or Finish Milestone, Task or Resource Dependant.



Project Scheduling is conducted using a Critical Path Method (CPM) which uses activity duration and relationships between activities to calculate the schedule dates. Once activities have been set up, roles can be set up between resources and the activities. The role will act as a place holder indicating the type of resource to be assigned later (for example software engineer, draftsman). Resource usage can be displayed with a Bar Graph giving an indication of a particular resource's activity allocation and will indicate over allocation through a different colour in that section of the bar.

The Primavera Web module, which provides Web access through a browser, had a very clean and intuitive interface and enables many remote, workflow and collaboration features. As with many of the other products reviewed, Primavera provides a dashboard view which can be configured to provide access to projects, activities and events, display key information such as financial trend analysis, summaries of resource allocation and status as well as the ability to set up discussions or e-mails for collaboration.

Overall, this product provides a comprehensive and robust solution for project managers at an enterprise level. It has good collaboration features to assist distributed team members and a range of tools that facilitate planning scheduling and tracking large projects.

TASKEY

Taskey takes a different view to most other project management tools in that it inherently employs a distributed management method that integrates general management and project management techniques.

Taskey identifies three activity levels in its method: Actions as the lowest unit of work, that is, it can't be broken down any further, such as an appointment or a to-do; Tasks, which are a logical grouping of actions and as such need management of information, resources and people; and Projects, which in turn is a grouping of tasks to achieve the overall, longer term goal.

The key steps in the Taskey method are: a goal and work breakdown of tasks using a bar chart to indicate planned and actual timings plus progress. For each Task an information template is used to ensure capture of key information such as team composition, responsibilities and actions to be done. Then a consolidated to-do list is created for all the actions required for all projects and tasks. Finally, when

a to-do list is complete, key information for the task and the bar chart progress are updated.

Taskey Team is good for all levels of users within an organisation—managers would use it for strategic plans, large projects and coordinating work between groups within the organisation, as well as their own Tasks and Actions; middle managers for smaller, more specific projects; and users who check off their to-do list that has been assigned by others.

TASKey TEAM, which uses a Web-based client interface, can be purchased as a client/server system for installation on the company infrastructure or as a hosted system. The client/server system can be used with Windows 2003 Server, Linux and Unix. A number of database systems can be used such as SQL Server 2000, Oracle 9i or Firebird (open source). The system is very scalable to cover use across large organisation and a mobile solution is available using Outlook and Exchange server.

The browser-based interface is very clean and uses a main header containing selection for the main views that cover Today, To-Do, Tasks, Task List, Progress, Options and Search. The Tasks button selects the main workspace which consists of a Task tree in a left-hand panel and in-

put areas on the right a number of Tabs enable the required Task related activities to be selected allow the user to add, edit or view Tasks, Actions, Resources Times or Documents.

Navigation through the various steps of a project is intuitive and even novice users will adapt to the system with little training. However, the Administrator functions aren't quite so intuitive but this is soon overcome.

Overall, the products mentioned in this review so far have all been designed for traditional projects and their management; TASKey Team on the other hand provides an innovative solution to distributed management and is definitely worth a look.

FINAL WORDS

For enterprises that are serious about running projects in an efficient and cost-effective manner, the products reviewed offer a wide range of features. They have been designed for all users in an organisation from senior management to the project managers and staff undertaking the tasks. The product designers have also taken noticed how modern corporations are moving to distributed workforces and have implemented collaborative work features. ■

SCENARIO

This large company is struggling to maintain control of a growing number of projects. It is seeking a project management tool that will be able to help

manage such things as project tasks, costs and resources, as well as aid communication and collaboration between all parties.

(((EDITOR'S CHOICE))) Primavera



With the number of products available and competition for a growing market space, the developers of these products are packing a lot of features into their solutions which makes picking a clear winner in this review difficult.

Based on its feature set, position in the marketplace and local support, the Editor's Choice award goes to Primavera.

We were impressed with the compre-

hensiveness of the Primavera product, which takes the disparate people and groups within a large enterprise and brings it all together under an easy-to-use tool.

The product appears robust and the level and presentation of documentation inspires confidence that the product will get the job done.

As a close second we must recommend @Task for a very rich feature set, great user interface and interoperability at a great price.