

Project Management Software Buyer's Guide:  
What You Need To Know Before Evaluating



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“By implementing EnterPlicity, we have experienced a tremendous benefit in our ability to communicate project information throughout the organization.”

-Tim Frost, Burner Systems International

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-Paul Neighbors, Lundeen Interiors

“EnterPlicity from Team Interactions gave us the best features for the price.”

-Daniel Moerschel, Xerox Corporation

## Welcome to the World of Project Management Software!

In today's world, becoming more efficient, doing more with less, solving organizational backlogs, and implementing processes that provide a strategic edge over the competition is essential. That is why project management software continues to be sought after by many organizations today in spite of economic conditions. Along with good processes, it provides a significant advantage, platform, and even a gateway into the workings of an organization to enable it to recognize those strategic advantages. As you work through the process of deciding which software system is right for you, EnterPlicity offers this Project Management Software Buyer's Guide as a companion to help you arrive at the right decision. This guide will help you understand the various project management software categories available in the marketplace today, and give you key criteria to use in evaluating different systems.

### WHY ENTERPLICITY WROTE THIS GUIDE

You might ask, "Why is EnterPlicity qualified to produce such a guide?" Good question. We have talked with many organizations that were attempting to properly evaluate and select project and portfolio management software. They understand the benefits and significance of using these tools, but struggled with identifying the right tools, understanding how to evaluate them, the questions to ask, and how to implement them successfully. Over the years, we have helped

organizations do just that, and also learned the questions that they ask or should be asking.

We believe that educated organizations make better decisions and achieve more value from those decisions. For that reason, we are producing this guide based on our experience to help you make an informed decision. We trust that you will find it a valuable resource in your search for project management software, or perhaps to simply help you better understand the project management software market.



## Project Management Software Categories

Many organizations struggle with understanding the available project management software types and what is available in the marketplace. Often times they simply do not know where to start.

We will attempt to clarify that picture by identifying the main project management software categories. This will not be a list of project management software packages, but of the categories of tools out there. For each category, we will lay out its characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages.

### Category 1: Simple / Stand-Alone Tools

This category is the most prevalent category in terms of usage. Most organizations either use tools in this category exclusively or use tools in this category in conjunction with other tools. The most common tools in this category are spreadsheets, e-mail, and Microsoft Project.

Common characteristics of this category include working with one project at a time. In other words, a person has to open up one project, and then open up another project, etc. to view each project's data. Another characteristic is that only one person typically has access to a particular project at any given point in time.

Yet another characteristic is that information is often dispersed throughout the organization. It is rarely centralized. That means that files for one project are stored with one individual, files for another project are stored with a different individual, etc. Unless an organization is really on top of things, this information is all over the place.

The benefits of this type of project management software are, first, that these tools are generally simple to use and understand. Second, people are often familiar with these tools. People are used to using spreadsheets, or Microsoft Outlook, or similar tools. Third, there is a low training curve. Because of the first two benefits, the training is much lower to implement tools in this category. Fourth, it is fairly easy to change processes because there is not a lot of rigidity in the tools themselves.

Along with benefits, there are always drawbacks. The first drawback is that information is spread out with different people and different files. Trying to do any kind of consolidated analysis is often very difficult and time consuming. Second, it is difficult to maintain. Because it is so easy to



store different types of data in different types of files in different locations with different formats / layouts, it is very difficult to have any type of standardization or to maintain it in a cohesive manner. Not impossible, just very difficult. The third drawback is that it is difficult to do any type of roll-up reporting. What is Susan working on this month? That is a difficult question to answer when the information is located in 20 different files.

When should you consider this category? This is a reasonable category if you have no more than 10-20 active projects and less than 10 people working on those projects. That type of environment will help to minimize the drawbacks listed above. Of course, you may still want to look at one of the other categories to obtain some of the benefits, but you can make this category work. On the other hand, if you have more projects or people than that, you quickly get into a scenario where it is very difficult to keep track of the project information with simple / stand-alone tools.

#### Category 2: Collaborative Tools

The collaborative tools category has emerged in the last 10 years or so with the advent of the Internet. What primarily distinguishes this category from the simple / stand-alone category is that information is centralized. Other common characteristics are that these tools are often web-based, meaning you use a web browser to access them (often times over the Internet), multiple people can utilize the tools at the same time, and the setup and overall use is not as difficult as more complicated systems. These tools are typically focused on collaboration and thus do not always have some features such as project scheduling, cost control, issue management, etc.

There are some clear benefits to this category. The fact that information is centralized is the primary benefit. The ability to view information in one place instead of in a lot of different project or spreadsheet files brings a whole new dimension to your decision-making capabilities (provided, of course, that the information in the system is accurate and timely). These tools tend to be fairly easy to use, and, in fact, they are focused on really keeping things simple. That means that it usually is not difficult to begin using a



**Tim Frost**  
**vice president of engineering,**  
**Burner Systems, International**

In my mind a project management system is essential in any organization. The key decision is which system to implement... our home grown project management system was not capable of communicating and reporting project tasks to our global organization. We have a centralized product development department in Chattanooga, and associates at each of our five manufacturing facilities must participate in our product development process.

Our approach to implementing a global project management system involved two components: a system for scheduling, tracking and reporting project information and a project management procedure.



tool in this type. Also, communication mechanisms are usually included with this category of tool, such as e-mail notifications or discussion forums. These help to enhance communication.

There are some drawbacks to this category. First, you will sacrifice some features for simplicity. These tools are sometimes “too simple.” For example, they often focus on simple task management without more advanced scheduling features. A lot of these tools often do not have features such as a Gantt view to enter dependencies and calculate schedules, or views to determine resource capacity. You manually enter tasks and give them due dates. Second, they lack sophistication for more “formal” project management. That just isn’t what they are designed to be. We are talking simple, straightforward collaboration. If your organization does not rely on scheduling, this may be the category for you. On the other hand, if you need to enter schedules with dependencies that rely on the tool to push schedules out without a lot of manual data entering, you may want to look at another category. Also, if you have a technical or collaborative culture or your team members are used to being collaborative tools, consider it as well.

### Category 3: Mid-Range Tools

The mid-range category of project management software has recently been adopted in the last 5 to 10 years with the advent of the Internet and the availability of web based tools. In fact, a number of tools in this category are web-based. The term web-based refers to the fact that a web browser is used to access the system, which runs on a standard web server (although in some cases, the software can run on your own server).

*“this is a good balance between the sophistication of the high-end tools and the simplicity of the lower-end tools”*

What are the characteristics of this category? First, information is typically located in a central database. That is usually a true, relational database. Second, and as already stated, another characteristic is that these systems are often web-based. Both of these factors mean that multiple people can access the system at the same time, and usually they can access the same project at the same time. Third, these systems tend to be more sophisticated than the simple, stand-alone, or collaborative tools. In fact, some of these systems provide a solid breadth of available features.

Fourth, and conversely, these systems do not tend to have the complexity of high-end, large enterprise systems built for thou-

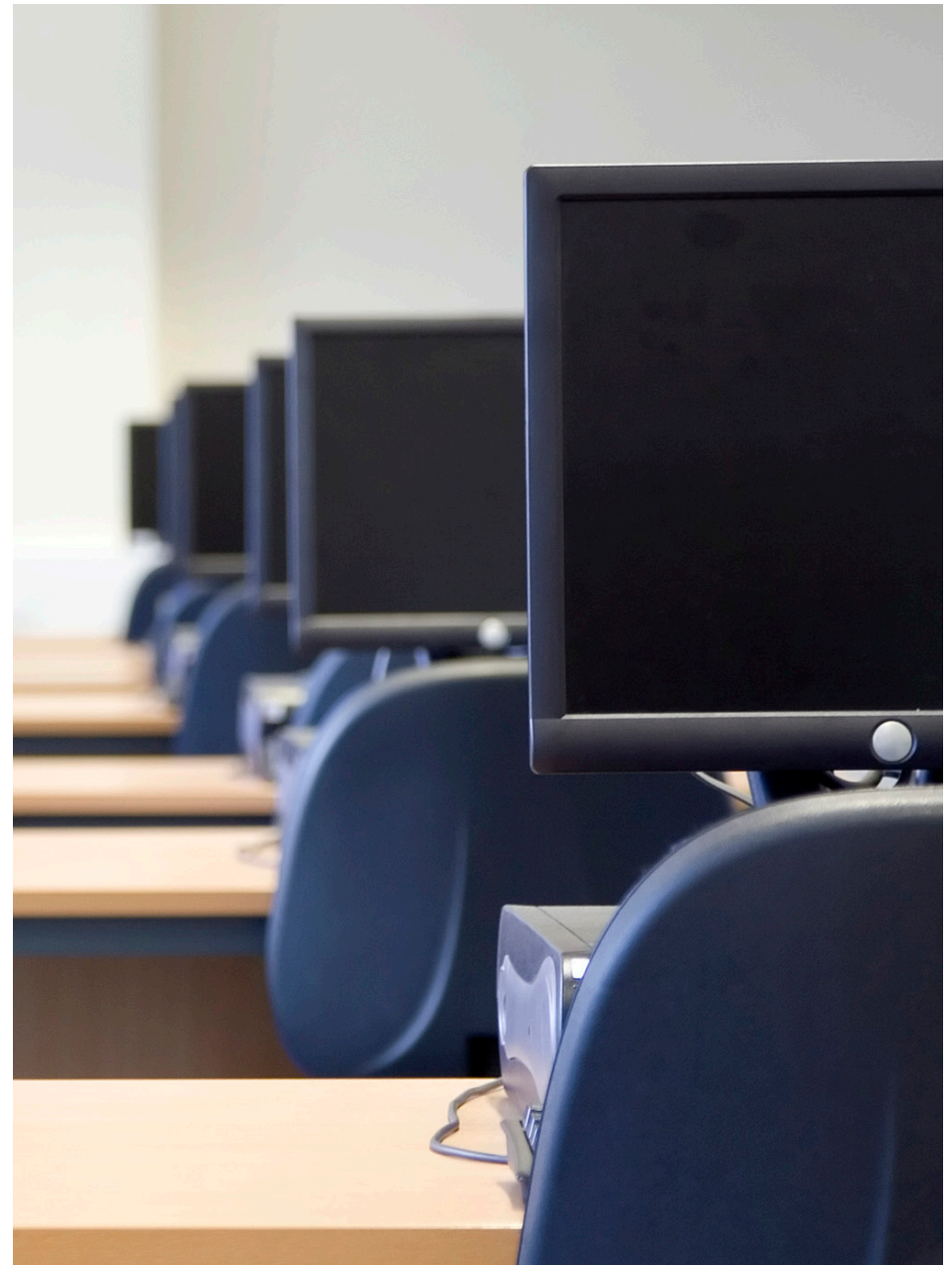
sands of users. As indicated in its title, these solutions are sitting in the mid-range.

Finally, the setup and rollout of these systems are typically much easier than high-end systems. This is due to the fact that the setup means installing the software on a web server and requires no installation of any kind on each user's computer (they already have a web browser). Many of these systems make it even easier by hosting the software for their customers, typically referred to as a hosted or software as a service model. This requires no installation at all. One simply signs up and logs in over the Internet. The downside of that approach is that the data is physically located at the vendor's site, which may be a problem for certain types of organizations.

The benefits of this project management software category are plentiful. Information is centralized. You can go to one place to find all the information about your projects. The systems tend to be easier to use than high-end systems, resulting in more usage. At the same time, you should have enough complexity and power to do what you need to do. Another benefit is that these tools tend to be more sophisticated than stand-alone tools. They tend to offer more features, such as resource management, crossproject reporting, and others. Finally, they also tend to include some of the features of collaborative tools such as e-mail notifications.

As with the other categories, there are drawbacks. We get to the point with this category where some thought needs to be put in regarding the initial setup. While these tools do not require the level of effort of the higher-end tools, we do reach a certain sophistication that requires some up-front planning to use them effectively.

Another drawback is that you may sacrifice some features when you compare these tools to high-end tools. Many organizations will be fine with this. Some larger or more complex organizations may find some high-end features missing.





Finally, some training is usually required. This should not be extensive training, but it's not quite as simple as turning it on and starting to use it. Many times it's close, but not quite. There is enough here to warrant a little time for training. Overall, this is a good balance between the sophistication of the high-end tools and the simplicity of the lower-end tools. You should consider this category if the tools you are currently using are simply not sophisticated enough for what you need, and you are not ready, not big enough, or not complex enough to warrant the investment in time and money for a high-end system. Organizations with ten to several hundred users tend to fit nicely in this category.

#### Category 4: High-End Tools

This category has been around for a longer period of time than the collaborative or mid-size tools. Characteristics of tools in this category are that they are very powerful, highly customizable, loaded with lots of features, require longer implementation times, and tend to be much more complicated. These tools are used to manage the project management functions of some very large organizations so they have to be powerful with lots of features to support the needs of organizations with thousands of users with complex requirements. Customization is important because the needs of large organizations vary, although this often means customizing code. These points make it inherent that the implementation of these tools tend to be much more time consuming and resource intensive than some of the other categories we have looked into, as these tools by nature are complex.

The benefits of this project management software category are power, power, and more power. These tools are highly scalable and can support large organizations. These tools tend to have brand recognition because they have been around longer.

The drawbacks are related to the complexity inherent in these tools. These are not the type of tools that you turn on and start using. There is a high learning curve and long

implementation cycle. That means a much higher cost as well. Often times, outside integrators and consultants are needed to supplement in-house expertise to implement these tools properly.

You should consider this category if you have a large organization, let's say more than 1,000 projects or 1,000 users. Likewise, if you have some complicated requirements that may be somewhat outside of the norm, you also will want to look at this category.

### Category 5: Project Portfolio Management

The fifth category has been getting a lot of press lately, and that is the Project Portfolio Management (or PPM) category. These tools are almost a hybrid in that some of them are mid-sized tools and some of them are high-end tools, while others are a mix between the two, with the characteristics and drawbacks that come with the associated category. It is our belief that a lot of these are turning into higher-end tools because there can be a lot of complexity that comes with the concept of portfolio management. Because of all that, characteristics of tools in this project management software category are a little harder to define. They may include characteristics of tools in the mid-size category, or they may include characteristics of tools in the high-end category. However the defining characteristic of this category is that these tools include a focus on portfolio management. A definition and discussion of portfolio management, especially from an IT perspective, can be found in many places. In short, you can think about managing portfolios of projects as you would manage a portfolio of investments. Projects are systematically managed in "portfolios" for better governance, return on investment, and management views. The primary benefit of this category is that they support the process of portfolio management, which may be important to a company that is heading in that direction.

The drawbacks of this category are two-fold. First, there is an inherent complexity that is added because you are now going beyond project management, and that must be represented in the tool. Second, many organizations struggle with getting their basic project management straight, much less trying to handle portfolio management. These tools may not be a good fit in that case. What that means is that you should consider tools in this category if your organization is mature enough for portfolio management, you already have well defined project processes and discipline, and portfolio management is a strategic initiative for your organization.

## Key Criteria to Consider

### 6 CRITERIA TO CONSIDER

Now that you have a better understanding of the available categories of project management software, and as you evaluate different project management software systems, you may find it helpful to compare them across six different core criteria areas:

1. **Flexibility:** Can the system adapt to how your organization does business?
2. **Ease of Use:** Will your people be able to use the system without an overabundance of training?
3. **Category:** Into which category of project management software does it fit, and does that category match with the needs of your organization?
4. **Responsiveness:** How responsive is the organization?
5. **Pricing:** Does the pricing of the system match the value you will receive?
6. **Features:** Does the system have enough features to meet your current and future objectives?

#### Flexibility

Organizations are different and unique. Project management software should be flexible to adapt to those differences. While no software will do this perfectly, it should be able to adapt to your organization's processes. Your organization should not have to change its processes to adapt to the software. What does flexibility look like? One of the most essential facets of flexibility is being able to create and modify fields and forms. If you are stuck with the built-in fields of a tool, it is very difficult to adapt this to your environment. You should be able to dream up and track almost everything you need to in the tool to eliminate redundant data entry and repositories.

Another facet of flexibility is being able to create and modify reports. Reports are such a fundamental part of any project management software system. After all, a big reason to employ such a tool is the ability to get at key information at the right time to act and make decisions. The ability to create and modify reports (including on your custom fields) is crucial to accomplishing this. Additional facets of flexibility to consider may include flexible security, views, and tracking additional data types besides projects and tasks (such as costs, issues, risks, or custom data types).

#### Key Criteria:

1. Flexibility
2. Ease of Use
3. Category
4. Responsiveness
5. Pricing
6. Features



**Krista Gettle**  
project manager,  
NORCAL Mutual Insurance

We purchased a tool...that was fairly rigid in its scheduling and resource usage. The management of the tool proved to be too much overhead for the nature of our projects. Adoption of the tool was slow and eventually waned when managers could not accomplish basic tasks easily. Instead, we needed something that was flexible enough to accommodate different styles while providing a global view of organizational projects and resources.



Find out what type of flexibility each project management software system provides. Create fields and forms that match your data tracking needs.

#### Ease of Use

Ease of use is a common term used to describe an aspect desired in software. But what does ease of use mean? Perhaps a simple definition is that users can utilize the software to follow your business processes without a lot of training. Find out how much training is typically required for users to begin using the system effectively. This will typically be different for different types of users: those entering and managing projects vs. those updating status or time vs. those running managerial reports for visibility. Most software systems allow you to trial the software. Find out how easy it is to navigate and do some basic functions. You may not be able to follow your process exactly in a generic environment, but you should be able to get a good feel for how to maneuver and perform common tasks (such as creating a project & running reports).

#### Category

Which project management software category does the product belong? Learn about the different software categories (see above) and evaluate systems that fall into the categories that fit with your organization's needs. For example, if you are an organization with a couple hundred users, you are probably not going to want a simple / stand-alone solution.

Ask initial questions to weed out products that are not in your targeted category (or categories).

## Pricing

While not the only and perhaps not even the primary criteria, pricing is an important consideration in any purchase and project management software is no exception. There are two primary cost models in today's project management software market: software as a service and installed. The software as a service (or hosted) model refers to the scenario where the vendor hosts the software for you as a service. You login to the software over the Internet. The cost structure is typically a per user per month fee that is continuously paid as long as the vendor is performing this service for you.

The installed model refers to the scenario where you install the software on your own server(s). This is not offered by every vendor. The cost structure is typically more of a traditional software purchase where you pay one-time for a perpetual license to use the software, along with annual maintenance to cover ongoing support and updates.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both models. Your short term cost will be higher with the installed model, but your long term cost will be lower. Your short term cost will be lower with the software as a service model but your long term cost will be higher. The software as a service model means that you do not have to worry about any technical considerations (the vendor does that for you), whereas the installed model means you have complete control over the data. Find out what each vendor offers and determine what makes sense for you.

## Responsiveness

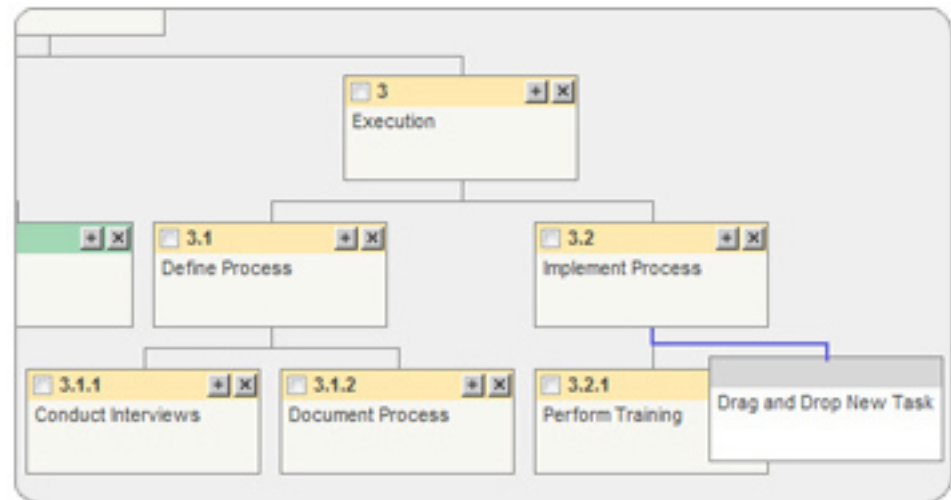
How responsive is the vendor? How does the vendor support its customers? Are they interested in truly helping your organization meet its strategic objectives? Can support be obtained by talking with someone or is it in only by e-mail? Are support personnel in the country or overseas? How often is the software updated? These are all questions that should be asked of a potential vendor to understand how that vendor responds to the needs of their customers.

One simple way of finding out more about a vendor's responsiveness is to ask questions and pay close attention during the evaluation process. Do you have a contact within the vendor's organization that you can tap into to help with your evaluation? Is your contact responsive and interested in your needs, and not just following a scripted approach to selling you software?

## Features

Features are an important part of any software evaluation; yet sometimes it is hard to identify the right features that are needed for your organization. That's why along with a chart of the six essential criteria, we have added a list of common features at the end of this guide that you can use as a reference and comparison. It is a compilation of general, commonly sought after features in a project management software tool.

In summary, ensure that the system has the core project management features that you need, and then determine what other features are available that you may be able to take advantage of either now or in the future. After you discover which features a system supports, understand how the feature would be used to perform your business process.



## Comparison Charts

Use these comparison charts as you research and evaluate different systems.

CATEGORY		EnterPlicity PM Software
	PM Software Category	Mid-Range, Simple Project Portfolio Mgmt
<b>FLEXIBILITY</b>		
	Custom Fields	Field configuration wizards
	Custom Forms	Form configuration tool
	Custom Views	Create view wizards
	Custom Reports	Create report wizards
	Other	
<b>EASE OF USE</b>		
	Hide unused features	With object configuration wizards
	All time and task updates in one screen	Done using the My Items screen
	Training required	15 minutes to 3 hours depending on role
	Other	
<b>RESPONSIVENESS</b>		
	Support options	Phone, e-mail
	Update schedule	
	Timeliness / quality of responses	
<b>BASIC FEATURES</b>		
	PM: Work breakdown structure	√
	PM: Gantt View	√
	PM: Sub tasks	√
	PM: Scheduling with dependencies	√
	PM: Templates	√
	Dashboards	√
	Portfolio Management	√
	Resource Management	√
	Timecards (timesheet)	√
	Cost Tracking: resource / direct costs	√
	Issue Management	√
	Document Management	√
	Risk Management	√
	E-mail Notifications	√
	Change Management	√
	Request Management	√
	Ticket Management	√
	Web Services API	√
	Workflow	√
<b>PRICING</b>		
	Delivery Model(s)	Software as a service or locally installed.
	Software as a service pricing	Visit <a href="http://www.teaminteractions.com/editions.aspx">http://www.teaminteractions.com/editions.aspx</a> for current pricing.
	Installed pricing	Contact <a href="mailto:sales@teaminteractions.com">sales@teaminteractions.com</a> for current pricing.

<b>CATEGORY</b>		<b>Solution 2</b>	<b>Solution 3</b>
	PM Software Category		
<b>FLEXIBILITY</b>			
	Custom Fields		
	Custom Form		
	Custom View		
	Custom Reports		
	Other		
<b>EASE OF USE</b>			
	Hide unused features		
	All time and task updates in one screen		
	Training required		
	Other		
<b>RESPONSIVENESS</b>			
	Support options		
	Update schedule		
	Timeliness / quality of responses		
<b>BASIC FEATURES</b>			
	PM: Work breakdown structure		
	PM: Gantt View		
	PM: Sub tasks		
	PM: Scheduling with dependencies		
	PM: Templates		
	Dashboards		
	Portfolio Management		
	Resource Management: manage / plan resources		
	Timecards (timesheet)		
	Cost Tracking: resource / direct costs		
	Issue Management		
	Document Management		
	Risk Management		
	E-mail Notifications		
	Change Management		
	Request Management		
	Ticket Management		
	Web Services API		
	Workflow		
<b>PRICING</b>			
	Delivery Model(s)		
	Software as a service pricing		
	Installed pricing		

## About EnterPlicity

EnterPlicity is a project management software system that centralizes all of your organization's project information and processes into one system. EnterPlicity provides a cost-effective, flexible alternative to high-priced, overly complex, and rigid systems for organizations that need to solve problems such as missed schedules, ineffective resource utilization, poor time tracking, scattered information, lack of accountability, and the lack of a platform to support better processes.

Learn more by visiting our web site at <http://www.enterplicity.com> or by contacting us directly at:

P: 760 655-4055  
F: 760 655-4017  
E: [info@teaminteractions.com](mailto:info@teaminteractions.com)

Team Interactions, Inc.  
256 Seaboard Lane B-105  
Franklin, TN 37067

