

An open letter to Mindjet regarding problems with MindManager 9

On behalf of many MindManager 8 users who upgraded to the current version as well as those who have purchased it for the first time, I would like to raise a range of serious problems with MindManager 9 which we are seeking to have rectified as soon as possible.

These issues have been identified in consultation with these users. A post was placed on the Mindjet and Yahoo MindManager 9 forums seeking comment on the key problems that users wanted to see addressed as a priority in the first MM9 Service Pack. In addition, all other posts to both forums regarding serious MM9 problems were reviewed and many of these issues also incorporated in the list.

Although there are a number of improvements to the current version which are appreciated by users, these are severely compromised by the program's defects. The problem appears in part to stem from a decision by Mindjet to attract new users by repositioning Mindjet as an Outlook task and appointment manager, with limited built-in Gantt facilities. While there are many worthwhile aspects to these new features, many of them have obviously been rushed through development and testing. As a result that they are poorly implemented, buggy and in some cases make MindManager 9 an inferior product in comparison to the previous version and even some of MindManager's competitors.

Furthermore, some of the changes made to position MindManager as an Outlook dashboard manager have compromised the product's fundamental role as a brainstorming and product development tool from which tasks will eventually be exported and linked to Outlook, rather than the other way round. Similarly, while the concept of the new inbuilt Gantt is welcome, the resulting decision to "lock-down" task start date, due date and duration on tasks even if they are not rolled up has caused serious difficulties for many users and third-party task management developers.

The resulting list of problems, which has been reviewed by several key industry figures, falls into four categories:

1. **Bugs introduced or previous bugs still not fixed:** for example, some users, especially XP users, report persistent crashing on exit.
2. **Important features removed/ restricted/dumbed down in MM9:** for example, (as indicated earlier) the extension of roll-up rules enforcing the link between start date, due date and duration to all tasks, whether they are rolled up or not, makes earliest / latest start /finish calculations impossible. Other examples of features removed that were relied upon by many users include topic alerts and the ability to do a one-time initial export of tasks to Outlook for subsequent synchronisation.
3. **New features introduced that don't work properly or which are too limited:** for example, the feature set of the inbuilt Gantt chart is much more limited than the previous JCVGantt and the new Outlook dashboard feature generates numerous unnecessary messages regarding topics that have been changed or moved whenever it is run.
4. **Features that should have been introduced or improved in MM9 but weren't:** for example, there are no improvements to the Topic Notes editor and Word export features and still no ability to position subtopics freely.

A detailed map and PDF document outlining the issues identified by MM9 users are attached. These also propose a possible solution for each problem identified.

It is understood that it may not be possible to address all these issues in the first service pack, given their scope and the fact that this pack appears to be already in beta testing, but we are still seeking to have as many as possible incorporated in this and subsequent service packs. The map and/or list will be put on the web with links posted on the relevant forums. These public versions will be used to monitor progress on implementation of responses to the problems as they are rolled out in the various service packs.

I would like to reiterate that many of the people who have responded on this matter are dedicated MindManager users who were looking forward to the release of the latest version. Despite their disappointment they still believe in the product and would like to see these problems fixed so that it can realise its full potential. While the list of issues identified is extensive, the solutions proposed are reasonable and would help to restore MindManager's role as the "flagship" of mind mapping software.

regards

Alex Gooding
Director
Gooding Davies Consultancy Pty Ltd

MindManager 9 Bugs and Problems

INTRODUCTION

The following list of bugs and problems identified in MindManager 9 has been compiled from posts to the Mindjet and Yahoo MindManager Users forums, many in response to an invitation to identify the key issues that should be addressed in the first MindManager 9 Service Pack. This list will be monitored and updated as the first and subsequent service packs are rolled out.

1 USER INTERFACE AND API

1.1 Several users (especially XP users) report persistent crashing on exit

Solution: fix bug

1.2 Sometimes slow when saving large maps and/or to network drives

Solution: fix bug

1.3 Problems with switching from pen to mouse view in Windows 7 without accidentally opening the Start menu

Solution: fix bug

1.4 Intermittent problem with Remove Filter button not working

Solution: fix bug

1.5 Removal of the options to add print preview and save all buttons to the Quick Access toolbar and other options seem to be not available

Solution: reinstate this facility

1.6 API appears to be much more "locked down" than previous versions, making 3rd party access more difficult

Solution: discuss with 3rd-party developers their requirements and work with them to make the API more accessible

1.7 Interface apparently designed to be consistent with Office 2010 but poorly implemented; e.g., common features such as map templates and styles "hidden" under optional Developer tab, ribbon layout cannot be edited

Solution: put map styles and templates under Extras tab and allow editing of the ribbon

1.8 "Backstage" view poorly implemented because MM still relies on a multi-document window instead of providing a separate instance of the interface for each document as in Office - thus all windows are hidden by the Backstage view 2010

Solution: consider redesign of MM9's interface to be more consistent with Office 10's behaviour re multiple files and Backstage view (longer term)

1.9 Macro feature still poorly supported with no tutorials, help facility or recording option

Solution: provide a recording option and more support for the macros facility

1.10 Still not possible to search for or use custom properties in any meaningful way without programming

Solution: provide option to link tags to custom properties and provide ability to search for custom properties

2 GANTT AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

2.1 Extension of roll-up rules enforcing the link between start date, due date and duration to all tasks, whether they are rolled up or not, causing problems for 3rd party task management applications and for earliest / latest start /finish calculations and for MS Project to operate properly

Solution: allow user the option to enforce or not enforce linked duration and start/due date rule for non-rolled-up topics and talk to 3rd party developers re this issue

2.2 No longer able to sync with JCVGantt

Solution: reinstate option to link with JCVGantt as an alternative to the inbuilt Gantt

2.3 Topic Alerts have been removed, forcing users to rely on Outlook alerts

Solution: reinstate Topic Alerts, at least for topics not linked to Outlook

2.4 Dependency type must be explicitly set for each new relationship

Solution: allow user the option to set a dependency default for new relationships

2.5 Feature set of inbuilt Gantt chart much more limited than the previous JCVGantt, e.g., unable to filter tasks in the Gantt view does not automatically reposition when topic focus changes on the map

Solution: expand inbuilt Gantt facilities to match those of JCVGantt

2.6 No facility to add a slide of the Gantt chart

Solution: provide facility to add a Gantt slide

2.7 Not possible to view Gantt chart and map in separate windows

Solution: allow option to view Gantt (and, ideally, maps as well) in a separate window

2.8 Not possible to display durations of less than a day in the Gantt chart, making it useless for detailed project planning

Solution: allow such durations to be displayed on the Gantt chart

3 FORMATTING

3.1 Notes editor is very limited: e.g., still does not provide a facility for numbered lists in item notes

Solution: Upgrade Notes editor and at the very least provide a numbered notes facility

3.2 Still no ability to change line thickness or distance between topics and sub-topics

Solution: allow users to vary line thickness and sub-topic locations

3.3 No ability to change vertical alignment of topic numbering

Solution: provide topic numbering vertical alignment facility

3.4 Range of map layout options has not been increased e.g., no left-facing or fishbone maps

Solution: provide more map layout options

3.5 Still no ability to hyperlink to text or image in a topic title

Solution: allow topic title text or images to be hyperlinked

4 ATTACHMENTS AND HYPERLINKS

4.1 Still only one hyperlink allowed per topic

Solution: allow multiple hyperlinks

4.2 Still not possible to specify a page number to open at in a hyperlinked Word or PDF document

Solution: allow option to specify a page number

4.3 Still no map part to search the user's PC in the same way as the web search map parts operate

Solution: provide a PC search map part

4.4 Still not possible to change the default setting for the number of rows/columns when a spreadsheet is added to a topic

Solution: allow option for the user to set default number

5 PRINTING AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Some users report shaded topics print as grey on the top with the main colour on the bottom (possible print driver problem)

Solution: fix bug or clarify if this is a printer driver issue and issue advice

5.2 MapViews feature removed (slide view an inadequate replacement)

Solution: either reinstate MapView feature or provide equivalent facility in Slides feature

5.3 Slide mode poorly implemented; e.g., it is difficult to resize slide frames to fit large branches

Solution: provide more flexibility to customise slides view and to resize frame

5.4 Problems when trying to export to PowerPoint unless Slides Page setup correctly implemented

Solution: provide more information on how to use this and a link from the export to PowerPoint dialogue box to the slides page setup dialogue

5.5 The built in Gantt feature does not provide either print preview and control over what is printed is very poorly implemented

Solution: provide a slide option for the Gantt view and improve flexibility of Gantt printing

6 OFFICE INTEGRATION

6.1 Opening a map including an area from an Excel file created with Office 2003 causes MM9 to crash, because Excel is waiting for an input in the background

Solution: fix bug

6.2 Several users report strange behaviour when attempting to export to Word

Solution: fix bug

6.3 MM9 crashes if the user is an Exchange client and attempts to use Outlook queries when not connected to Exchange

Solution: fix bug

6.4 Removal of the Export to Outlook button, which forces users to send multiple topics to Outlook the first time on an individual basis.

Solution: allow users option to highlight multiple items of the same type to send to Outlook the first time in one hit

6.5 Can no longer link MM tags to Outlook categories as categories are synced to custom properties which are not as easy to view and can't be searched for

Solution: provide option to link tags to custom properties and provide ability to search for custom properties

6.6 Outlook map parts are no longer available, which means it is no longer possible to create new Outlook note or contact items in MM and appointments or tasks can only be created using the Send To facility

Solution: reinstate Outlook map parts

6.7 if user imports an Outlook task that is assigned to them, the assignment doesn't show and its also not possible to assign an imported item

Solution: allow users to view tasks assigned to them and to assign imported items

6.8 Syncing an Outlook dashboard to Outlook produces numerous messages re items that have changed or been moved and is slow with large maps

Solution: provide an option to turn off sync warnings re changed/moved/deleted items

6.9 Word export still poorly implemented, forcing user to accept MM styles for topics and MM direct formatting for notes content

Solution: allow user to map topic levels and at least basic notes formatting to styles in the Word template of their choice

6.10 MM9 still does not export to Excel

Solution: provide Excel export facility

6.11 Still unable to synchronise with OneNote

Solution: provide OneNote sync facility

7 IMPORT AND EXPORT (OTHER THAN OFFICE)

7.1 Working custom web templates imported to MM9 from 8 fail during export, as do files generated in MM8 exported to the web in MM9

Solution: fix bug

7.2 Cannot generate a Mindjet Player export without being connected to the Internet

Solution: allow Mindjet Player files to be generated locally

7.3 Limited number of Web services available (e.g., no Twitter, LinkedIn, FourSquare etc)

Solution: expand the number of web services available and make it easier for users to add services

7.4 No ability to set parameters for web searches beyond topic and number of results

Solution: provide an "advanced search" option

7.5 MM9 still does not export to OPML (outlining) format

Solution: provide an OPML outline export template

7.6 No synchronisation to Google calendar or other web-based or non-MS calendars or office applications

Solution: provide syncing facility at least for Google Calendar and Google Docs

Disclaimer: While every care has been taken in preparing this map, it is based on problems identified by users. Not all the issues mentioned will necessarily affect every user, whose individual experiences may vary. Therefore no responsibility is taken for the completeness or accuracy of this list.