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& Billing Software

EZtime is a different sort of time-based billing system in a couple of ways. First, it is designed for integration with QuickBooks (and is an authorized QuickBooks add-on), which obviously means it has the potential to tap into a huge market of small service-based businesses. Second, the system is fully web-based, meaning users can access it from anywhere. This combination provides a simple method of implementing a time tracking and billing system that downloads time and expenses directly into a business' QuickBooks records, but does not give those employees access to the QuickBooks data files.

The vendor admits that EZtime is not geared to be a full practice management system, instead offering a simplified basic approach for small businesses that rely on QuickBooks for its contact management, billing and most reporting functions.

That said, the program is cheap: \$2.99 per month per user for the Lite version, which allows only tracking and billing of timesheets through its web-based interface, and \$4.99 per month for the full version, which also can be used to track, allocate and bill expenses.

While this program may not meet the more detailed needs of larger accounting practices, it should be sufficient for very small firms or small clients who use QuickBooks, especially those who may be using some workaround for time and expense tracking. The system is so easy to set up and its interfaces so friendly, for both staff and administrators, that getting employees to use the system should prove simple, while even its basic features should also result in increased accountability and productivity. QuickBooks Professional 2002 or later is required.

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...many jobs each week, and we have had some implementations that last a couple years.” said Griffith. “In nearly all cases, we are billing our clients on a time-and-materials basis with hourly rates for labor and passing through our travel expenses without any markup.”

The firm currently has 17 employees and contractors who enter their time and expenses into the EZ Web Time product on a weekly basis, and the firm uses QuickBooks

Premier Professional Services Edition for its back-office accounting/billing/payroll functions. When asked what drove him to select EZtime, Griffith said: “As the company grew, it became too burdensome for me to enter everyone’s time and expenses each week from the information they submitted in an Excel spreadsheet format. This also slowed down our invoicing cycle (we generally invoice clients every week), which of course impacts cash flow. When we were doing our search (about this time last year), this was the least expensive product that met our needs. Most other systems that we considered were MUCH more expensive because they contained a lot of features that we just didn’t need. The EZ Web Time product matches up well with the functionality that we were looking for at a very good price point.”

Griffith says one of the greatest benefits his firm has realized is that “our consultants and contractors (we typically have about four 1099 contractors working through GRT at any given point in time) are able to enter their time and expenses (charged to jobs) on a weekly basis, and we are able to download this information directly into QuickBooks without any re-keying of data.” Since consultants can only charge time and expenses to the jobs they are assigned to, mistakes are minimized, and because it’s web-based GRT’s consultants and contractors are able to access the system for data entry just about anywhere they are, any time of day.

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information.

Two options are available for data entry: a Grid format or the Activity view. The Grid format uses drop-down lists for entering projects and task information, with entry fields for inputting time spent on a task. The Activity mode is timer-based, with the option to have multiple clocks running simultaneously. Users can easily add comments that can be included or omitted from customer invoices. The interface for management houses the control Dashboard, which provides access to administrative functions including setting up staff, customers, projects and work codes, and one-click downloading of timesheets and expenses into QuickBooks, as well as running reports and customizing the system. The look and feel of the interface, preferences, workflow and terminology can be tailored to suit a business' needs. New staff and clients are created in QuickBooks and then synched into the EZtime system.

Management Functions — 3 Stars

EZtime can support as many staff and clients as the business' version of QuickBooks, but is more suited to smaller businesses and has limited support for multiple billing rates per staff. However, administrative users have the ability to override, markup/markdown or otherwise edit entries to make it more amenable to those special circumstances. As noted earlier, all customer, job, employee, vendor, item and account information is maintained in QuickBooks, which eases most tasks associated with creating new entries. The program includes some workflow management capabilities, including creation of project assignments and routing of timesheet and expense entries for review and approval. Along this line, the administrative Dashboard includes a Pending Tasks section, which notifies management users of timesheets and expenses that are awaiting download and review.

The company also offers an optional program called Outlook TimeCard that allows

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on-hold, pending download, pending approval and time off. Summaries of time and expense by employee or client are also available. Timesheet audit trails can also be generated for DCAA compliance. Most reporting and analysis functions are performed through QuickBooks. Similarly, all invoicing activities are handled through QuickBooks.

Integration — 3.5 Stars

The system is designed to work hand-in-hand with a small business' QuickBooks system, with all data maintained in that program after timesheets have been downloaded from the web interface. This process requires only a single click to synchronize the data. As noted above, the optional TimeCard application integrates with Outlook. The vendor also produces a more powerful time and billing system called TimeRewards 4.0, which shares the same interface as EZtime and can migrate data directly from the lower-end program if a business scales up to that system. EZtime allows PDA and Blackberry data entry.

User Support & Help — 5 Stars

EZtime's interface, for both administrators and staff, is exceptionally easy to use, with intuitive workflow-based task icons and other general features that make the system a no-brainer. The system includes a well-built web-based Help section that includes a searchable knowledgebase and (just in case) training videos for employees with sections on entering timesheets and expenses. Support via e-mail or toll-free call is included at no additional cost. Because the system is web-based, all program updates are performed by the vendor.

2005 Overall Rating: 3.5 Stars

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