

IMAGINE trying to do a jigsaw puzzle with the pieces scattered in various locations instead of being in one box. Not only are they not together, you don't know which pieces are in which box, or even whether you need the pieces in Box C or D before you can connect the pieces you have in your hand.

That scenario resembles project management before the latest generation of software tools came along. Projects were often done haphazardly, with one department within a corporation not knowing what another was doing, and neither having any way of checking on progress or making scheduling adjustments. And for the project manager, the bits of data needed to keep on top of things were stored in many locations, making it time-consuming just to track them down.

Now, however, project management is precise, efficient and co-ordinated. The key is to have the proper tools.

The big player in the game is software giant Microsoft Corp. Many software-development companies tool their own products to fit Microsoft Project.

And Microsoft plans a new version this spring — Microsoft Project 2000, which ships as a full package with Microsoft Project Central.

"This new version is very flexible for the novice; it's easy to get started with it," says John Corrigan, product manager with Mississauga-based Microsoft Canada Co. "There's a Web-based interface for help and it's easy to navigate back and forth. The new edition also caters to high-scale, heavy-duty project management, so it's really very scalable in terms of the user and the size of the project."

The latest edition of Microsoft Project before this one was introduced in November, 1997, he says, and the changes reflect what the company's clients are doing and demanding.

"We're seeing a growing trend from personal productivity to being more involved with everyone in the corporation when it comes to project management," he says. "That's built in to this new version. That's where the component of Project Central comes in: It's Web-based and allows people to collaborate on tasks. It also makes the data more versatile, in terms of storing and accessing."

Andy Welch, a principal with Toronto-based Daedalian Systems Group Inc., says his company uses Microsoft Tools, Oracle and IBM software. "We're IBM Best Team partners, so that's how we develop the systems we set up. These companies have tools for writing e-business sites, and we use them. We also use Microsoft's or Oracle's built-in security so that these sites are secure. These are industry-standard tools, and they're the best way to serve our customers."

## New software eases the job of making all the pieces fit

Daedalian started out with Project Invision, which stores plans for thousands of projects at the same time and relates them all back to one database. His company has 200 projects going on at any one time, and uses the same tool to manage its own work as it offers its clients.

The advantage to project-management tools, he says, is a single database and how it works. "The Internet is only half of it; a relational database is the other half. Let me give you an example. A customer in Chicago owns three magazines. The magazines have 80,000 subscribers. And they're about furniture making, and the magazines are funded by advertisers, with free subscrip-

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tions. The advertisers manufacture tools used by cabinet makers and furniture makers and upholsterers.

"So the Web site that we've developed builds on those relationships. It knows about every magazine, every issue, every piece of editorial, every advertisement. Everything has reader response cards that you can access over the Internet. You can ask for additional information; you can communicate with the authors of the articles; you can communicate with the manufacturers of the products."

Using this tool, he says, the site becomes a portal, a means of communication among a whole community of interest. "We've got the vendors, the buyers, the advertisers and they're all tied into one database. Everything everybody does relates to that database."

"The Internet is a communications revolution, but it's also an integration revolution. We have a way to tie everything back to one source. We're trying to create effective, two-way communication."

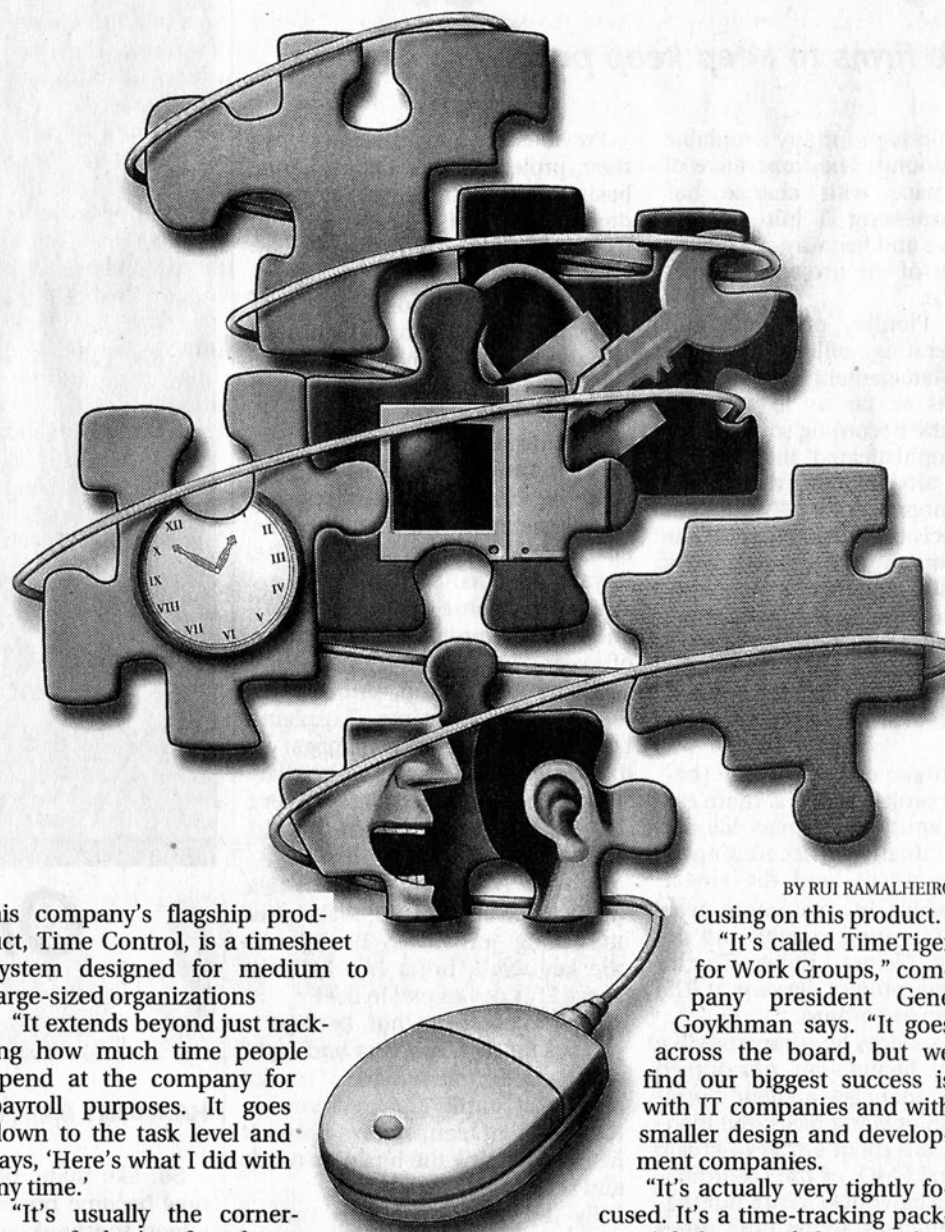
Some tools are quite specific in terms of what they can do and what market they are geared for. Chris Vandersluis, president of Montreal-based HMS Software Inc., says

his company's flagship product, Time Control, is a timesheet system designed for medium to large-sized organizations

"It extends beyond just tracking how much time people spend at the company for payroll purposes. It goes down to the task level and says, 'Here's what I did with my time.'"

"It's usually the cornerstone of what's referred to as activity-based costing. That says, 'We're going to track our budget and our actuals by task instead of just by person.'"

Another company that keeps its focus narrowed is Indigo Technologies of Toronto. It originally was a consulting company and developed a tool to help it manage its own projects. That tool ended up being very successful when it was marketed, so the company repositioned itself as a software-development organization fo-



BY RUI RAMALHEIRO  
cusing on this product.

"It's called TimeTiger for Work Groups," company president Gene Goykhman says. "It goes across the board, but we find our biggest success is with IT companies and with smaller design and development companies."

"It's actually very tightly focused. It's a time-tracking package, so it helps people keep track of how much time they actually spend on their project activities and compare that with what they thought they were going to spend."

TimeTiger also ties in with Microsoft Project. "Our package is really great in the fields where people don't want to keep track of their time, where they don't like the additional costs and hassle of tracking where they spend their time," he says.

"The software is always running on their computer, so it's great for people who have

to do multiple things, who have to switch tasks a lot. It's all running in the background and it's very quick."

TimeTiger has been on the market for 18 months, and the company plans to release TimeTiger for Work Groups 2.0 on April 3. "The great thing with this one is now you can log your time over the Web, and that's what a lot of clients have been asking for," Mr. Goykhman says. "So if they're working off-site or anywhere in the world, they can log their time."

ABT Corp., whose Canadian operations are based in Mississauga, takes a broader approach. Donna Montminy, regional director in Canada, says: "We're a software-development group. Our only focus is project management. We umbrella everything under our Results Management Suite, with various components."

"One is a Web publishing component called ABT Publisher. Then there's a planning and estimating tool called ABT Planner, and a scheduling tool called ABT Workbench, which used to be called Project Workbench."

Her company sells its products by component or as a package. Also among those components are ABT Connect, which is Web-based time capturing software. Clients can track their time, how long they spend on each task and enter the data.

"Another of our tools is ABT Resource, and that's for capacity planning and resource utilization," she says. "The last one is ABT Integrator, which allows you to take that project-management information in the repository and integrate it with ERP systems or third-party applications."

ABT has its own consulting group that assists organizations in selecting the tools and implementing them, helping them to define some of their standards and doing training and mentoring. And there's also a technical-support hot line.

"We are a Microsoft Solutions provider, so instead of using our scheduling tool, a client can use Microsoft Project. If the client's already invested in that tool, they may as well keep using it. We have a team devoted to ensuring the integration of Microsoft software with our tools, so it's not an afterthought with us."

On April 1, ABT will release a new issues-management, time-tracking, project-collaboration tool, and expects to have new Web products available in the third quarter of this year.

### Related Web sites

The following sites provide information on project management and related products:

[www.abtcorp.com](http://www.abtcorp.com)  
[www.daedalian.com](http://www.daedalian.com)  
[www.hmssoftware.com](http://www.hmssoftware.com)  
[www.microsoft.com/project](http://www.microsoft.com/project)  
[www.solutionsnetwork.com](http://www.solutionsnetwork.com)  
[www.indigo1.com/timetiger](http://www.indigo1.com/timetiger)