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REVIEWS

2010 Review of Time & Billing Systems

Time & Billing Isn't *Just* Time & Billing Anymore

Aug. 01, 2010

From the August 2010 Issue

It is gratifying to see the natural evolution of software over time, as the more successful software vendors respond to user feedback and incorporate features and functionality that reflect the demands of actual users. Great software is becoming more powerful all the time, and new development tools and database capabilities allow this evolution to occur more quickly than in the past. The migration to relational databases also helps get the software developer past the legacy syndrome, where each new feature would become more difficult to design because of the inherent limitations of flat files and the need to maintain backwards compatibility.

Time & Billing: 2010 Review Sections

- **Basic System
Functions**

- General
Navigation/Ease-
of-Use
- Designed for
accounting

A fork in the road comes with the decision to deliver the product in a web-based or SaaS (software as a service) model or as an on-premise installed product.

Neither paradigm is universally the “best” because each has its

own pros and cons. Web interfaces provide the user with location flexibility

for data entry, management and reporting. However, remote access software that

professionals

- Concurrent users

- **Time Tracking**

- **Capabilities**

- Timesheets, timers, views
- Multi-staff entry
- Time tracking by project/job
- Approvals/sign-off process
- HR tracking (PTO, sick, benefits)
- Support for various hourly rates

- **Invoicing Functions**

- Expense tracking options
- WIPs, budget-from-estimate
- AR management
- e-Functions: Invoicing, payment, remote access
- Customization

- **Management**

- **Features**

- Dashboard overviews
- Managerial reporting analysis
- Security/user roles

allows a user to connect with the home server or desktop provides an alternative that mitigates this advantage somewhat. SaaS products are managed by the software vendor, which greatly eases issues of updates and bug fixing. On the other hand, client/server-based software may give some users a feeling of control and security.

The basics of time entry have changed very little; recent development focus has been on in-depth reporting and analysis, and customization of reports and invoices. These practice management tools are the frontier of profitability and realization improvements. A firm should be able to quickly recoup their investment in new software by finding areas for improvement in staff, client and types of work done. Perhaps even tighter control over billing will close up some holes where time and client expenses are falling through the cracks.

Simply becoming aware of what is actually happening in a practice will inevitably lead to upgrades in policies, rates, utilization and workflows. Finally, a dramatic reduction in the time spent on review and billing will translate into more billable hours for the most profitable people — the partners and managers.

The vendors of these time & billing products are continually adding more and more features, with a focus not only on the billing side of the equation but also with the availability of add-ons that are intrical to tracking and managing time. Time & billing isn't just time & billing

- **Integration & Data Mgmt**
 - Data output options
 - Integration w/payroll and professional acct systems
 - **Help/Support**
 - Built-in Support Features
 - Support Online
 - Live Support
 - **Summary & Pricing**
- anymore, but it's not end-to-end practice management either. (see page 6 of this issue for a review of Practice Management systems).
- The document storage solutions that we are reviewing in this issue typically have a more focused set of features and functions, which are often targeted to a specific niche such as direct integration with a particular tax prep package, integration with QuickBooks, or providing a secure file sharing solution. So you should read each of the individual product reviews carefully to help you gain a better understanding of the core strengths that each has to offer.

The specific attributes that we have evaluated for each product are organized into three fundamental categories: core functionality, integration and advanced functionality. The core functionality focuses on the overall user experience, based upon the interface and the ease of navigation, as well as the ability to publish documents directly to the system via a PDF print driver, and the nature of how the files are organized. In the integration category, our focus is on what options are available for an integrated scanning solution, integration with Outlook or other e-mail platforms, and the ability to support multiple file formats such as MS Word, Excel, etc. In the advanced functionality category, we look at what type of reporting is available, security features, document indexing and retrieval capabilities, and file archival features. We will also use this category to identify any unique features the vendor offers that distinguishes its solution from the rest of the crowd.

I hope you find these reviews helpful and encourage your feedback. I have been writing these reviews for *The CPA Technology Advisor* for the past four years, and I am always interested in learning what information you find helpful. We have revised our review process this year in a way that we believe helps us to compare the products more consistently, with the realization that every product is unique.

Abak Software – Abak

Abak is a multi-user, client/server-based system for tracking and invoicing time and expenses for accounting, engineering, architecture, and other firms whose primary product is professional time.

[Read Full](#)

[Review](#)

AccountantsWorld – Practice Relief

Practice Relief is a web-based SaaS (software as a service) product, a delivery method at the forefront of a growing trend for many software products.

[Read Full](#)

[Review](#)

BQE Software Inc. – BillQuick

BillQuick is an impressive program for capturing time, creating invoices, and analyzing the firm position and productivity. It is well suited for medium-sized firms that can exploit the extensive analysis features, and for those who have a need to customize invoicing and reporting.

[Read Full](#)

[Review](#)

ImagineTime, Inc. – ImagineTime

Practice Management

ImagineTime offers several industry-specific practice management suites, including versions for tax and accounting professionals, attorneys, and engineers.

[Read Full](#)

[Review](#)

Sage North America – Timeslips

by Sage 2010

Timeslips by Sage 2010 has been around for more than 20 years, providing effective time and billing functionality to a variety of service-based professions. Industry-specific templates are available for tax and accounting professionals, attorneys, engineers, consultants, etc.

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[Review](#)

Tenrox Project Workforce Management

Spring Bloom 2010

Tenrox offers a very powerful, web-based system for advanced management of time and expenses, and is suitable for firms of any kind that can make use of the powerful management and reporting features. The system is designed to support multiple currencies, types of clients and project billing scenarios.

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[Review](#)

TPS Software, Inc. – TPS Time

& Billing

TPS Time & Billing is specifically designed for small to mid-sized accountants firms with up to 60 employees. It offers a clean interface and regularly surveys its users for suggestions of new features and functionality.

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[Review](#)

Virtual Software – Virtual Time

+ Expense

Virtual Software was founded by two former CFOs who have spent decades in the finance and accounting markets. Virtual Time + Expense is a fully-hosted solution that eliminates setup and maintenance requirements.

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[Review](#)

— Related Articles —

Chrometa Time Tracker

While we are on the subject of capturing time for billing, have you ever wondered how you spend your time on the computer? Enter Chrometa, a utility that does just one thing: It tracks the time you spend on an active window and captures the window title for every window and/or application you open on your computer.

[Read Full](#)

[Review](#)

Virtual TimeClock Pro

Time tracking and management systems run the gamut, from very basic systems to extremely comprehensive, high-end programs. For many small and mid-sized businesses in the middle, however, the low-end systems are too limited and the upper side of the spectrum can be cost-prohibitive and difficult to maintain and use.

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[Review](#)

2010 Review of Time & Billing Systems — Comparison Chart

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