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Program Design

A Plan came into existence as a result of a search for a Program that was easy to understand, and yet didn't lose the overview for large projects.

Most PIMs (Personal Information Managers) are good for reminding the user of upcoming events, but are inadequate for organizing the tasks to be accomplished.

The alternative is to buy a Project Management Package, which could cost as much as $1500.00 or more. Such Packages are very complex, and require a considerable "lead time" to understand the basic functions, and sometimes lost the "big picture" -- becoming bogged down in the details of running the program. After a while it feels like shooting flies with a cannon.

A Plan is the package that now fills the gap between overblown Project Management packages and simple Task lists.

Projects are organized by A Plan in a hierarchical database with the following levels:

1st.Level: Folders (max. 999 Folders per Database),
2nd.Level: Projects (max. 999 Projects per Folder) and
3rd.Level: Tasks (max. 999 Tasks per Project).

Theoretically you can have 1 million Projects with almost 1 billion corresponding Tasks in a single data file, and if that doesn't get ya, just start another file.

A Folder could have the name "EXHIBITIONS," for example, and contain the Project "COMDEX." As Tasks under the project COMDEX you may have the entries "Reserve Stand," "Make Signs," and "Assign Personnel."

Should the Project Prove very complex, you may wish to give it a complete folder, or even a complete file. With such a complex project you may then have the further entries under "COMDEX" and "Make Signs" of "Design", "Layout", "Presentation for Approval", etc.

Through varying display options, you may now achieve a fast overview of all running, past, and future entries.

The Entries will also be displayed on a calendar commonly called a Gantt Diagram, which can be zoomed up to 18 times to achieve an overview. 1x Magnification (1 pixel per day) displays about a year, and 18x Magnification displays about 3 weeks.

Beside the normal options (Sort Order, Auto-Save) there are also various filtering possibilities for the database. They are designed to facilitate the use of larger projects.Printing of data is an analog function of the display. That means you have WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) printouts. The Gantt-Diagram can be configured to your personal needs, including columns, type size, page borders and orientation, resolution of the calendar, color, etc. The Gantt diagram may also be printed on multiple pages to display longer time periods.

File structure

On the MS-DOS level, there is a Database consisting of 3 related files with the endings .ISD, .ISM, and .ISF. This is an ISAM database (Indexed Sequential Access Method) which is characterized by fast data access and "gapless" data saving routines with variable record lengths. The file with the ending .ISD is dynamically increased by 2K at need. During the work session with A Plan a temporary file is created with the ending .ISL.

You should not change the names or the endings of the files, nor try to open them with a text editor -- they will be destroyed for use by A Plan. The database is also rendered useless if any of the original 3 files is missing.

If the database should be rendered non-functional for any reason, the data may possibly be retrieved using the backup files automatically stored as bak.*. Even in the case of Hardware failure the original files are left unchanged, as A Plan does it's work entirely in the temporary file, and saves the information permanently to the originals with the Save option.

Program Structure

A Folder is characterized by the following data fields:

- Sort Index (0 to 99)
- Description (max. 50 Characters)

Projects and Tasks are identically structured. A project can serve as a collection of Tasks, or as a Task in itself comprised of many smaller detailed Tasks.

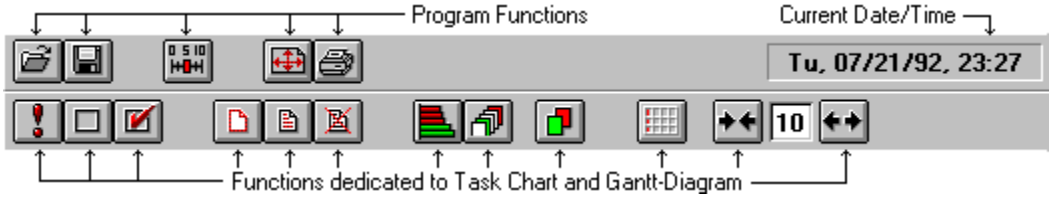
Projects and Tasks consist of the following data fields, where all of the fields are optional:

- Priority (1 to 5)
- Description (max. 50 Characters)
- Contractor (max. 30 Characters)
- Worker (max. 30 Characters)
- Entry date
- Starting Date
- Reminder Date
- Deadline
- Finishing Note incl. Ending Date
- Note (max. 32.000 Characters)

Toolbars

Underneath the menu bar there are 2 Rows of buttons called icons. These are collectively referred to as Toolbars. These lines also contain the current date and the Time.

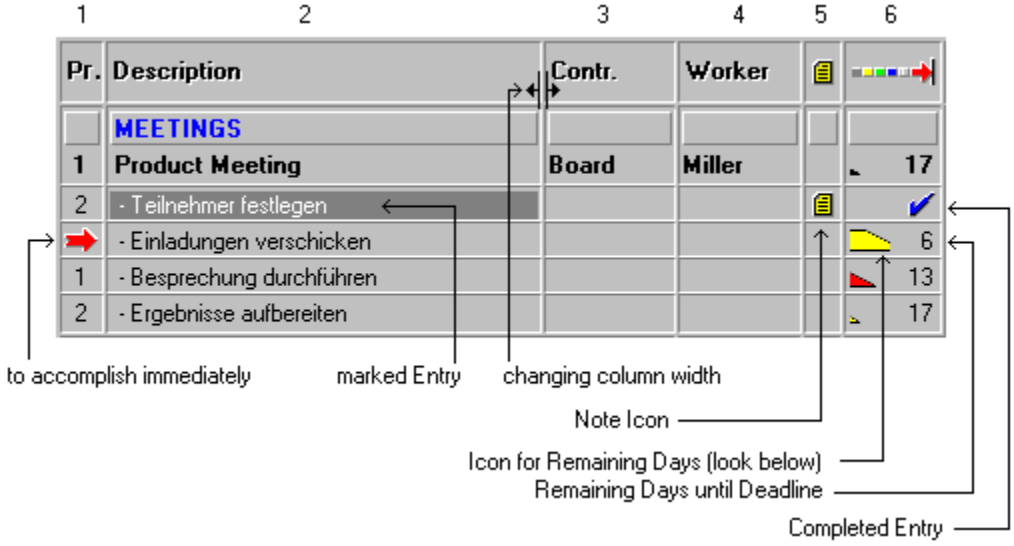
The upper icons call Program Functions such as File:, Print:, and Program Settings. The lower row dedicates itself to the Gannt Diagram and the displayed entries.



(Click on the buttons you want to know more about.)

Task Chart

The data entries that have been chosen for display (see Reminder, Incomplete Entries, Completed Entries, Filter) will also be shown in a Diagram. FOLDERS are shown in blue caps, Projects in Boldface and Tasks in normal Font Size.

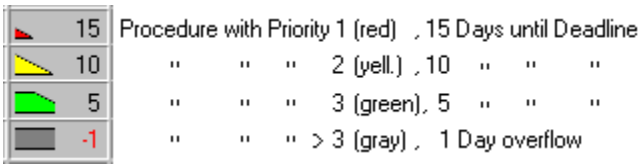


Contents of the columns:

1 Priority (Sort Index for Folders)
2 Description
3 Contractor
4 Worker
5 Note Icon (if a note for that task exists)
6 Number of days until deadline. (if less than 20, also with a small graphical image)

The Column Width can be steplessly ad justed.

Meaning of the Icons for the Time Remaining (Column 6):



Color and Size of Icons for Time remaining depend on the Priority and number of days that remain until deadline date is approached.

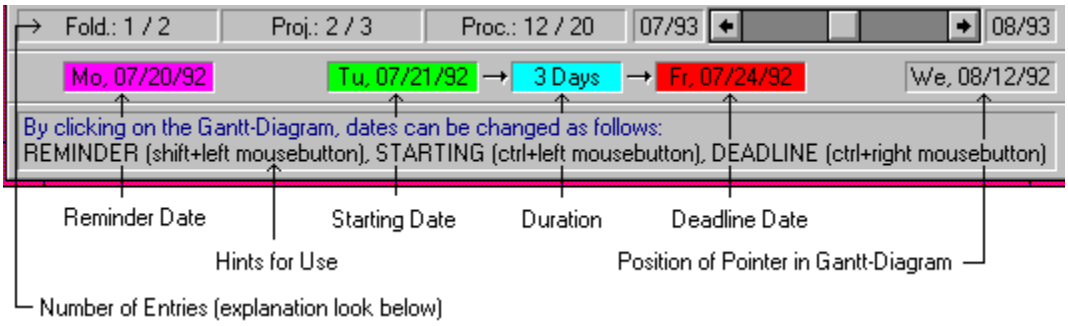
see also:

Clicking the descriptions

Clicking the Descriptions

Column	Mouse button	Function
1 (Priority)	left	Mark with Arrow (Toggle)
2 (Description)	left	Mark Entry
	right	Show/Change/Edit Entry
5 (Notes)	left (hold)	Show notes
	right	Enter/Change/Delete Note
6 (Time Remainder)	left	Mark as completed (Toggle)
7 (Gantt-Diagram)	shift + left	Set/Change Reminder
	ctrl + left	Set/Change Beginning Date
	ctrl + right	Set/Change Deadline

Footnote



Number of Possible entries:

The number of entries that were read in from the database is shown on the bottom (left of the slash) separated by Folders, Projects, and Tasks. To the right of the slash are the total numbers of that type of Task.

Hints for Use:

The Hints (s. Program Options) relate to the buttons or window areas where the mouse pointer rests.

Program Use

Basically the Functions of A Plan can be accessed either with the Pull-down-Menus or for the most part with the underlying Button bar (Toolbar).

The easiest and fastest way is usually the mouse, although almost all functions are accessible with the keyboard. When using the keyboard, you can move between fields with the Tab key.

By Clicking on the Tasks in the Task Chart or in the Gantt-Diagram you may access many functions directly.

See Also:
Toolbars
Clicking on the Descriptions

New

Should you need to create a new file, it is possible only by using the menu selection File:New on the menu bar. This will create a new file, and clear the screen to begin entry of the new Tasks. (New Task)

Because an ISAM-Database is capable of storing almost a billion Data entries, and every file can be further separated into Folders, this should not be necessary very often.

Open...

To open an existing File, use the icon or Open in the menu bar under File:. The usual Windows dialog will appear to allow for your selection.

The ending .ISD is set as a default for the standard ISAM database.(File structure). The corresponding .ISM and .ISF files will be opened automatically.

Save

By selecting the icon or Save in Menu File the permanent File will be updated on disk from the temporary file that is being worked on. Depending on the settings in Program-Options, the File May be automatically updated at given intervals.

Save As...

Also when a file is saved for the first Time (File: New), or when it will be saved under a New Name, the normal Windows "Save As..." Dialog appears to allow a Manual entry of various options.

If you choose to Save an old Database under a New Name, the old Information will be duplicated in a New File and the old File remains unchanged. You may also use the File Manager from Windows to delete any Files that are no longer needed. Remember that the Database is actually comprised of 3 files. (Database-Structure).

Print

The Same Filter and sorting options will be used for printing that were used to display items on the screen. Selecting the icon or Print in Menu File under Print Options... accomplishes the Same Task.

Printer Setup...

If several printer drivers are installed for Windows, this Option will allow you to install and setup the printer of your choice.

This function is also available under Print Options....

In this Dialog you may also Set the Page orientation (Portrait or Landscape)

See also:

Print Options...

Print Options...

Printing is an analog function of the display in tabular Form with an integrated Gannt Diagram. All Sizes are drawn relative to the font size selected on screen. This insures that the complete Diagram is proportional and the columns are optically correct.

By selecting Print Options... in Menu Options, you Can determine the contents of the printed chart to your personal need.

Selection of Printable Columns:

The Printable columns can be selected or de selected, and the with of the columns "Description", "Contractor", and "Worker" Can also be steplessly changed. The value displayed in the field "free" is an indicator of How Much space remains before reaching the right margin of the printed Page. As Long As this number remains positive, no Data will be truncated by printing to fit on the page.

Gantt-Diagram:

When printing the Gannt-Diagram, the value in the field "free" is always "0" because the Diagram will fill all remaining space on the printed Page even if no Task remain with deadlines further than the display allows. Normally the margin is also a little larger than the margin setting, As only complete weeks or months will be printed.

If you are one of the few with a color printer, the timebar of the Gannt Diagram Can also be printed in color. If not, the lines are distinguishable by varying fill patterns of stripes. If the Option "color" is active, But you possess only a Black and White printer, you will receive a printout in grayscales.

If the given calendar dates can't be printed on a Single sheet of paper, A Plan will print as many pages As needed with non-overlapping borders. Of course you may Set the display for a smaller pixel/day ratio and print a larger time frame on a Single sheet of paper.

The values that are used for the columns representing days are constant pixels and the Rest of the Table will be drawn relative to the fonts chosen in Their respective fields.(Screen Display),

Notes:

Notes can be printed under the chart, or as a separate document. As it is possible for several charts to be concatenated vertically, having the notes printed As footnotes is possibly More a hindrance than a Help.

(If a Note is to be printed, but no longer fits on the printed Page, Then a form feed occurs, and the Note is printed together with it's corresponding chart Data on a New Page. In this case, it is possible that a printed Page Not be completely filled.

Margin Settings:

The margins can be Set in Millimeters hat the upper Right of the Dialog. In the middle you See the Page orientation.(Portrait or Landscape)

Fonts:

The printer fonts serve to distinguish between headnotes, Tables, and notes.

By selecting the normal window font Dialog appears to allow changing the type style.

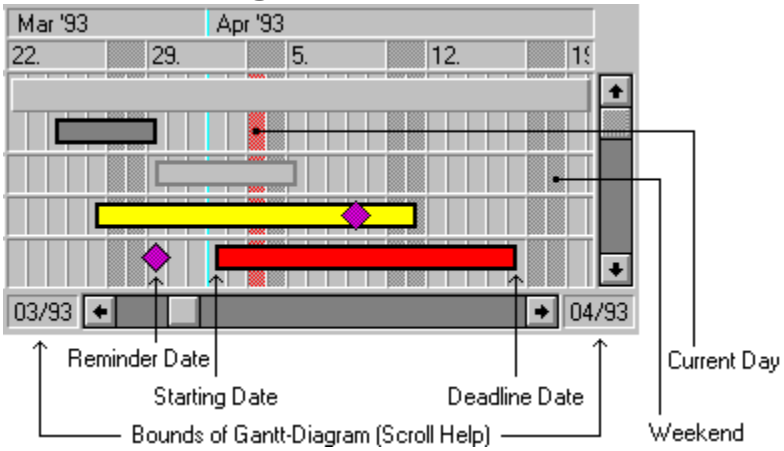
The settings in the column Type style have no effect, As A Plan Sets These automatically.

Printer:

The Printer can also be Set with .(i.e. Selection of Portrait or Landscape)

See also:
Gannt Diagram
Notes...

Gannt Diagram



The colors of the Timeline in the Gantt Diagram are ordered by the Priority of the task(1=red, 2=yellow, 3=green, 4 and 5 = dark gray). Completed Entries are "colorless" (shown only with a frame). The violet diamonds mark the corresponding Reminder Date.

Setting the desired display area:

The date fields to the left and right of the Horizontal scrollbar show the range of dates that will be displayed on the Gannt Diagram after letting go of the scrollbar button. Use them to set the Diagram to your needs.

When the scroll button reaches the left or right margin, it will spring back to the middle of the bar, so that despite the relatively fine resolution you may steplessly scroll as far as needed.

By selecting the Gannt diagram will automatically be set to display the week containing the current date on the far left of the Gannt Diagram.

The Resolution can be set with

See Also:

Clicking on the entries

Notes...

Every Project and Task may include a Note of up to 32,000 characters.

The notes window is opened by clicking on (

) with the Right mouse button. At that point it may also be deleted.

If a Note exists for an entry, the .symbol will appear in the Notes column next to that entry. By clicking on this with the left mouse button and Holding it down, the first 6 lines may be viewed.

The notes are capable of all clipboard commands using the normal key combinations.

- Copy: ctrl + ins
- Cut: shift + del
- Insert: shift + ins
- Undo: alt + Bksp
- Page break: Enter

The notes window can be resized by "pulling" on the frame. The Position and size will be maintained relative to the main window.

Program Options... (Auto-Save etc.)

By clicking on this button with the mouse, you may adjust the following settings.

Auto-Save:
If a value greater Than 0 is Put into the Interval field, an automatic backup will occur that many minutes After any detected changes. (That means the original File will be overwritten with the New Information in the temporary working File.) If confirmation is required, it will be requested even if another application is active at that time.

Backup Files:

If the field Backup Copy is crossed, a backup copy of the database will be made before the original is overwritten with the updated data. This backup is named BAK.ISD and can be opened normally As any A Plan Database.

Confirm Deletion:

If confirmation is required before deletion of Files, it will be requested.

Help Displayed in Footnote:

The meaning of the icons and buttons or descriptions of A Plan functions can be displayed as a Footnote. The Help relates to the position of the mouse pointer at the time.

Fast Call of Entry Screen:

To reserve Resources, that are limited in Windows to 2 x 64k regardless of available Memory, the normal practice is to remove all Menus and Input fields that are Not in use from Memory As they are closed. This causes a small delay when the menu must be loaded again before any Input can take place. If the Memory requirements are Not a bother, or you must change or enter Data frequently, Then you may choose to leave the Data entry menu in Memory until further notice.

Reminder

By selecting this icon or Reminder in Menu View, all entries that have reached or overrun Their reminder dates will be displayed. Also shown are any entries marked with an Arrow .

Incomplete Entries

By Selection of this icon or incomplete in Menu View, all entries that are Not yet completed will be shown regardless of Their Reminder date.

Completed Entries

Use this button or the completed in Menu:View to display those items which have been marked as completed.

Sort Order...

The Selection of Sort Order... in Menu View allows many adjustments to be made.

The Sort Order of the Main chart can be dynamically changed.

Sorting the Folders:

Folders can be sorted by a sorting Index, or in alphabetical Order. The display of the Index can be hidden or turned off also.

Sorting of Projects and Tasks:

Projects and Tasks can be sorted by priority, description, reminder dates, or deadlines. Combinations are also possible, except for reminder dates and deadlines.

Tasks without dates (no reminder or deadline) appear After sorting at the bottom of the chart.

Rem.: Should these tasks for some reason appear at the top of the newly sorted chart, you might want to edit the section of a_plan20.ini to read "Options" "WithoutDateLast=0".

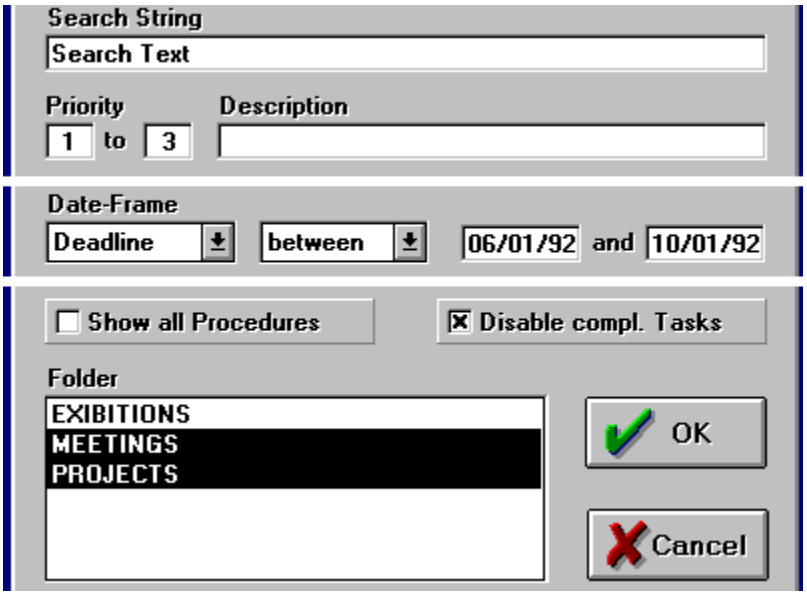
If the Option "new sort on change" is enabled, the Order of the Data entries will be automatically sorted as any changes occur. (s. also Re-Read Data). You should disable this Option if the sorting bothers you when you are changing dates in the Gannt Diagram.

Filter...

By selecting this icon or. Filter... in Menu View, you may adjust the settings of the display Filter and problemlessly display large amounts of Data.

After entering the Filter criterion, only those entries matching the Filter will be read from the File on Disk.

Example:
(to Save space, the window will only be displayed partially.)



In the displayed example above, a;; Data entries will be read and displayed that:

- contain the "search Text" in any field, including notes.
- have a priority between 1 and 3,
- have a deadline between 1.6.92 and 1.10.92,
- are not yet completed
- belong to the folders "PROJECTS" and "MEETINGS".

time frame:

By Date (Entry, Begin, reminder, deadline, and completed) are two simultaneous entries. The following entry possibilities exist:

- before
- after
- on
- between (incl. Lower and upper limits)
- relative

Using -relative -you can determine a Time frame that. for example, Begins ten days before the current date, and ends 20 days after it.(Entry -10 and +20).

Show all Tasks:

With the Selection Show all Tasks, the Filter will apply only to Projects already displayed. Tasks for any Project not displayed will remain hidden.

Folder:

In the Folder list are all folders that exist in the Database in alphabetical Order. By selecting or de selecting an Time in this List, a folder will (or will not) be displayed.

Rem.: The Selection or de selection of a folder is saved to the temporary File on Disk. For this reason, it is possible that the auto save or Save occurs at exit even if no other changes have been made.

The display can be further influenced by the selections criteria mentioned in Reminder, Incomplete Tasks and Completed Tasks. Naturally, no Data can be displayed that was not read from the File as a result of the File Filter.

ReRead Data

Updates of the Data displayed on screen are carried out by selecting this icon.

Rem.: Through changes made in the entries (i.e. dates changed or items marked as completed) the display becomes cluttered with entries no longer matching the Filter settings. The screen is not immediately updated because sudden disappearance of an Time may be More of a nuisance than a Help. The Data will only be sorted automatically if that Option is manually Set. Option "new Sort on Change"

Show current Date

If you have Set the Gannt Diagram so that the current date is no longer visible or easily manipulated, you may click on the icon or select View current date in Menu View. The Diagram will then display the week containing the current date at the far left.

New Task...

Click on New Entry... in Menu Entries to add an entry to the Database.

Folder:

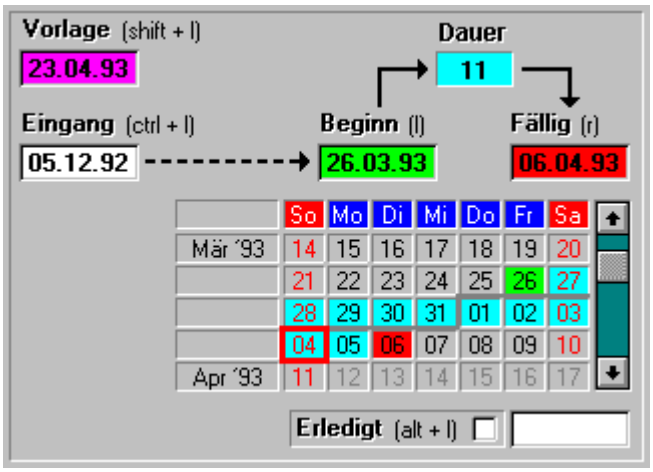
To insert a New folder, no other entry or item may be selected. (de selection is accomplished by clicking on the Word "Description".) In the entry window appear two edit fields: Folder (give the New folder a Name) and Sorting Index (a value between 0 and 99).

Project/Task:

By marking a folder, the Same icon will call an edit window to enter a New Project, and with a Project marked it will allow entry of a Task. In both cases, the entry of the Data is as follows:

If you enter a worker's Name for the first Time, it will be recorded in the List of human resources, and will thereafter be available as a Selection from the List. (s.Changing Worker's Names).

All dates may be entered directly into the colored blocks or by clicking on the calendar with the mouse. The required key/mouse combination for any given field is displayed in the Help Text as a Footnote on screen. (for example, the reminder date is Set by Holding the shift key and clicking on the calendar with the left mouse button.)



The current date is shown in the calendar with a red frame. The beginning of an entry is marked in green, the deadline in red, the reminder in purple, and the duration in light Blue. (when dates are entered from the keyboard, the display can be updated by clicking on the area to the left of the calendar.)

Task:

When entering or changing a Task, an extra Status line appears to remind you of the beginning and ending dates of the corresponding Project.

Also the calendar dates of the Project will be shown in Black. Those dates falling outside of the Project are shown in dark Gray.

Edit...

Any marked entry can be edited by clicking Edit... in Menu Entries, or even faster by clicking on it's Description with the Right mouse button. (Entry Window, Program-Options).

When an entry is changed, it is possible that it must change positions. (Depending on the Sort Order). This may be accomplished immediately, or be left to the user for Manual update.

Delete

Any marked entry may be deleted by this icon or through Delete in Menu Entries, or by pressing Del on the keyboard.

Important!:

When deleting a folder, all corresponding Projects and Tasks will be deleted. When deleting a Project, all Tasks underneath will be removed. If the Option: Confirm Delete is active, you will be asked if you are certain.

See also:

Program Options...

Arrow

Entries that must be immediately accomplished can be marked with a special Arrow.

This is done by clicking on the priority column with the left mouse button, or Data arrow in the menu bar. It may also be removed the Same way.

Anything marked with this arrow will be displayed regardless of Filter settings.(Options: Reminder).

Completed

Entries are marked as completed by the following:

- Selecting Completed in Menu Entries,
- Clicking on the Time Column with the left mouse button.
- Clicking on Completed in the Data Entry window.

The current date is used as a completion date, which can be changed from the edit window.

The Marker is a toggle, which means it may also be removed in the Same manner it was created.

Edit...

This function allows entry or deletion of names for available workers.

Rem.: The Button Cancel in the Edit Window is only active until a change is made. It is not intended to be an "undo" function.

Change:

The effected name must be selected from the List, changed to the desired entry in the editing line, and saved by clicking on the change button.

New:

Simply enter the Name in the editing line and Confirm the Addition with New.

Delete:

Select the Name in the List to be deleted, and Confirm by clicking the button.

Rem.: If the Name of a Worker is still associated with a Task, A Plan will refuse to delete it until the Task is changed or completed.

Handbook

Calls Write and displays the User Handbook. (HANDBOOK.WRI)

About...

Next to the Program Version number is a Serial number that is needed by us to Register the Program.

See also:

Registration

Registration

A Plan is a Shareware program in compliance with the requirements of Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP). It is therefore a complete Program without crippling of any kind.

There are no "Time-Loops" or any other registration "gimmicks" built into the Program, and the shareware Version has complete functionality.

Please Test A Plan for 30 days completely. You may also make copies of the complete, unchanged, and unregistered Program to give away. (If you have a registered copy of A Plan, simply do NOT copy init.dat when you distribute the Program.)

If you should decide within that time frame that A Plan has a value of $50 and you wish to use the Software further, we ask you to Please Register your copy.

When you Register, you will receive an individual Registrations number, which will remove the "Please Register" screen at the Start of the Program. (Also you will no longer wake up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night from your bad conscience.) You will also receive (pending availability) news of new program versions, and the possibility to buy inexpensive updates.

If necessary, we are naturally overjoyed to hear from you (also as an Unregistered user.) Further details on registration can be found by selecting "Registration Info" at the start of A Plan.

Compuserve users have the unique opportunity to register per modem over the Compuserve communications network. To use this facility, you would simply type in GO SWREG at any of the normal prompts. The number of our program in the database is 1514, and the registration fee will be $50.00, which will be reflected in your normal Compuserve bill. Delivery will also be accomplished over Compuserve to cut delivery times as much as possible. The file size will be about 40 bytes. (yes bytes, not kilobytes) and should occur within 3-4 working days. (Or faster, if i happen to pick up the personal mail.) If you would rather recieve a diskette with the absolutely brand hot new version in the mail, please write me a note at 100022,1400.

All American English-speaking users may use the address in Texas listed under addresses, and all other English-speaking users please refer to the address in Würzburg, Germany.

See also:
Address
Planned Additions

Address

German Original:

BRainbow - Stuttgart

English Edition & Support:

KLR PC Service & Beratung
Kirk L. Roybal, Owner

Mozartstr. 1
97232 Eßfeld

Tel./Fax.: (+49-9334)-85 50
Compuserve:
100022,1400

American Ordering Address:

PIK A Program
Bill Shor

13 St. Mark's Place
10003 NY NY
1-800-867-3447
Fax.: 212-228-5879

Please send a USA check drawn on an American bank, or a money order (cash, if you trust us) to this address. You may also use certain credit cards. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.

Planned Additions

In the next version all of your wishes should be included, provided that you tell us what they are. So Please fill out the questionnaire in "register.wri" and send it back to us. We are interested in your opinion even if you don't decide to register.

The following is likely to occur in the near future:

- Drag and Drop of entries into other Folders or Projects.
- Moving complete Folders or Projects on the timeline.
- Network capability
- recurring Entries (i.e. weekly, monthly)
- association of entries to one another.
- Export (i.e. to Excel, WinWord, other A Plan format....)
- task duration modifications. (Like a holiday planner)

The order in which this occurs depends largely on your input. Whatever we hear the most from our users (preferably registered, of course) will get built in first.

Naturally it is also important for us to receive news of Bugs. A Plan has been tested thoroughly, but it is impossible to test a program for everything. Please contact us if any problem arises from use.