

This case history is excerpted from Chuck Frey's recently revised and updated e-book, ***Power Tips & Strategies for Mind Mapping Software – Second Edition***. To learn more and purchase it online, [please click here](#).

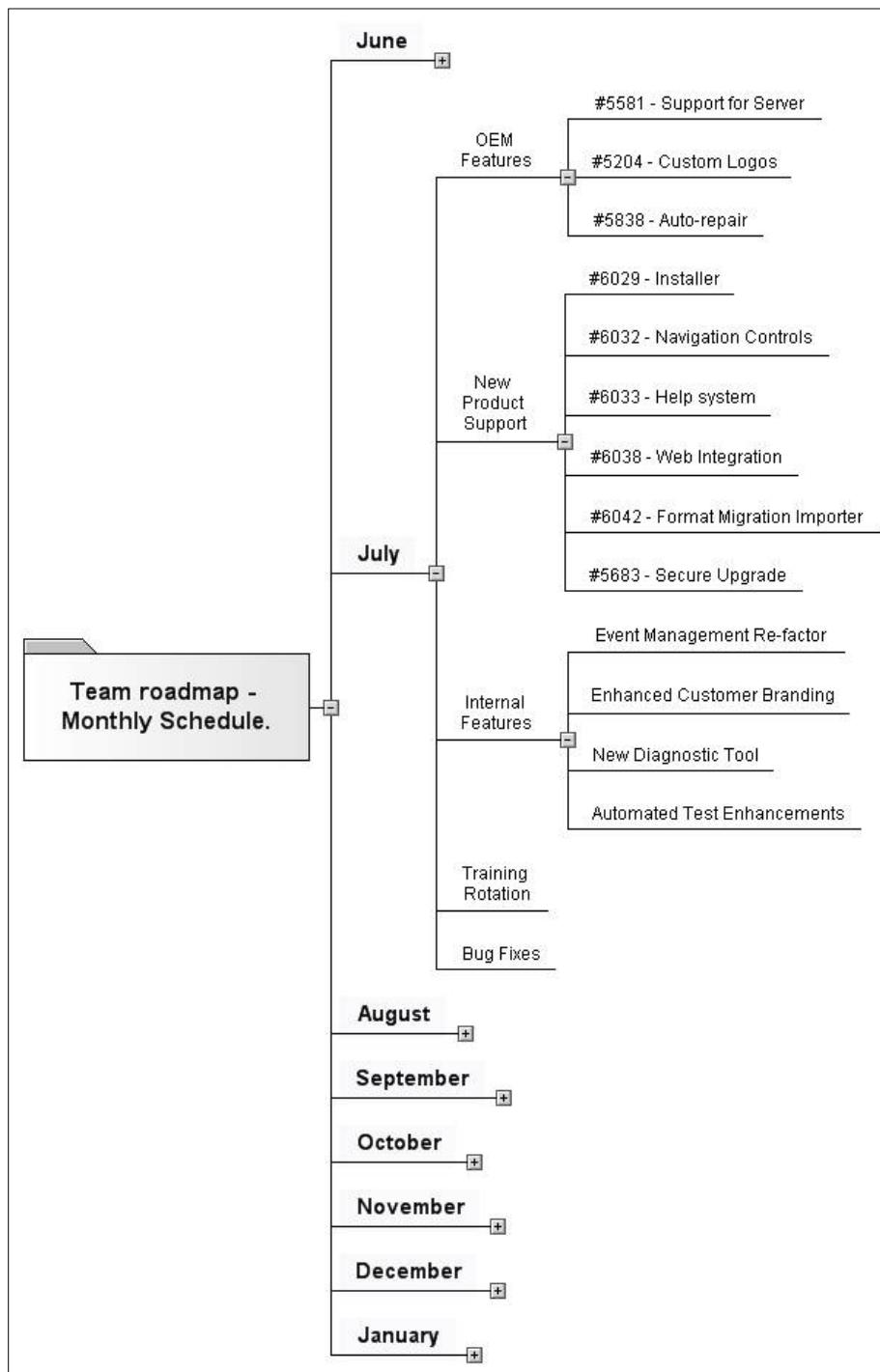
Scheduling & Product Mapping

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Job title: Director, PC Software, User Experience Group

Software used: OpenMind 2 Business



When I'm working with schedules, OpenMind's ability to import and export Microsoft Project files is extremely powerful. A project in Microsoft Project is similar to a mind map in that it has a root concept (the subject of the schedule), a bunch of sections and sub-sections each with interdependencies. It is not, however, as flexible as a mind map in how it presents, organizes and allows me to manipulate the information. As a result, it is very useful to me to be able to move between OpenMind and Project.

With OpenMind, creating and interpreting schedules can be done in the mind map view or the Gantt chart view. When a schedule already exists in Project, importing it into OpenMind and switching to the mind map view (or left to right view) makes it possible to get a fast overview of the project and drill down into the details as needed. The ability to filter topics is also valuable, as is the ability to move between OpenMind, Microsoft Project and Microsoft PowerPoint.

Steps:

As mentioned earlier, we often brainstorm problems to solutions through mind mapping. At the end of a brainstorming session, in the case of a development project, we will have captured the work items, issues/risks and opportunities. These components are all key parts of managing a project, and from there it's a simple task in OpenMind to switch to the Gantt view and add effort estimates and order dependencies. Essentially, everything required to manage a project can be maintained within an OpenMind file.

Often, the end result of the brainstorming session is a mind map that includes a plan on how to address the problem and a schedule that covers the efforts involved. When this gets merged into the master team schedule and the resource leveling occurs, we get a better idea of when this particular set of tasks will be delivered relative to other planned work that is being done. This leads to the other use for OpenMind that I want to cover; using mind maps to interpret detailed schedules and converting them into roadmaps.

In situations where an entire team is working from a detailed schedule, which includes all planned activities over a large number of months, I can use OpenMind to quickly dig into what the team is doing.

Maintaining a schedule for the team is a typical task for a resource manager and we use standard tools (Microsoft Project) for schedule maintenance. Captured in those Project files is an abundance of data for work planned to be completed at a particular time (or in a particular software release).

By switching between OpenMind's Gantt chart view (essentially resource leveling) and mind map view, it is possible to see what tasks and times are planned without having to see all of the details. It is much easier to swap tasks around in a mind map than in a Gantt chart. The Gantt chart view is (as it should be) better for looking at an overall timeline and resource loading. When discussing changes to a schedule and possible trade-offs that can be made, I prefer OpenMind's mind map view as a way of managing from a high level without losing access to the deep details.

Another issue OpenMind solves is translating detailed schedules into plan of record roadmaps. By importing the Microsoft Project file into OpenMind 2.0 Business and using the filters, it is possible to quickly create a view that shows a release schedule which allows me to drill down release by release to see the planned features. By only drilling down into selective branches of the schedule I can quickly reveal (or hide) the information that I need. By deleting sections of the tree that are not relevant to the

roadmap, but are relevant to a schedule (for example engineering reserves for bug fixing, vacations, etc.). I can quickly create a reduced map. This reduced map can then be exported to Microsoft PowerPoint as the starting point for a published roadmap presentation.

Advantages & Efficiencies

At a very basic level, the ability to use OpenMind as a Rosetta Stone to move between various applications and levels of detail is a big time saver. The ability to quickly summarize data in a high-level view and make trade-offs and adjustments without losing the details is also very useful. Further, I find the ability to start a project in an OpenMind mind map to capture the project phases, development methodology, work items, and effort estimations, and then convert that directly into a Gantt chart or Project file (schedule) to be incredibly powerful.

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