

What is an Electronic Meeting ?

**Let's visit a
collaborative
work session
using**

GroupSystems

**Electronic Meeting System
(EMS)**

To give you an overview of how you might use **EMS** to assist with a typical task of risk assessment, you're invited behind the scenes to tour a meeting from start to finish.

This brief tour will show how a skilled facilitation team works with you to set objectives, design an agenda and transform abstract concepts and ideas into an effective action plan.

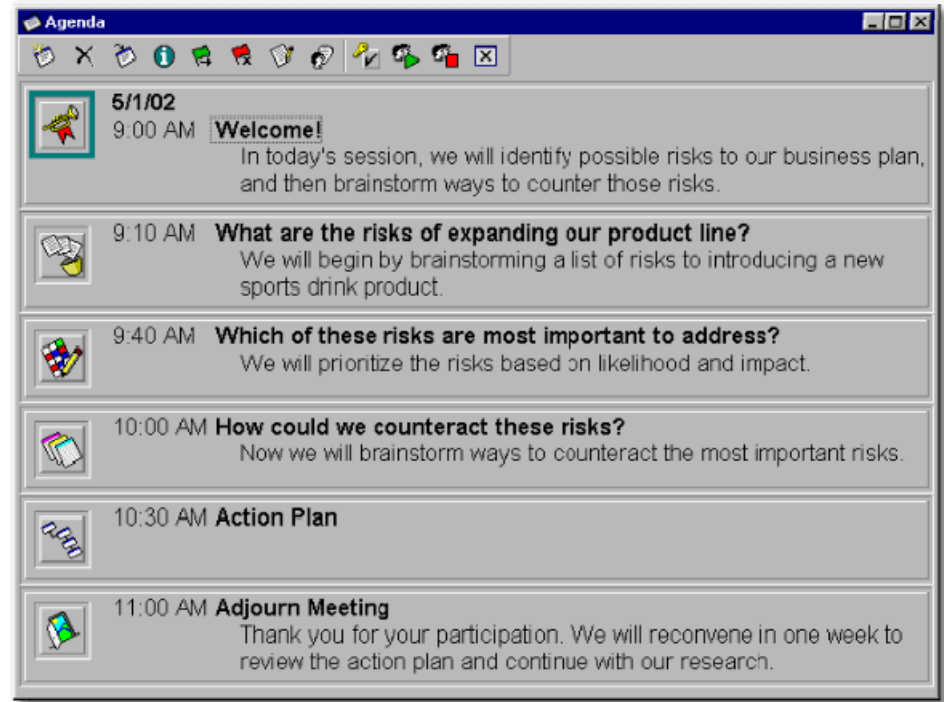
The tour also illustrates how this electronic meeting support software adapts to your needs to accomplish your desired outcomes.

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Prepare an Agenda

Before today's session, the facilitator worked with Sally (the meeting owner) to prepare an agenda. The agenda ensures that the group stays focused on the task and helps the meeting owner gauge the timing of the meeting.

The facilitator suggested particular tools in the meeting support software that best fit Sally's need to conduct a risk assessment. The tools were organized into a logical sequence that would achieve the desired result, then names and descriptions were added to make the agenda easily understood by the meeting participants.



The final agenda includes the:

Meeting objective (Welcome),

four activities:

Identifying risks (What are the risks of expanding our product line?);

Assessing risks (Which of these risks are most important to address?);

Mitigating risks (How could we counteract these risks?);

Preparing an action plan, and a final announcement of Implementation strategy; (Adjourn Meeting).

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Brainstorm Risks

At the planning session, Sally and the facilitator developed the meeting agenda and decided who would attend the meeting. Today, all of those people are together in a meeting room and each is sitting before a laptop computer. Additionally, the facilitator and a technographer are in attendance. The facilitator and technographer are both independent, impartial consultants who will not be affected by the meeting's outcome. The facilitator's role is to keep the group focused on the task and to control the *process* the group will use to achieve the stated objective.

After Sally reviews the meeting objective with the group, she turns control of the meeting over to the facilitator. He asks the group to think about the risks to the company if they launch a new line of sports drinks while the technographer brings up a “categorizer” screen on each participant's laptop. Everyone types in as many risks as they can think of. Each person also reads through the list. Several people are inspired by their colleagues' ideas to enter risks they hadn't thought of before.

After the group has entered risks, the facilitator leads a discussion to make sure everyone understands what each item means. The group decides to divide the list into two categories: *Short-term Risks*, which they will focus on today, and *Long-term Risks*, which they will come back to in a later session.

The screenshot shows a software window titled "What are the risks of expanding our product line?". The window contains a list of seven risks, each with a "0 / 0" indicator in the left margin. To the right of the list is a categorization tool with two buckets: a yellow bucket labeled "Short-term Risks" and a white bucket labeled "Long-term Risks".

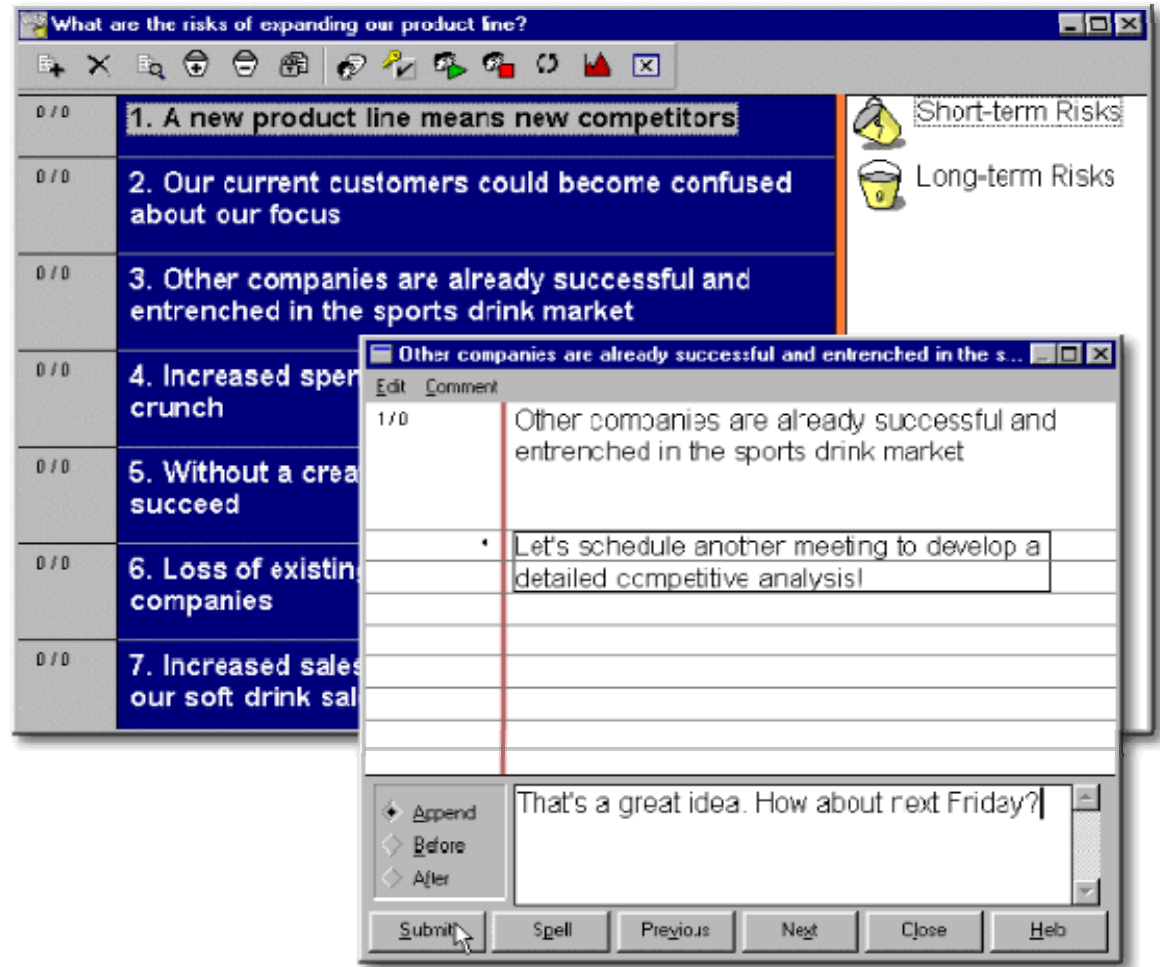
Indicator	Risk Description	Category
0 / 0	1. A new product line means new competitors	Short-term Risks
0 / 0	2. Our current customers could become confused about our focus	Long-term Risks
0 / 0	3. Other companies are already successful and entrenched in the sports drink market	Long-term Risks
0 / 0	4. Increased spending on R&D could cause a cash crunch	Long-term Risks
0 / 0	5. Without a creative marketing strategy, we won't succeed	Long-term Risks
0 / 0	6. Loss of existing market share to other soft drink companies	Long-term Risks
0 / 0	7. Increased sales of sports drink could cannibalize our soft drink sales	Long-term Risks

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Gather Additional Information

As the group discusses the items on the list, the facilitator recognizes that many of the comments may be of interest to the group later. He signals the technographer to switch on a feature so that participants can append comments to the risks they identified in the previous activity. The facilitator explains this feature to the group and invites them to use it.

The participants simply double-click on an item to enter a comment. These comments remain associated with the risks throughout the session and serve as reminders for future discussions or action items.



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Which of these risks are most important to address?

Rate from 1 to 10, with 10 the highest value. Previous Next

Primary List (3 of 7)
3. Other companies are already successful and entrenched in the sports drink market

Secondary List (1 of 2)
1. Likelihood

	Primary List	Likelihood	Impact
1.	A new product line means new competitors	10	9
2.	Our current customers could become confused about our focus	6	5
3.	Other companies are already successful and entrenched in the	8	
4.	Increased spending on R&D could cause a cash crunch		
5.	Without a creative marketing strategy, we won't succeed		
6.	Loss of existing market share to other soft drink companies		
7.	Increased sales of sports drink could cannibalize our soft drink		

Prioritize Risks Based on Likelihood and Impact

Now that the group has discussed the list of risks, they are ready to prioritize the list. While the group discussed the list, the technographer was busy copying and pasting each of the risks into an “Alternative Analysis” tool. This tool will allow individuals to rate the risks on a ten-point scale based on two criteria: **Likelihood** the risk will happen, and the **Impact** the risk would have on the business. If they desire, the participants can enter additional comments or even explain their vote

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View and Discuss Results

The votes are in! Results are available *instantly*; The technographer just has to switch screens. Now the group can discuss the outcome. Based on the totals, it looks like the most pressing risk to the group is the first one: *A new product line means new competitors*. This item has a high likelihood of happening and it would have a high impact on the business.

The results display shows total scores, means and standard deviations. However, there is even more information in the colored cells. Green cells indicate a high level of agreement among meeting participants, while red cells indicate disagreement. The group is tempted to discuss the green items, since those are the ones they agree on. However, the facilitator recognizes the red cells are where the work needs to be done and steers the group to focus their efforts on these items. Focusing the group on areas of low consensus helps the group to understand new perspectives and ensures the results are valid. The facilitator knows that this discussion is often the most valuable part of the voting process. If necessary, the group can vote again (the technographer has prepared a new ballot during discussions) but the facilitator feels they are ready to move on.

Next step: A graphical analysis of the results!

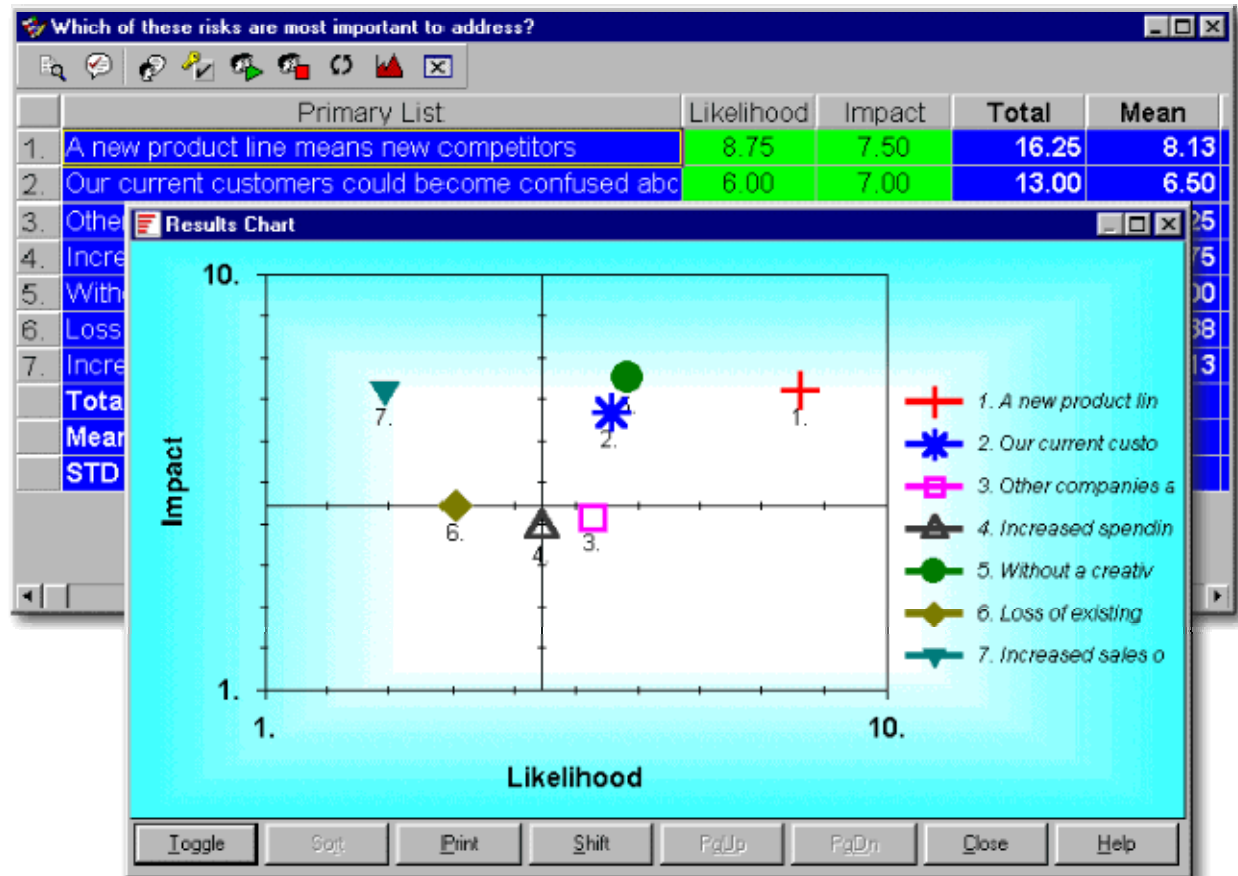


	Primary List	Likelihood	Impact	Total	Mean
1.	A new product line means new competitors	8.75	7.50	16.25	8.13
2.	Our current customers could become confused about our products	6.00	7.00	13.00	6.50
3.	Other companies are already successful and entering our market	5.75	4.75	10.50	5.25
4.	Increased spending on R&D could cause a cash crunch	5.00	4.50	9.50	4.75
5.	Without a creative marketing strategy, we won't succeed	6.25	7.75	14.00	7.00
6.	Loss of existing market share to other soft drink companies	3.75	5.00	8.75	4.38
7.	Increased sales of sports drink could cannibalize our sales	2.75	7.50	10.25	5.13
	Total	38.25	44.00		
	Mean	5.46	6.29		
	STD	1.93	1.46		

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Choose Risks for Further Analysis

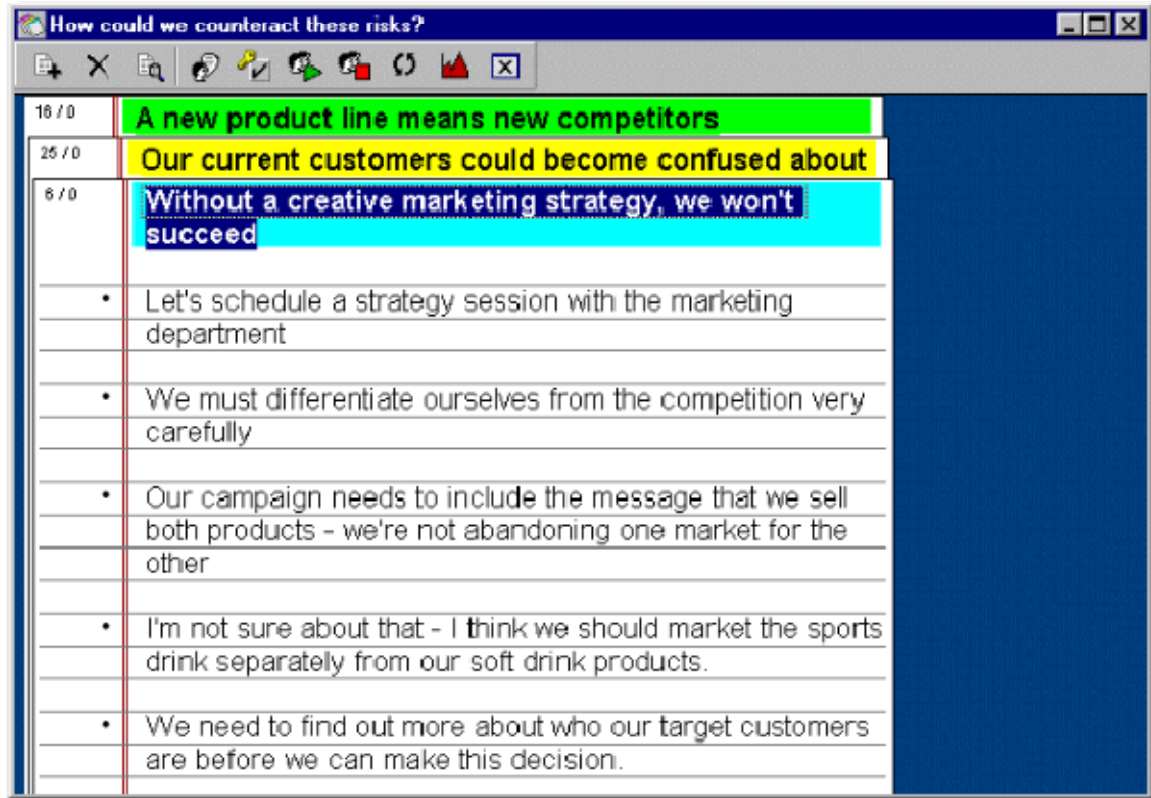
The next step is to determine which risks the group needs to focus on for the rest of today's meeting. The facilitation team quickly creates a chart to help the group better understand the results. In the chart, the criteria (likelihood and impact) form the "X" and "Y" axes, and each risk is plotted on the grid. The upper right quadrant of the graph represents risks with a high likelihood of occurrence and a high impact. These are the most pressing risks, and the facilitator will focus the group on them for the rest of the session.



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Collect Additional Input on Risks

While the facilitator explained the chart, the technographer was busy copying the top three risks into a “Topic Commenter” tool and sending this screen to everyone’s laptop.



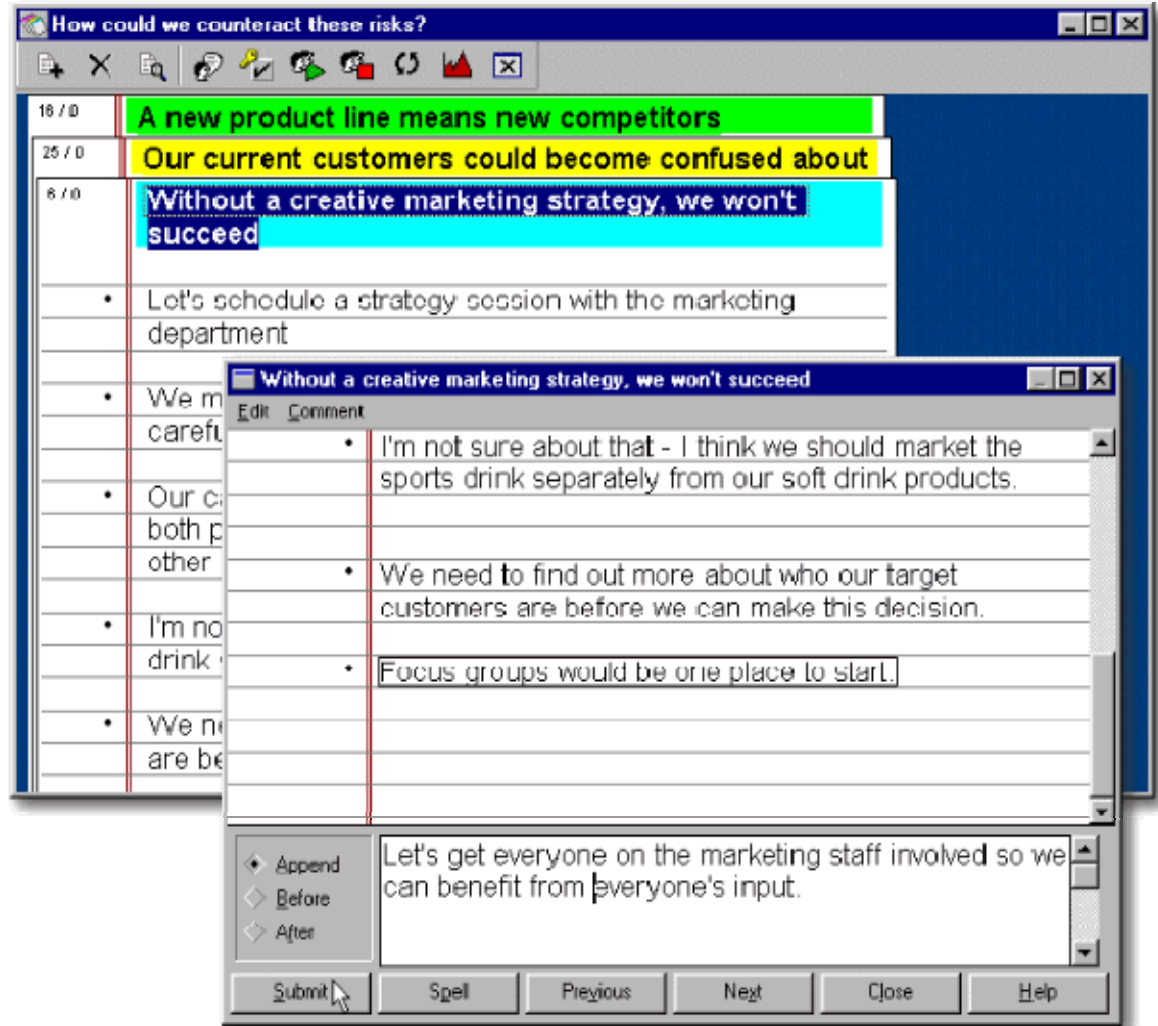
The technographer draws the group’s attention to the new screen and asks participants to enter additional comments, clarifications or questions on each risk. She wants to make sure everyone has a chance to input their feedback before the facilitator moves the group on to the final step of creating an action plan. As the discussion resumes, participants occasionally enter new thoughts.

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Review Comments on Risks

As with the previous tools, participants simply double-click to enter their comments. Even though several members of the team hadn't used an electronic meeting-support system before today, they find the interface intuitive and easy to learn.

After a few minutes of discussion, the facilitator asks the group members to carefully review the comments entered under each risk. They have a brief discussion and answer a few questions. The group has collected a lot of information... Now its time to turn all of this knowledge into action!



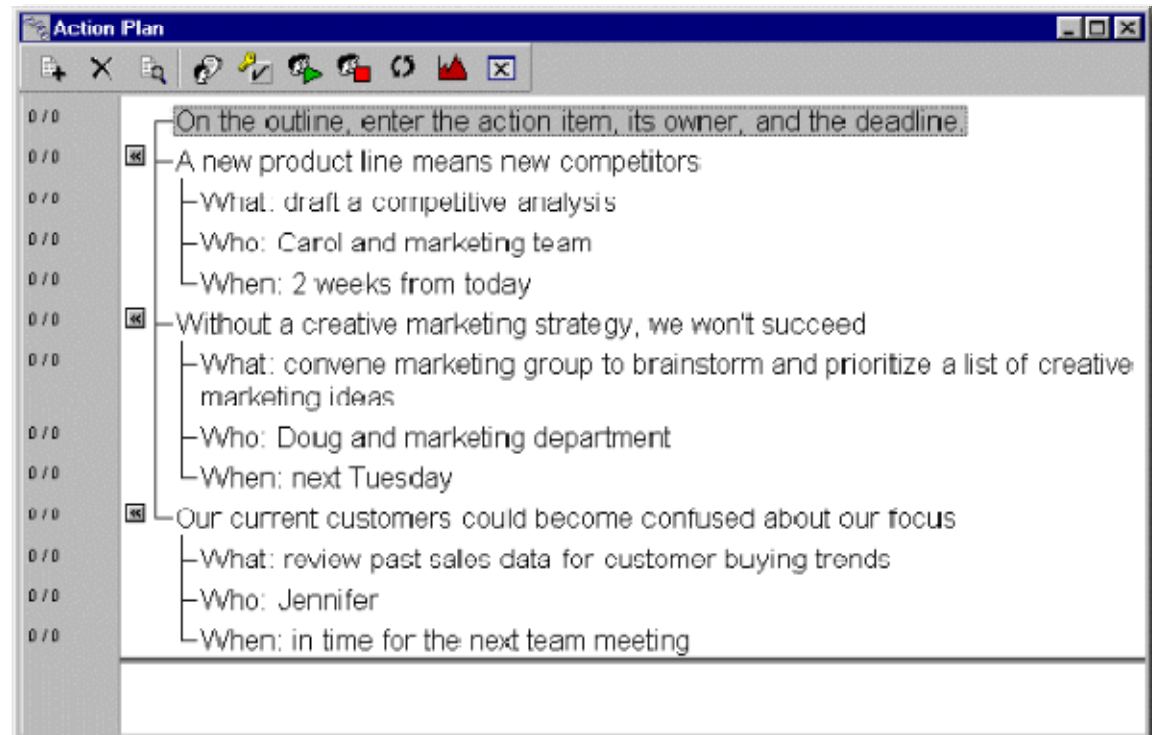
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Create an Action Plan

We have reached the culmination of today's risk assessment session: **The Action Plan**. So far the group has brainstormed risks, prioritized risks, and collected detailed information. Now the technographer sends the participants to a "Group Outliner" tool, which provides an ideal framework for action planning. The facilitator divides the group into teams and asks each team to complete their own action items, since they know best who should do what. The subgroups enter three items under each risk: **What** the action item is; **Who** is going to do it; and, **When** it should be done. They can also use the comment window to collect details.

The group has decided to reconvene next week to review progress. This outline will serve as the starting place for that meeting, and will serve as a reminder of everything that was accomplished today. The group will be able to build on the outline as they move forward with the product launch.

The risk assessment session has concluded... The facilitation team has just one more thing to complete.



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Create and Distribute the Meeting Report

The group members (and Sally!) are very pleased that they were able to accomplish so much in such a short period of time. They all have a much better understanding of what the new product launch will require. One final vote is unanimous: It's time for lunch! The group heads off to their favorite restaurant to discuss an idea that emerged during their session; the marketing team wants to use the EMS team to help them develop a marketing strategy for the new product. The facilitation team arranges a time to help Joe set up his agenda for that meeting.

Before leaving, the technographer uses the software to quickly create a report of the morning's activities. The report, in Word format,

includes all of the ideas, comments, votes, charts and processes the group worked with today. She prints a copy for Sally, the meeting owner, then e-mails a copy to each member of the group. When they return from lunch, they'll each have a complete transcript of the session in their inboxes... and a reminder of their action items!

