Using Issues & Risks

Overview

All projects encounter some problems during their life. *Issues* provide a way to identify and manage problems that currently affect the work. *Risks* provide a way to identify and prepare for problems that may occur in the future.

When you create an issue, you are identifying a current problem that needs immediate attention. The focus of the Issues process is to resolve the issue before it impacts the project schedule. This usually involves assigning someone to work on the issue and collecting ideas from the project team. Issues will typically be created and resolved in a short time period and will occur throughout the life of the project.

When you create a risk, you are identifying a possible problem that has not actually occurred, but which, if it did occur, would seriously impact the project schedule or budget or outcome. Creating risks involves much more that just announcing your worries. To properly create a risk you must document actions that you will take now to avoid the problem as well as preplanning a course of action to be taken if the problem proves to be unavoidable. Thus risk management tends to be a somewhat more formal activity than issue management. It tends to be concentrated at the beginning of the project life and usually involves the most experienced team members.

Project Gateway makes it quite easy to create, locate and respond to both issues and risks. In most respects these two classes of documents are treated alike. It is also possible to transform an issue into a risk and vis versa.

There are a number of common services that help you manage issues and risks including the following:

- The project dashboard maintains a color coded indicator that tracks overdue items and notifies the project manager when issues are not being resolved.
- The project profile provides statistics for issues and risks.
- The Observatory provides a time based graph of open and overdue items and notifies program managers when issues are not resolved.
- The ProjectGo Document Tracking agent sends a list of open issues to project managers weekly.

- The project policy can be set to notify the project manager immediately when a new issue or risk is created.
- The author of one of these documents can be notified immediately when a response is posted.
- Project assignments can be directly linked to these items so that hours spent working on the problems can be associated with the problem and with the project as a whole.
- The system generates both reports and Gantt charts for issues and risks.

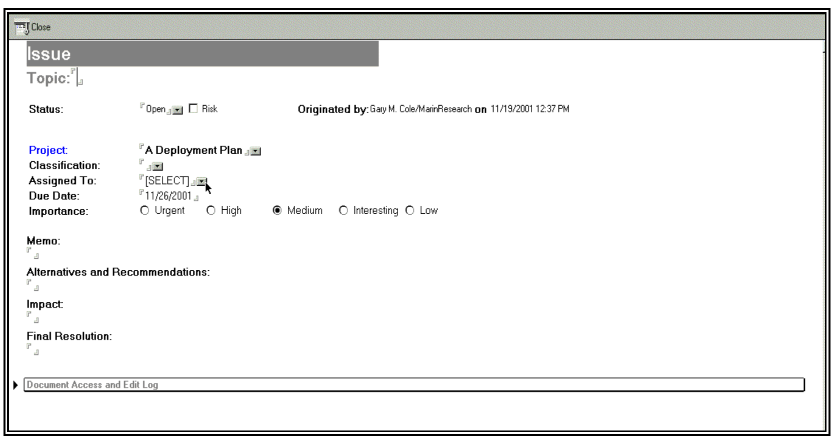
Issues

Issues are a blend of assignments and discussions. Like an assignment they are part of a project and have due dates and are usually assigned to someone for resolution. Like a discussion they are posted to elicit response from others in the project team.

Issues are usually associated with a specific project but this is not an absolute requirement.

Creating a New Issue

Selecting the "create a new issue" item on the navigator or using the "Create Issue" command from the Notes menu will open an Issue form.



Topic

Describe the issue in a short but complete way so that others will recognize it without having to open the document.

Status

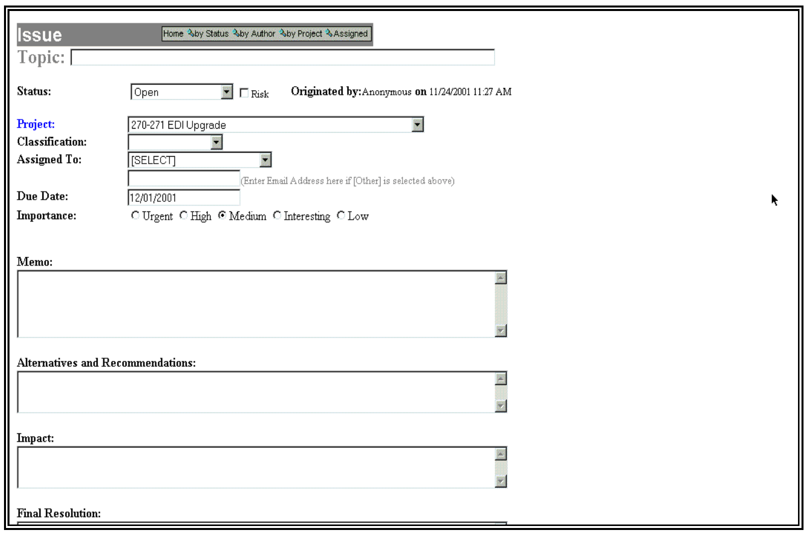
New issues are automatically given the status of Open. At some later time, you should change the status by editing the Issue document and changing the status to Resolved or Deferred.

The status choices can be customized for your site, so the choices you see may be different. However, there will always be at least one status for marking issues as open and at least one status for marking them as closed.

Project

Issues are normally associated with specific projects, although this is not required. The choice of project can be changed at a later time using the Associate action.

Unless preselected, the "project name" defaults to [Select]. The user must then select a project or [All] to save the document. This prevents the inadvertent selection of "All" for new issues.



New Web Issue Form

Classification

This field allows you to classify you issue. The choices available are normally customized for your site. For example, if your site does software development, your administrator may have provided several defect classifications.

Note that when an issue is listed in a view, this classification will be used as a subgrouping under the project name. If the project is "[All]", then whatever you enter here becomes the top level classification for the issue.

Assigned To

This should be set to the participant who you select to resolve the issue. When you record this issue, an email will be sent to the person named informing them that they have been assigned to the issue.

A droplist button opens the list of participants. Only those participants who have assigned email addresses will be shown. By selecting "[Other...]" you can enter any user name that you wish.

When used in a Notes Client, the selection of "[Other...]" will cause a new field to appear just below the first one. This field will allow you to select a person from the address book.

When used from a Web Browser, you will always see two fields. The second will be ignored unless the first one is set to "[Other...]". You must enter the user name manually into the secondary field.

Due Date

This should be your best estimate as to when the issue needs to be resolved in order to prevent it from seriously impacting the project schedule or outcome.

Issues become "overdue" if they are still open when this date arrives.

This field defaults to one week after the issue is created. Note that the due date can be changed by anyone with the right to edit the document.

Overdue Open Issues are shown on the Project Dashboard and can result in email alerts to the project manager.

Importance

Issues are ranked on a relative scale. The default choices are simply 1...5, but the site can customize this list to show a series of words or phrases. In any case, the choices at the beginning of the list represent the highest levels of importance.

The selection will result in a number icon next to the issue in the view.

Memo

This is a rich text field for additional information to clarify the issue. If you used Issues for bug tracking, you might put the problem examples here.

Alternatives and Recommendations

This should be used to describe possible ways to resolve the issue.

Impact

This should be used to clarify exactly how this issue, if not resolved, will impact the project. Will it reduce the quality of the result?, compromise compliance with a specification?, create additional labor?, complicate the documentation?

Final Resolution

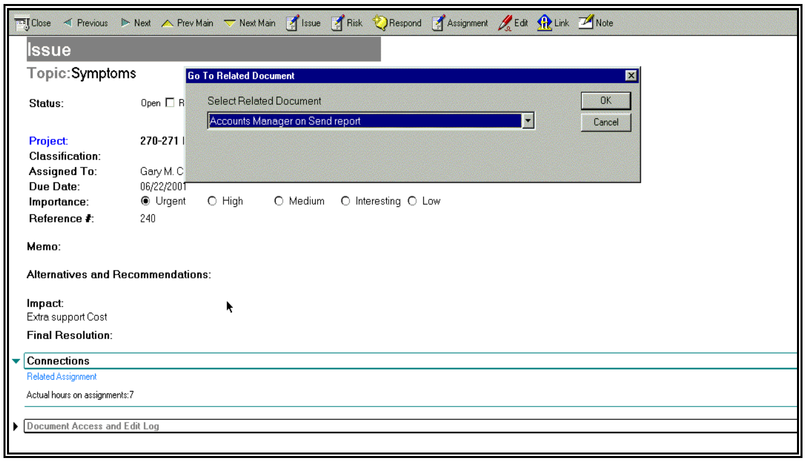
This field is where you record the way in which the issue was resolved, it should be used when the issue is marked as complete.

Connections Section

The connections section shows linkages between this Risk document and other repository documents. Such linkages are created when new issues, risks, or assignments are initiated using the action buttons, or when this issue or risk document was itself created using the action on another document.

Clicking on one of these in a Notes Client will display a dialog box listing the choices. Selecting a title and OK will open that document.

Clicking on one of these titles in a web browser will open the referenced document.



When the content of the connections area is clicked in Notes, a dialog is displayed to allow you to select which connection you want to open. Web users do not see this dialog because the individual items are hyperlinked to the related documents.

Actual hours on assignments

This shows the total actual work hours reported on all assignments that are linked as "related assignments" for this document. This information is updated nightly by the Maintain Dashboards agent.

Changes Made

This field is used to summarize the changes you have made each time you edit the document. The notes you place here will be made part of the document edit log.

If the "Require changes to be documented..." option in the associated project's policy is set Yes, then you will not be able to save the edited document until you write something into this field. Do not write gibberish as it will be recorded along with your name and date.

Document Access Section

Who can read this document?

This will be preset to "Default" that means that it will be visible to everyone unless a specific reader team has been specified in the policy section of the project profile of the owning project.

You may also explicitly select Everyone, or to limit read access to the author, project and system managers, or to any team. Note that everyone who can modify the document will always be allowed to see it.

Who can modify this document?

This will be preset to "Author, Project and System managers". It can also be set to Author & Assignee & Project & System managers if you want to allow the person assigned to the document to be able to edit it.

It can also be set to any named team in order to include a larger group.

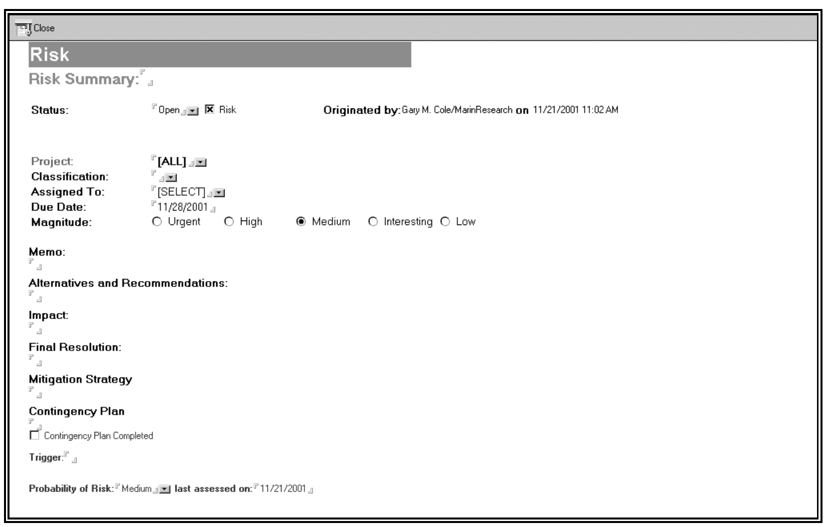
[ ] Notify on Response

Checking this will instruct the system to send the author of the document an email whenever anyone posts a response to it.

Risks

Risks are created to make the team aware of **possible future problems** so as to provide an opportunity to work out solutions in advance. If you already have a problem, it is an issue, not a risk!

To create a new risk, click on the icon at the bottom of the Issues and Risks navigator, or the Risk action at the top of the project profile.



The Risk Form

Risk Summary

Describe the risk in a short but complete way so that others will recognize it without having to open the document. E.g., "Server farm may be inadequate to support final testing requirements."

Status

New risks are automatically given the status of Open. At some later time, you should change the status by editing the Issue document and changing the status to Resolved or Deferred.

The status choices can be customized for your site, so the choices you see may be different. However, there will always be at least one status for marking risks as open and at least one status for marking them as closed.

Project

Risks are normally associated with specific projects, although this is not required. The choice of project can be changed at a later time using the Associate action.

Classification

This field allows you to classify you Risk. The choices available are normally customized for your site.

Note that when a risk is listed in a view, this classification will be used as a subgrouping under the project name. If the project is "[All]", then whatever you enter here becomes the top level classification for the risk.

Assigned To

This should be set to the participant who you select to development the mitigation strategy and contingency plan for this risk. When you record this risk, an email will be sent to the person named informing them that they have been assigned.

This field should be used to direct the Risk to the person who must take action to prevent or reassess it. Initially it is used to indicate who must prepare the contingency plan. Later it would be used to indicate who should be reassessing the risk as the project progresses. Each time it is changed, a new email notification will be sent.

A droplist button opens the list of participants. Only those participants who have assigned email addresses will be shown. By selecting "[Other...]" you can enter any user name that you wish.

When used in a Notes Client, the selection of "[Other...]" will cause a new field to appear just below the first one. This field will allow you to select a person from the address book.

When used from a Web Browser, you will always see two fields. The second will be ignored unless the first one is set to "[Other...]". You must enter the user name manually into the secondary field.

Due Date

This should be your best estimate as to when the risk needs attention in order to prevent it from seriously impacting the project schedule or outcome. This will probably be changed periodically to reflect the next time at which the risk needs to be reassessed.

Risks become "overdue" if they are still open when this date arrives.

This field defaults to one week after the risk is created. Note that the due date can be changed by anyone with the right to edit the document.

Overdue Open Issues are shown on the Project Dashboard and can result in email alerts to the project manager.

Magnitude

Risks are ranked on a relative scale. The default choices are simply 1...5, but the site can customize this list to show a series of words or phrases. In any case, the choices at the beginning of the list represent the highest levels of importance.

The selection will result in a number icon next to the issue in the view.

Memo

This is a rich text field for additional information to clarify the risk so that all members of the project community can understand exactly what you are concerned about.

Alternatives and Recommendations

This should be used to describe possible ways to resolve the risk.

Impact

This should be used to clarify exactly how this risk, if not avoided, will impact the project. Will it reduce the quality of the result? compromise compliance with a specification? create additional labor? complicate the documentation?

Final Resolution

This field is where you record the way in which the risk was resolved, it should be used when the risk is marked as closed.

Mitigation Strategy

For each risk, you should write a **Mitigation Strategy** describing what you are going to be doing to prevent the risk from actually occurring. A mitigation strategy might be to send people to skill training workshops early in the project cycle.

Contingency Plan

You should also provide a **Contingency Plan -** what you are going to do if this problem actually happens. A contingency plan might be as simple as a prearranged contractor agreement to provide additional skills or could be a very complex process. You may want to use a file attachment for this plan. It frequently takes some time to prepare these plans.

Contingency Plan Completed Checkbox

A checkbox is provided to allow you to indicate that the Contingency plan is completed. When this is checked, the appearance of the risk icon in the view gets a checkmark in it so that you can quickly tell whether or not a contingency plan exists for each risk. Do not check this item until a real plan of action is available.

Trigger

The **Trigger field** is a place for you to write a clear, short statement of the condition that should cause the contingency plan to be implemented. "If manuals have not gone to the printer by June 15" for example.

Assessment

Risks should be reassessed periodically during the lifetime of the project. At each reassessment, the probability of the risk and a new "due date" should be set.

Probability of Risk:

Set it to indicate how likely the risk is to occur.

Last accessed on:

This is a date field that you should change whenever you reassess the likelihood of the risk. Reassessment is more that just looking at the listbox. You should, as part of each reassessment, examine the Contingency plan to see if it is still appropriate and revise it if necessary.

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Clicking on one of these in a Notes Client will display a dialog box listing the choices. Selecting a title and OK will open that document.

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Actual hours on assignments

This shows the total actual work hours reported on all assignments that are linked as "related assignments" for this document. This information is updated nightly by the Maintain Dashboards agent.

Changes Made

This field is used to summarize the changes you have made each time you edit the document. The notes you place here will be made part of the document edit log.

If the "Require changes to be documented..." option in the associated project's policy is set Yes, then you will not be able to save the edited document until you write something into this field. Do not write gibberish as it will be recorded along with your name and date.

Document Access Section

Who can read this document?

This will be preset to "Default" that means that it will be visible to everyone unless a specific reader team has been specified in the policy section of the project profile of the owning project.

You may also explicitly select Everyone, or to limit read access to the author, project and system managers, or to any team. Note that everyone who can modify the document will always be allowed to see it.

Who can modify this document?

This will be preset to "Author, Project and System managers". It can also be set to Author & Assignee & Project & System managers if you want to allow the person assigned to the document to be able to edit it.

It can also be set to any named team in order to include a larger group.

[ ] Notify on Response

Checking this will instruct the system to send the author of the document an email whenever anyone posts a response to it.

Email Notifications

Assignee

When a new issue or risk is created, if an person is assigned to the item, then an email will be sent to that person when the form is saved. If no one initially assigned, but a person is assigned at a later date, or the assigned person is changed, another email will be sent to the new assignee.

Note that the assignee is the person designated as the send to point for the selected participant. It will usually, but not always, be the participant. If the participant does not have a send to name set in the participant profile, then no email will be sent.

Project Manager

If the "Notify PM about each new issue, risk, or scope change" option in the associated project's profile form is set Yes, then the system will send the project manager notification to the first 10 project manager email addresses listed in the project profile Send Message To field.

This notification would be sent even if no participant was assigned to the issue or risk.

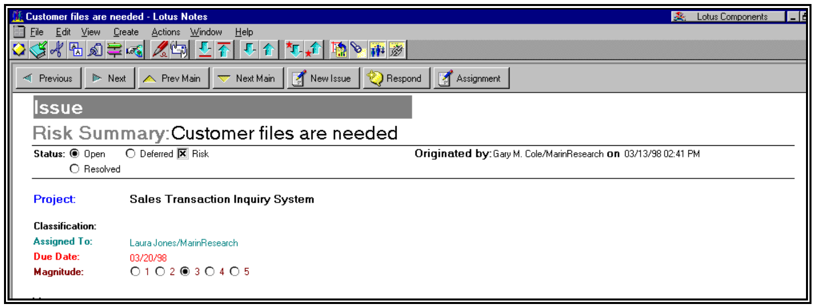
Author

The author of the issue or risk will be notified whenever a response is posted to the document if the "Notify on Response" checkbox is checked.

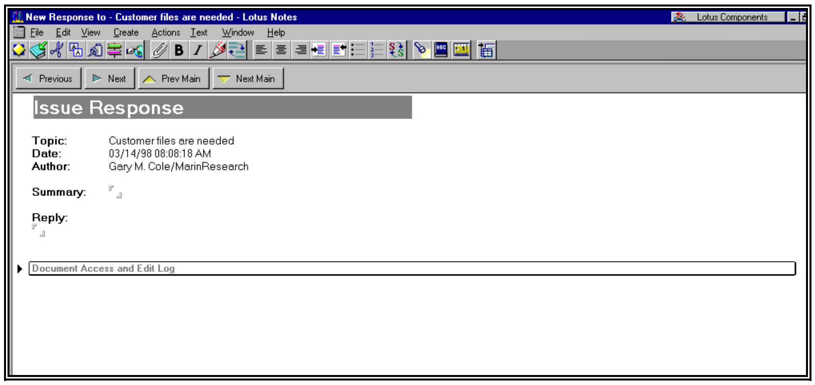
Actions Available for Issues and Risks

Respond

When you display an existing issue or risk, a Respond button will appear at the top.



You can respond by clicking on the "Respond" button of the form.



Responses will be indented under the document titles. A twisty will allow the responses to be displayed or hidden.

Associate

The associate action allows you to change the project that this document is directly associated.

When an issue is re-associated, the issues count for the original and new projects will change.

Links

The links action allows you to logically connect this issue or risk to any number of other projects. This results in the creation of one or more "Issue Dependency" or "Risk Dependency" documents. These documents appear in the various views under the projects to which the issue or risk is being logically connected.

You use this function when you want to inform other project teams that your issue or risk may also affect them. Creating these dependencies does not change the number of open issues on the other projects, but it does cause your issue to appear in views and reports listings issues/risks for those projects

Note

The Note action allows anyone to send a quick note to the author or project manager of an issue. See the chapter entitled "Using Note and Journal"

Issue & Risk

These create new documents that will be preset to the current project and will be cross-connected to the originating issue or risk. When such are created, you will find a "Related" entry shown in the "Connections" section of both documents.

Assignment

This will create a New Assignment form on which the project name will be preset to the current project and the task name will be preset to the name of the issue or risk. You need to select the participants, dates and effort to complete the form.

When an assignment is created from this action, a hotlink is created in the assignment form that is labeled "Related Issue". At the same time, a hotlink is created in the Issue document that is labeled "Related Assignment **-** <participant name>".

At any later time, you can use these links to check the status of the corresponding item.

Essentially you are creating a special kind of assignment. The work done on this kind of assignment will be tabulated as *issue actual work* on the project profile, and will displayed in the ***actual hours on assignments*** field on the originating Issue or Risk form.

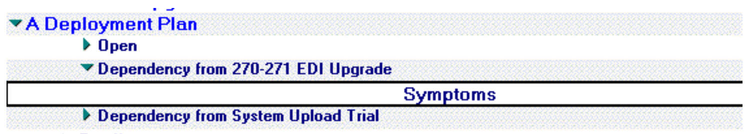
Views of Issues and Risks

This Issues and Risks Navigator provides six views for Issues and six views for Risks. There is also a "calendar" view that shows all Issues and Risks by due date. More specific calendars can be created using the Todo actions on project and program profile documents.

by Project

Documents are indexed by project name and then by classification and then by status and by due date. Responses are shown indented under the document title. Documents without any classification appear first.

Dependencies appear under the heading of the affected project as if they were additional status categories. A dependency category is created for each contributing project.



by Author

Documents are indexed by author name and then by status, project, classification and then by due date. This view will show documents that have been created by each person.

by Status

This view is classified first by status and then by project and by classification.

by Classification

This view is grouped by classification, then by project, status and due date.

by Program

This view is grouped by program, then by project within the program, and then by classification and status.

Assigned

This view will show documents grouped by the person to whom they are assigned.

View Icons

Importance/Magnitude are designated by gold icons containing the numbers 1 through 5.

Risk issues are identified by icons resembling eyeglasses. Those with completed contingency plans have a red checkmark next to the glasses.

Interconverting Risks and Issues

These two document types have been deliberately designed to be very similar so that a document created in one form can be switched to the other.

For example, early in the project you may create a risk. Six months later, the risk has actually occurred and so needs to become an issue.

Converting a Risk in to an Issue (Notes)

1. Open the Risk document.
2. Uncheck the "Risk" checkbox. This will cause the form to transform itself into any Issue.
3. Revise the status, etc., as appropriate.
4. Close and Save.

Converting an Issue into a Risk (Notes)

1. Open the Issue document
2. Check the Risk checkbox
3. Revise the status, etc. as appropriate
4. Write a mitigation strategy, contingency plan, and trigger condition.
5. Close and Save

Converting a Risk into an Issue (Web)

1. Edit the Risk document
2. Uncheck the Risk checkbox.
3. Submit the Form
4. On the Response page, click the "Open this issue document" link.
5. Edit the Issue document to make any required changes.
6. Submit.

Converting an Issue into a Risk (Web)

1. Edit the Issue Document
2. Check the Risk Checkbox
3. Submit
4. On the Response page, click the "Open this risk document" link.
5. Edit the Risk document to add a mitigation strategy, contingency plan, and trigger condition.
6. Submit.