

# JPWF Tier 2 Research

Assess existing solutions for Mary Manager

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## **Direct competitors:**

Do what we do, solve what we solve

## **1. Karbon**

### **What they do:**

*What is their purpose? What is their product all about?*

- “Karbon is collaborative work management software for accounting firms...”

### **Key product features:**

*What do they offer? What do they emphasise?*

### **Product video:**

- Emphasis on single place to communicate and collaborate for your team and your clients
- Page: Team capacity overview and management

## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research

The screenshot shows the Karbon Work dashboard. At the top, there's a 'Capacity Dashboard' section with filters for 'Work type: Accounting' and 'Due date: Next Month'. Below this, a summary bar shows '75 Work Items', '\$40,550.00 Budget USD', and '452h 30m Estimated Time'. The main area is divided into columns for team members: Frank Abernathy, Lachlan Macindoe, Richard Snell, Sara Goepel, and Scott Gerdzunas. Each column lists tasks with details like 'Monthly Accounting w/ Client Tasks Oct 2019', 'Worked Industries Planned', 'Due Nov 10', 'Type: Accounting', and 'Estimated Time: 6h 0m'.

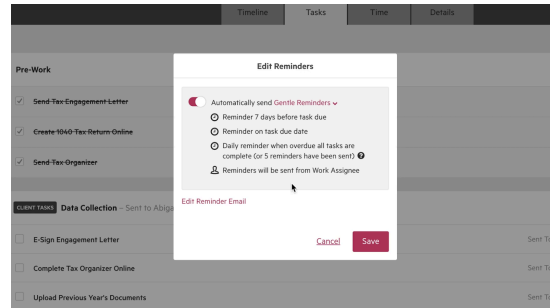
This screenshot shows a zoomed-in view of a task card for 'Monthly Accounting Nov 2019'. The card details include 'Acme Corporation', 'Planned', 'Due Nov 29', 'Type: Accounting', and 'Estimated Time: 5h 0m'. It also shows 'Also working on 2' other tasks.

- Includes workflow templates for internal use
- “Automates client data collection”
  - Karbon does client outreach for you

The screenshot shows the 'CLIENT TASKS' section with the title 'Data Collection – Sent to Abigail Silvers Today | Gentle Reminders'. It contains a list of four tasks, each with a checkbox:

- ☐ E-Sign Engagement Letter
- ☐ Complete Tax Organizer Online
- ☐ Upload Previous Year's Documents
- ☐ Reconcile All Accounts

- Able to schedule auto reminders



- Mentions improved timeliness in clients and a better relationship, time saved
- Email integrations used to bring email communications into Karbon app
  - Staff members can leave notes for each other on emails
  - Can reply to email
- Permissions
- Security
- Automate recurring work
- Client management features (--> client is brought into Karbon workflow)
- "One single place for your team to work together, with everything at their fingertips."

## 2. Monday

What they do:

*What is their purpose? What is their product all about?*

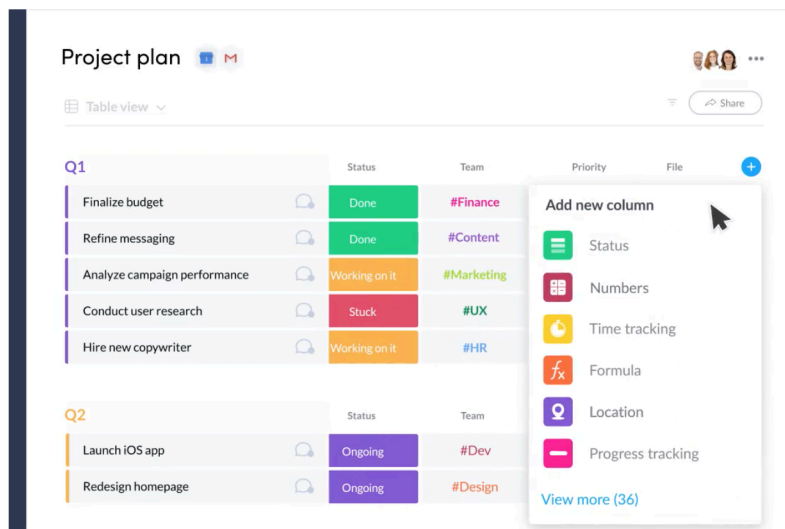
- Generalized workflow software

- “Together. In projects, processes, and success. Wherever you are.  
monday.com is the Work OS that powers remote teamwork.”

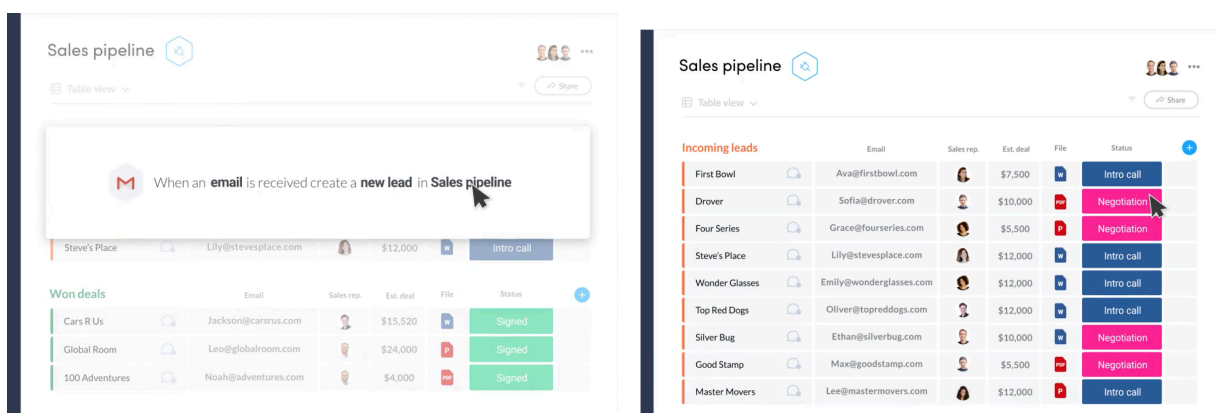
### Key product features:

*What do they offer? What do they emphasise?*

- Customizable workflow (“Enjoy working in a platform that adapts to your needs”)

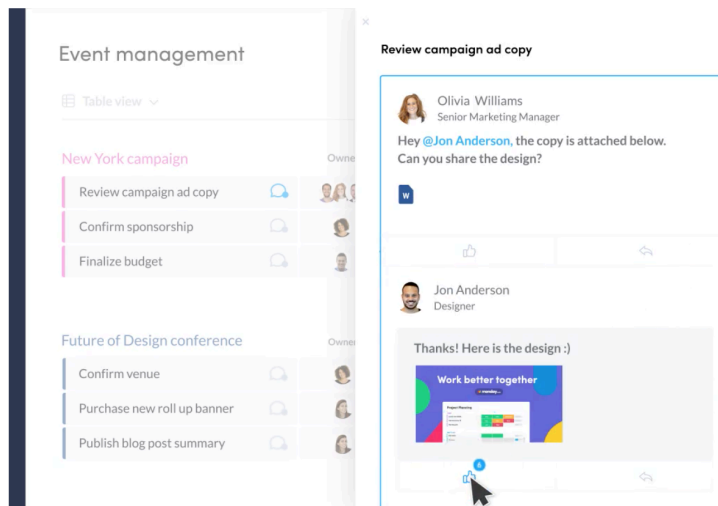


- Automate routine work and focus on what counts



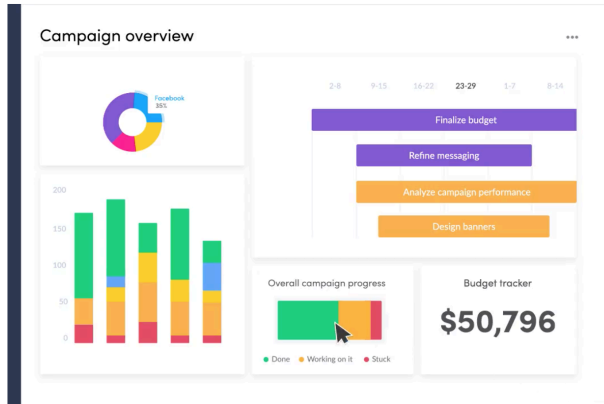
- Collaborate in one shared workspace

## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research



- Workflow overview gives snapshots into project progress









## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research



- Emphasis on product flexibility

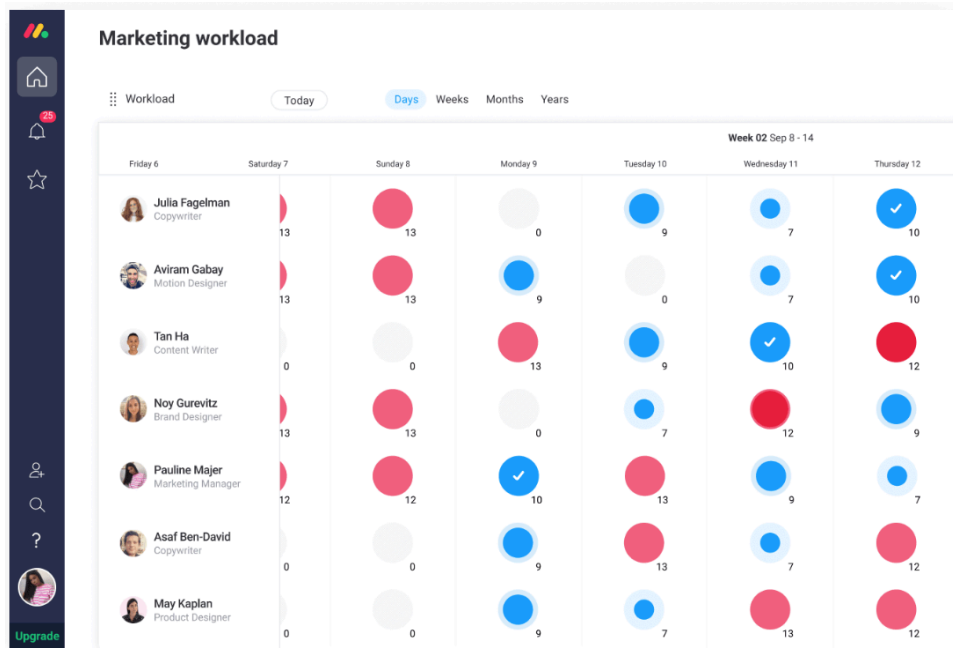
Any process, any department, any industry, anywhere

Teams and organizations of all sizes use monday.com

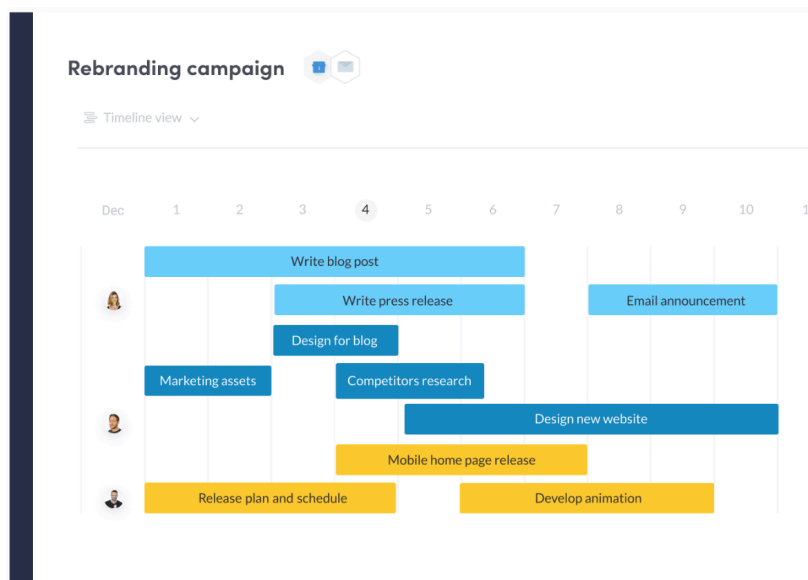
 Remote Work	 Project management	 Software development	 HR
 Marketing	 Media and production	 IT	 Sales

- Workload management page

## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research

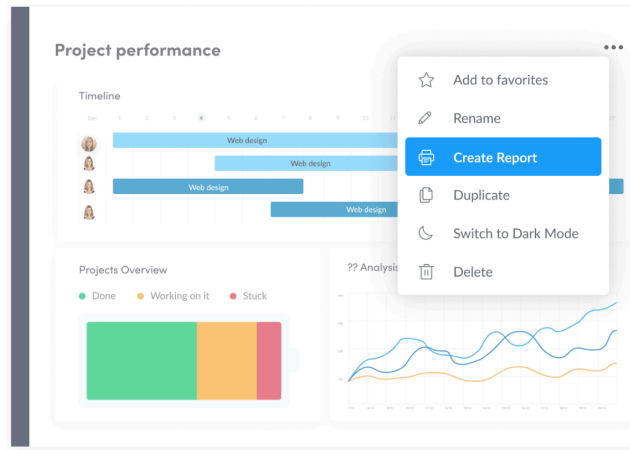


### – Timeline page



### – Instant report

- Instantly turn dashboards into performance reports that you can easily share with both internal and external stakeholders.



- Provides workflow templates available for internal use
- Many integrations available (flexibility emphasis)

### Key takeaways:

*What stood out to me?*

- Automation and customization seem like main selling points

## 3. Aero Workflow

### What they do:

*What is their purpose? What is their product all about?*

- “Workflow for accountants by accountants”
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### Key product features:

*What do they offer? What do they emphasise?*

- Product video:
  - “...keep client work on track”



## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research

- “Staff often wastes time tracking down client information”
- See status of current client work

	User	Start Date	Hours	End Date	Subject	Company	Project	Category	Type	Status
User Barb										
	Barb	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Payroll using GP	Cost New Firm	Accounting Services	Task	Payroll	Not Started
	Barb	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Bill.com: Pay Bills	Blackwater Racing		Task	AP	Not Started
			Grp Hrs: 1.00							
User Lucy										
	Lucy	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Payroll using GP	Blackwater Racing		Task	Payroll	Not Started
			Grp Hrs: 0.50							
User Michelle										
	Michelle	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Payroll using GP	Blackwater Racing		Task	Payroll	Not Started
	Michelle	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Payroll using GP	Cost New Firm		Task	Payroll	Not Started
			Grp Hrs: 1.00							
User Heidi										
	Heidi	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Payroll using GP	Cherry's Express	Monthly Booking	Task	Payroll	Deferred Ready for review
			Grp Hrs: 0.50							
User Robert										
	Robert	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.50		Payroll using GP	Cherry's Express		Task	Payroll	Not Started
	Robert	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.25	03/07/2017	Reconcile Bank Account - QRO	Cherry's Express		Task	Accounting	Not Started
	Robert	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.25		BDO: Pay Bills	Cherry's Express		Task	Overhead	Not Started
	Robert	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	0.08		note			Other	Post Support & Training	Not Started
	Robert	03/03/2017 12:00 AM	2.00		Business Process Review - Initial meeting	Cloud Consultancy		Appointment	Client Dashboards review	Not Started
	Robert	03/03/2017 08:36 AM	0.08		Why the ACA executive order doesn't void the rules for CTRs	Superior Accounting		Email	Accounting	Not Started
			Grp Hrs: 5.17							
			Tot Hrs: 8.17							

- Meed critical deadlines
- Time tracking
- Aero library gives access to workflow templates
- Store client passwords and other crucial data in Vault
- Export reports
- Schedule recurring and one-time tasks
- Organize with Projects
  - Create a project in Aero and then break it down into one-time or recurring tasks assigned to different staff members. Track time and cost on projects to make sure your

*work is on time and on budget*

Notes

Aeros

Time

Master Aeros

Invoices

Drag a column header and drop it here to group by that column

	Date	Team Member	Hours	Note	Billable	QB Item
<a href="#">View</a>	12/10/2015	Robert	1.53	Attend appointment	No	Consulting
<a href="#">View</a>	12/10/2015	Michelle	2.77	Review Chart of Accounts	No	Consulting
<a href="#">View</a>	12/10/2015	Lauren	7	Technology Assessment	No	Consulting
<a href="#">View</a>	12/11/2015	Barb	4	Technology Assessment	No	Consulting
<a href="#">View</a>	12/11/2015	Robert	5	Staff assessment and reveiw	No	Consulting
			Tot Hrs: 20.33			

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1

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5

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Items per page

1 - 5 of 6 items

↻

- Gather resources

- *Make sure the resources your staff need to do their work are located in a secure and central location. Client vaults, links to websites, links to procedures, links to client specific resources, and client activity history are all a click away*

**Key takeaways:**

*What stood out to me?*

- Emphasis on taking over client data to avoid the chase
- Setup similar to ours. Very spreadsheetsy. Surfaces information but doesn't emphasise workflow as much as others

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**Indirect competitors**

Offer something similar to what we offer. Some features may overlap.

## 1. Bench

What they do:

*What is their purpose? What is their product all about?*

- “You run your business. We’ll do your bookkeeping.”
  - *Get a professional bookkeeper at a fraction of the cost of a bookkeeping firm, and powerful online accounting software with zero learning curve.*
  - *America’s largest professional bookkeeping service for small businesses*

## How our bookkeeping service works



1

### We get you set up

First, we'll introduce you to a dedicated bookkeeper. They'll get to know your business, show you how Bench works, and gather everything they need from you.



2

### We do your bookkeeping

Each month, your bookkeeper imports your business transactions and gets to work on your books. If they need anything from you, they'll get in touch.



3

### We deliver intuitive financial reports

Easily track business health with real-time and monthly financial reporting. At tax time, we send everything you need to file. Or, let us do it for you with BenchTax.

- “Bench for Accountants” (a link to click on, not their main messaging)
  - *If I’m an accountant, I can sign up for Bench (to be what they call a “Partner”) and they help me do my work.*
- Emphasise security that the work is done right

## Why partner with Bench?

### No more clean up

Save time, avoid headaches, and improve tax filing quality when you work with financials provided by Bench. We deliver accurate, standardized books that tie to prior year returns, capture your adjusting journal entries, and properly account for all tax relevant financial activity.

### Get what you need, when you need it

Bench gives you direct access to the books and our in-house, professional bookkeepers. Give us your quarterly and annual deadlines and requirements, and we will work towards them with open communication.

### Keep growing

As a partner of Bench, earn revenue share and extend valuable discounts to your clients as they discover a bookkeeping solution tailored to their needs. The future is bright when you partner with Bench.

### Key product features:

*What do they offer? What do they emphasise?*

- Emphasise partnership aspect. Offer two main ways they can help (with customization based on my preferences available):

- Option 1: they work with my clients directly and do their books. I have access to Bench and can pull financial reports and work with their bookkeeping team. (Benefit: they take over stressful relationship)
- Option 2: they work with me to complete my clients books, I maintain communication with my clients. (Benefit: they help me with my books)

### Key takeaways:

*What stood out to me?*

- Peace of mind: Bookkeepers can do their work and grow their business **knowing** that the work is done correctly
- They are about supporting my work, not a workflow tool
- If I hate client outreach they will do that part of my job for me

## 2. Proposify

### What they do:

*What is their purpose? What is their product all about?*

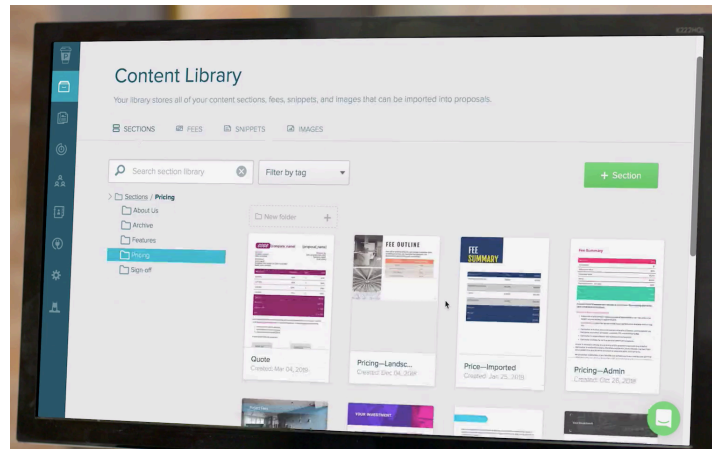
- Discover the proposal software that modern sales teams use to create, send, track, and e-sign winning proposals, contracts, and agreements.
- Proposify takes over proposal process

### Key product features:

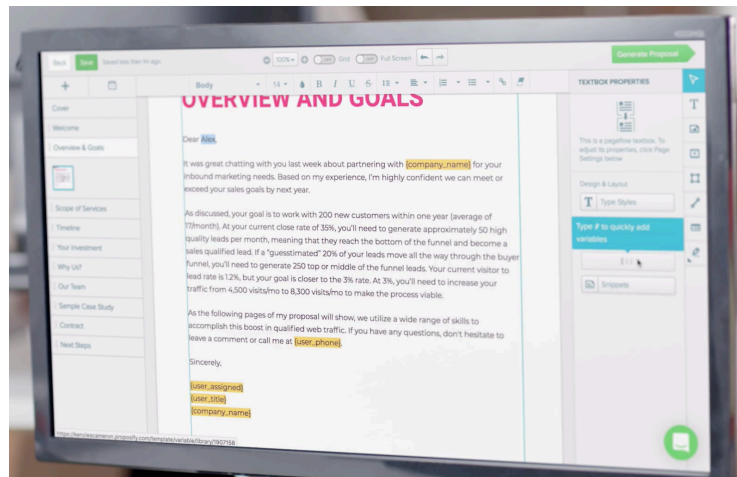
*What do they offer? What do they emphasise?*

- Product video:
  - Offers high-level view of where proposals are at at every stage of the process
  - Emphasis on entire workflow happening within Proposify

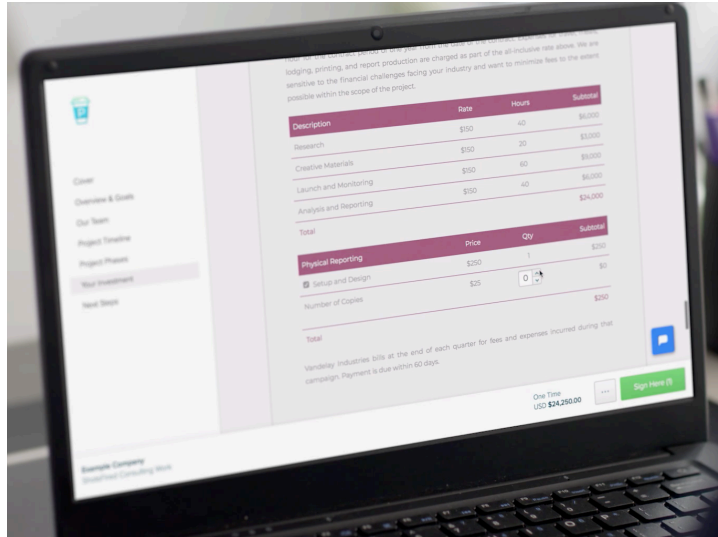
- Content library
  - Store proposal templates, proposal content, fees, images, etc.
  - “Everything you need in one place” to quickly put your document together



- Proposify saves you time by reducing manual entry



- Proposify alerts you when client: opens document, leaves note
- Emphasis on trickiness of client relationships
  - The client has an interface on proposal.
  - Interactive quotes so they can tell me exactly what they need



- Ability to chat with me live right from the proposal
- Online signature tool increases signature speed by 60%
  - Clients sign proposals right away in the browser
- Integrates with a variety of CRM, product management, and invoicing software
- Progress tracking: you get notifications at different steps of proposal process
- Interactive quoting: My client feels empowered because they get to choose quote option, reduces back-and-forth that would delay a deal closing
- “Stop reinventing the wheel with every proposal”
  - Allows me to construct proposal from predefined content blocks, templates
  - Less manual entry means fewer errors and faster turnaround
- Client input forms
  - My client or prospect enters info I need so I don’t have to chase them for it later
- Professional looking proposals that I can customize to match my branding
- Auto reminders available to follow up with my client if they need a nudge

**Key takeaways:**

*What stood out to me?*

- They make a point of smoothing user/client relationship
  - Client input forms
  - Speedy communication
  - All-in-one work/communication platform (sort of. Not meant to replace emailing, but allows instant messaging on app)
- More about individual workflow than team workflow

### 3. Clickup

**What they do:**

*What is their purpose? What is their product all about?*

- All your work in one place: Tasks, docs, chat, goals, & more.

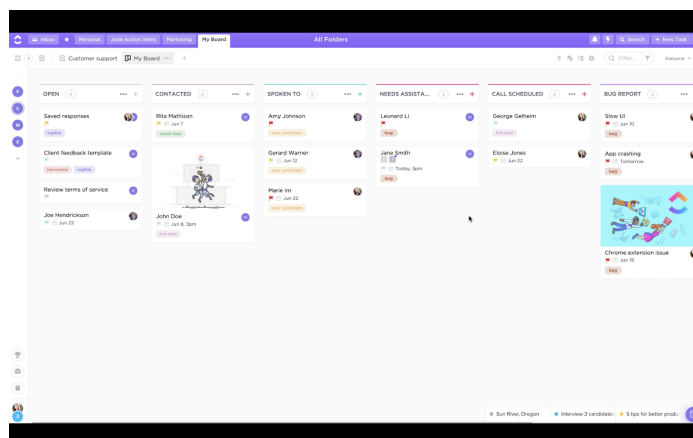
**Key product features:**

*What do they offer? What do they emphasise?*

- Product video:
  - Highlights pain of juggling multiple apps
  - "Productivity platform that keeps all your work in one intuitive place...use one app for everything"
  - Highlights customization. "One app to replace them all"
  - AI tells you what to work on next
  - Integrates with "thousands of apps"
- Emphasize time saved in a week

## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research

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- Emphasis on customizability (different views, spaces, etc.)
- Recurring tasks
- Comment, collaborate in-app
- “Solved by Clickup”:
  - You’ll no longer have to use separate apps
  - You’ll know what everyone is working on
  - Everyone knows what to do next
  - All teams can work together, finally
  - Birds eye view of everything
    - Sort, filter, manage tasks across team
- Proprietary features:
  - Slash commands
  - Real-time chat
  - Task tray
  - Inbox
  -
- Task list view

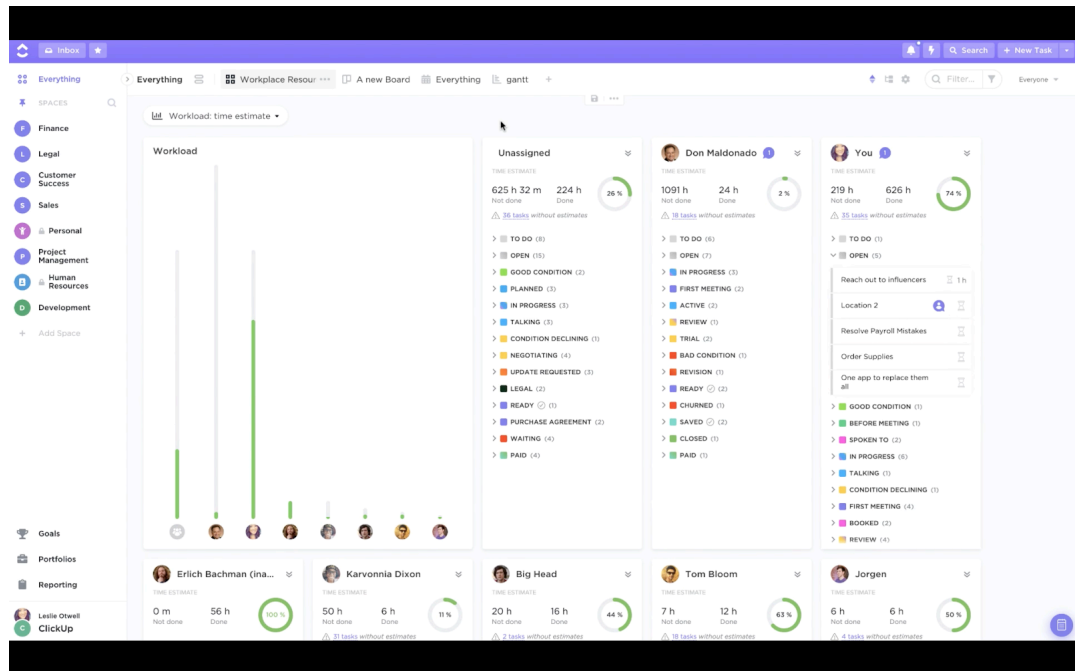


- Box view

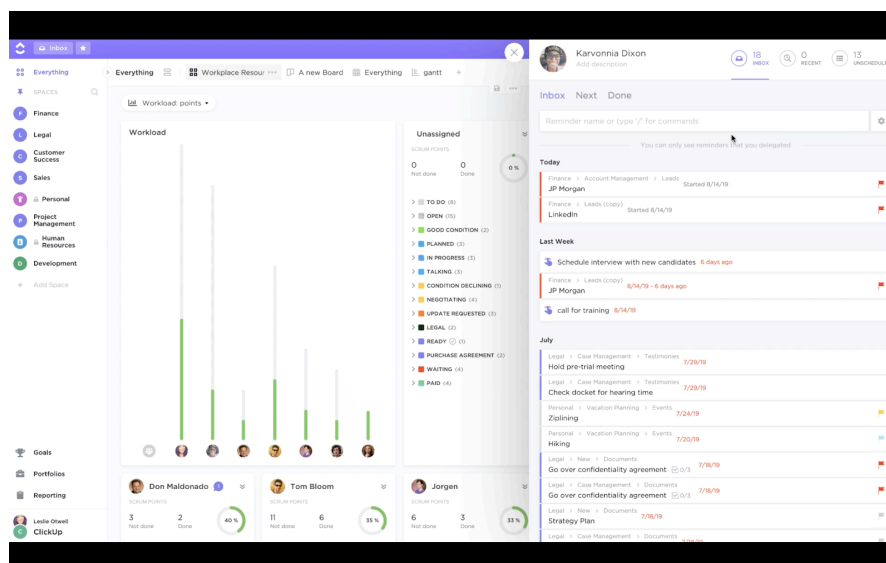


## Competitive Analysis – Tier 2 Research

- Answers: what are people working on? What have people done? Who needs more tasks and who has too many?



- Drag and drop to reassign tasks from one person to another
- Workload view: by number of tasks, by time estimate, by points (like github)
- Access people's profile and workload directly from this page



- Ability to show/hide tasks without estimates

### **Analysis**

What are their commonalities?

Why are they similar? What common actions are users performing?

### ***Consider:***

*Tone and copy   User actions   Good / bad features   User reviews   Visual design*

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## **Work automation:**

Multiple apps show how they can take over some of your workload for you. Some form of client data collection (example: auto reminders or an interface for clients) are common, as is the use of templates for projects/tasks and communication. Recurring jobs/tasks are the norm in terms of what these companies offer. Reducing the amount of manual work a user would be responsible for is a common goal.

## **Opinionated workflow:**

Multiple apps encourage you to do all of your work and communication within their system. Karbon, Monday, Clickup, Proposify all encourage you to do your internal communication within their app. Karbon and Proposify take this concept further by providing client interfaces as well.

Bench, Aero workflow are exceptions. They frame themselves as being in more of a supporting role: they are here to help you do your work how you know it needs to be done.

## **Client relationship:**

Karbon and proposify offer client interfaces to facilitate workflow and data collection with the goal of eliminating part of the client chase. Bench offers to interface with your clients for you

Aero allows for client data storage (passwords, documents, etc) so you can gather what you need yourself instead of waiting on your clients.

## **Capacity management:**

Karbon, Clickup, Monday have birds-eye view of tasks available to show status, capacity. Karbon and Clickup use similar trello-style boards showing users and their assignments. Both use drag-and-drop for speedy assignment adjustments. Both allow access to individual user profiles to view assignments and make changes. Units used for capacity are mixed; units include budgeted time, number of tasks assigned, or a custom points system (like Github)

## **Status view:**

Multiple apps allow you to see the status of your jobs/tasks. Monday uses: Done, working on it, and stuck as statuses you can use and view. Clickup uses: customizable statuses in the form of colored flags. Allows you to filter and sort by status. Proposify uses: progress tracking, where you are alerted when your project reaches the next stage.

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### **Summary**

What have I learned? What are my actionable insights?

We should decide if we want to be opinionated with our workflow, or fill a supporting role. Right now we do a bit of both. We offer in-app messaging and some email, but email is single-directional so users aren't saving as much time as they could, and they still bear the mental burden of being responsible for multiple messaging interfaces.

We should be more proactive in facilitating the client relationship and make a point of marketing this as a selling point. Most companies included in this competitive analysis take a stance of some form to smooth the client chase (ranging from automated reminders to an active role in their users' clients work). This is an area where we are conspicuously lacking in comparison to our competitors and is clearly a problem worth solving.

Staff workload management is another pain point that many of our competitors have gone out of their way to solve. The solutions I saw seemed to prioritize short term capacity adjustments, meaning easy dragging and dropping tasks for this or next week, though there were also interfaces for longer periods of time such as 'this year'. Easy task reassignment is a key feature of this solution, and is an area where we could definitely improve. Solutions I saw featured drag-and-drop for task reassignment, same-page access to user profiles to check their assignments, and progress bars (or similar) for quick visual overviews of staff capacity.

We should consider whether we are surfacing project status data as effectively as we should be. While our progress report page gives people an idea of whether work overall is progressing as needed, some of our competitors have solutions that show individual projects and their statuses in greater detail which may be an asset for a manager looking to see how individual projects and their assigned staff are progressing.