New software eases the job of making all the pieces fit

Daedalian started out with Project Invasion, 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 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 focused on making all the pieces fit.

"We're seeing a growing trend from personal productivity to being more involved with everyone in the corporation when it comes to project management."