

Steve Cotterell looks at an addition to the Project in a Box template range and at a project management application for business users and then has a little play with a web design tool.

MSP Method Templates

Project in a box (PiB) has been designed to make use of a range of available templates, including PRINCE2. To this range has been added a set of templates based on the 2007 edition of Managing Successful Programmes (MSP). The latter is an official OGC licensed product, but, because MSP doesn't include its own template pack, the PiB people have created one, which has been verified by the OGC. The package includes everything from the MSP manual and all the included processes and templates.

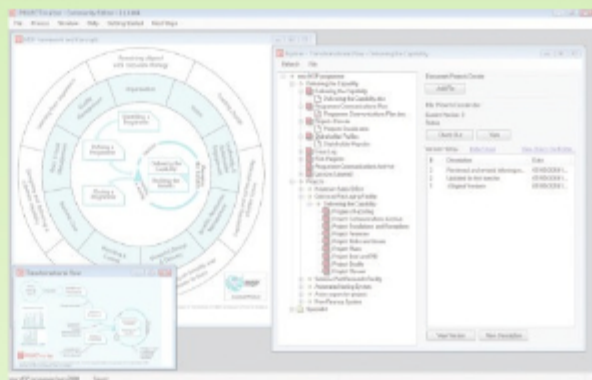
The MSP Method Templates can be downloaded from your Project in a box user account and you can then run your project using them. The tools provided include Word document templates, Excel logs and other structured tools.

On opening your project you see an interactive MSP Framework and Concept wheel. Clicking on any part of this wheel takes you to a dialog box giving you access to the relevant part of the manual and, where applicable, the appropriate templates and tools.

Clicking in the centre of the wheel opens the appropriate interactive process diagram.

When using either of the multi-user versions, your documents can be shared with other team members and projects. There's full version control over the project documentation, indexing for searches, etc.

The MSP Method templates are included free in the Project in a box Enterprise Edition. You can add them to the Personal and Community editions for £75 each, while adding them to the Small Team Edition (for up to twenty users) costs £500. For further information, visit www.projectinabox.org.uk.



Swiftlight

This unusual desktop application hasn't been designed for project management specialists, but it could be a useful PM communication and reporting tool. It's aimed at the general business user for managing small and simple projects using Excel and PowerPoint.

It opens at a blank 'Timeline' page. On the left is a set of shortcuts and, in the main screen area, there are four horizontal sections. Into the topmost you enter your project's objectives, deliverables and success metrics.

The next two narrow timeline bands show the dates of key meetings and milestones. The lower, largest screen area contains the activity timeline, in many ways similar to a basic Gantt chart. Using the product's drag and drop interface, you draw the colour-coded activity groups onto this chart. They can be moved or extended by dragging them and you can insert activities between those already shown. You can zoom the timescale in and out.

Auto-formatting helps you keep all of your data on one page but you can go on to multiple pages if you wish. You can output screens to PowerPoint and PDF format.

Deliverables and to-do lists can be recorded against each activity and you double-click on an activity to access and enter its detail.

You can convert a MS Project file to a Swiftlight file to produce a high level report quickly. You can also import a Swiftlight plan into MS Project for continuing development.

Swiftlight costs £199 per user (excluding VAT). For more information visit www.swiftlightsoftware.com/Swiftlight-Project-Management-Software-you.html.

Xara Web Designer 6

Project web sites provide a useful way of communicating with your project team and the project stakeholders. Xara Web Designer could help you put your site together. When you open this application, you see a blank page with some toolbars and a 'Tip of the Day'. It looks like many traditional web authoring tools, difficult to use and aimed at programmers with features such as HTML and script editing.

However, don't be put off, Xara Web Designer is different. It takes a new approach to web creation by being a design-based, rather than a technical, HTML, or script-based tool. It gives you the freedom to place anything anywhere on the page – text, photos, graphics, animations and widgets. You create your page using a WYSIWYG layout and Web Designer provides all the graphics features you're likely to need.

A set of video movies explains the features of the product to get you started, and then you're ready to go. You can design your own page or use one of the supplied themed designs. There are thirty-one of these, each including ten or more layouts and all are fully customisable. These pages can be used individually, but each theme also includes a ready-built, ready-linked eight-page website. Web Designer also includes a wide variety of other individual graphic templates such as nav bars, individual buttons, icons, headings, speech bubbles, photo objects/galleries and text panels.

Downloading Xara Web Designer 6 costs £39 (inc. VAT). For more information or to download a free trial version, visit www.xara.com.

