

# Working Smarter with Project Charts

## What you'll learn:

**1.** How to scope out your project with a mind map

**2.** How to create a project chart

**3.** How to use your project chart to more effectively manage your work

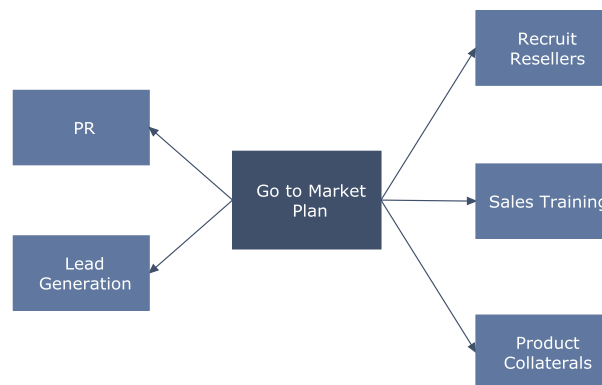
## 1. How to scope out your project with a mind map

Projects get completed on time when you can identify every task involved, how long each task will take, and who will be responsible for each one. The easiest way to identify all the tasks involved is with a mind map.

### Step 1: Identify each of the high-level tasks in the project.

As our example, we'll use a go-to-market plan.

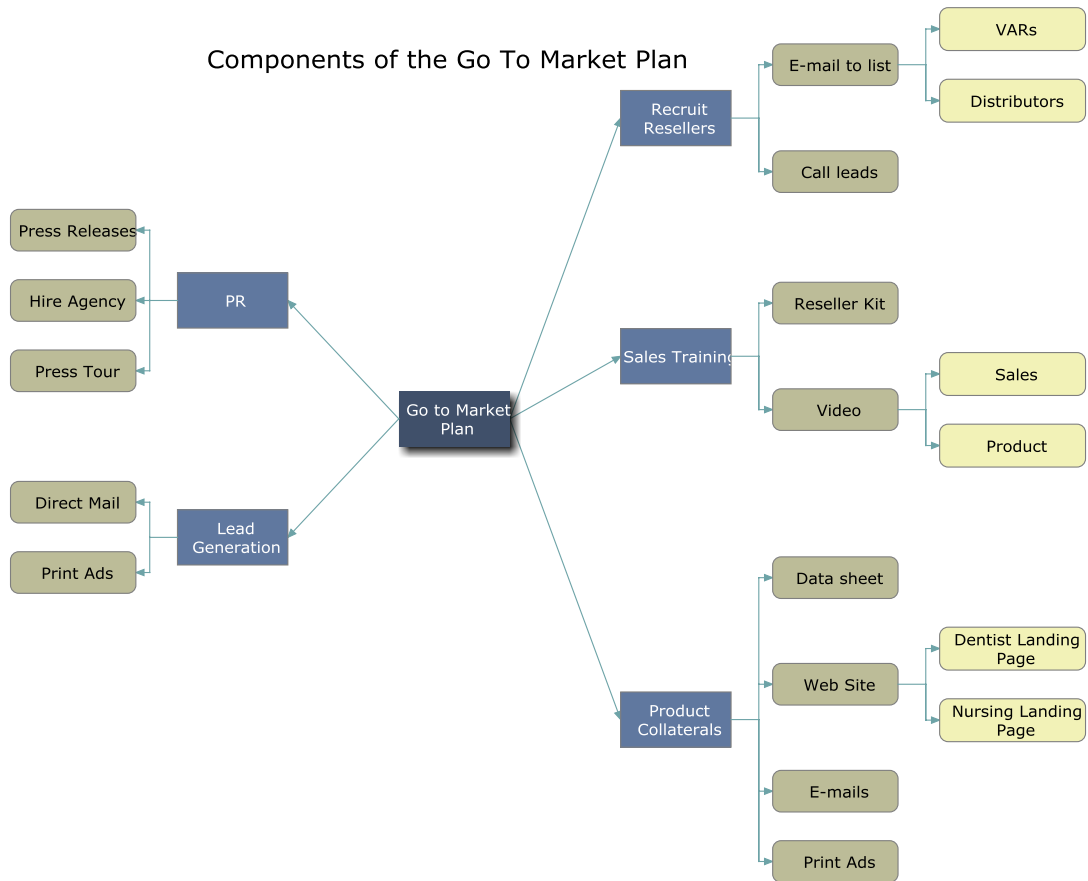
#### Components of the Go To Market Plan



It is difficult to estimate the length of complex tasks like these. It is much easier to accurately estimate the length of a smaller, simpler task, so:

### Step 2: Break the complex tasks into simpler tasks.

Simply expand your mind map to include all the sub-tasks for each.



Once you have identified all the tasks in your project, the next step is to apply timeframes and task dependencies with a project chart. Here's how:

## 2. How to create a project chart

### Step 1: Convert your mind map into a project chart.

Make each box in your mind map a line item in the second column of your project chart. Use the first column to number your tasks and sub-tasks as shown below.

(SmartDraw converts your mind map to a project chart automatically with a single mouse-click. You can also toggle between mind map and project chart views for easy editing.)

Number	Task	Start	End	Duration	2/25							3/3							3/10						
					2/25	2/26	2/27	2/28	2/29	3/1	3/2	3/3	3/4	3/5	3/6	3/7	3/8	3/9	3/10	3/11	3/12	3/13	3/14	3/15	3/16
1	Marketing Campaign	2/25/2008	3/14/2008	14	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 3/14]																				
2	Hire Agency	2/25/2008	2/27/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 2/27]																				
3	Press Tour	2/27/2008	2/29/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/27 to 2/29]																				
4	Lead Generation	2/25/2008	3/1/2008	5	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 3/1]																				
5	Direct Mail	3/1/2008	3/4/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 3/1 to 3/4]																				
6	Print Ads	2/25/2008	2/28/2008	3	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 2/28]																				
7	Recruit Resellers	2/28/2008	3/1/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/28 to 3/1]																				
8	E-Mail to List	3/1/2008	3/4/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 3/1 to 3/4]																				
9	VARs	2/25/2008	2/27/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 2/27]																				
10	Distribution	2/27/2008	2/29/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/27 to 2/29]																				
11	Call Leads	3/3/2008	3/5/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 3/3 to 3/5]																				
12	Sales Training	3/5/2008	3/8/2008	3	[Gantt bar from 3/5 to 3/8]																				
13	Reseller Kit	3/7/2008	3/8/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 3/7 to 3/8]																				
14	Video	3/9/2008	3/11/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 3/9 to 3/11]																				
15	Sales	2/25/2008	3/7/2008	9	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 3/7]																				
16	Product	2/25/2008	3/1/2008	5	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 3/1]																				
17	Product Collaterals	2/29/2008	3/1/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 2/29 to 3/1]																				
18	Data Sheet	3/3/2008	3/6/2008	3	[Gantt bar from 3/3 to 3/6]																				
19	Web Site	3/5/2008	3/15/2008	8	[Gantt bar from 3/5 to 3/15]																				
20	Dentist Landing Page	3/10/2008	3/15/2008	5	[Gantt bar from 3/10 to 3/15]																				
21	Nursing Landing Page	3/13/2008	3/15/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 3/13 to 3/15]																				
22	E-mails	3/6/2008	3/8/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 3/6 to 3/8]																				
23	Print Ads	3/10/2008	3/15/2008	5	[Gantt bar from 3/10 to 3/15]																				
24	Campaign Live	3/13/2008	3/15/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 3/13 to 3/15]																				

**Step 2: Assign lengths to each task.**

Take each of the simple tasks and enter the amount of time (in days) each will take in the “Duration” column (Software you use to create the chart should change the length of the bar automatically).

**Step 3: Assign start dates to each task.**

If several tasks are assigned to the same person and they can’t work on more than one effectively at the same time, start each of their tasks after they finish the one before.

Number	Task	Start	End	Duration	2/25						
					2/25	2/26	2/27	2/28	2/29	3/1	3/2
1	Marketing Campaign	2/25/2008	3/3/2008	5	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 3/3]						
2	Hire Agency	2/25/2008	2/27/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/25 to 2/27]						
3	Press Tour	2/27/2008	2/29/2008	2	[Gantt bar from 2/27 to 2/29]						
4	Lead Generation	2/28/2008	3/1/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 2/28 to 3/1]						
5	Direct Mail	3/1/2008	3/3/2008	1	[Gantt bar from 3/1 to 3/3]						

If a task can’t start until another is complete, make sure you don’t schedule it to start until the earlier task is complete.

The software you use should automatically calculate the end date of each task based on the number of working days required to complete it.

**3. How to use your project chart to manage your work**

**Update. Share. Repeat.**

A project chart should be a “living document” that is regularly updated and referred to by everyone working on the project. Once work has begun on the project, monitor the completion of each task and adjust the schedule accordingly. Be sure to share your updated chart with the entire team so that everyone has the “big picture” of how things are going.

### **Project Chart Software: What to Look For:**

Although project charts can be created with a word processor or spreadsheet program, software that includes features specific to project chart creation will save you time and make creating and updating your chart easier. Here are three key features to look for:

- The ability to start with a mind map and automatically generate a project chart
- Automatic adjustment of task bars when dates are changed
- The ability to export chart to common file formats for easy sharing

Watch how to create project charts using SmartDraw by [clicking here](#).

Only SmartDraw meets all these criteria. To download a free trial copy of SmartDraw [click here](#).