

Get Smart About Your Billable Time

By Neil J. Squillante

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“**W**hat did I do today and how much of it can I bill?” In midsize and large firms, partners and associates ask this question with alarming frequency. Even worse, some ask themselves what they did during the past week or even month! But who can blame them? Tracking time as you go while using your BlackBerry or PC is virtually impossible. Because most lawyers err on the side of underreporting rather than overestimating time spent, reconstructing time from memory usually results in lost rather than exaggerated time. With even the largest firms feeling financially squeezed, accurate and complete time capture has become critically important. A new product that launched yesterday seeks to help law firms solve this problem.

Smart Time ... in One Sentence

Smart WebParts' [Smart Time](#) is a Web-based time capture and entry application installed within your firm's firewall that automatically captures the time you and your colleagues spend on your PC applications, office telephones, and BlackBerrys so that you can create accurate time entries.

The Killer Feature

Smart Time's Open Connector Engine enables your firm's IT managers to connect Smart Time to virtually any database or mail platform. As a result, Smart Time looks across all the data stores at your firm—Out-

look, Exchange, document management systems, legacy telephone and VoIP switches, BlackBerry Enterprise Server, and more, to capture all activities. You can then view these captured activities, and transform them into time entries.

Obviously, Smart Time cannot literally “think” for itself, but you can train it thanks to its Intelligent Client Matter Data Learning feature. Smart Time learns the relationships among data points such as email addresses, telephone numbers, and client matter codes, and automatically assigns future activities accordingly. Smart Time can also learn to exclude personal communications and other activities that are not billable.

“Smart Time solves a major problem that has vexed timekeeping professionals for years—booking and billing eight hours for eight hours of work,” Smart WebParts co-founder and CEO Todd Gerstein told us. “Smart Time improves the accuracy, completeness and velocity of time entry.”

Other Notable Features

Smart WebParts reports that you can install Smart Time in a day as it requires only a IIS Web server. There's no software to deploy so it has a zero footprint on your firm's desktops—you access it via a Web browser.

Among the major features, you can search for and sort your captured

activities by date range. You can quickly access preset searches such as Today, Yesterday, This Week, and Last Week.

You can adjust a number of settings to personalize Smart Time. For example, you can elect to receive automated reports via email daily or weekly. You can also select which Smart Time event connectors will return data, and further refine data collection within each connector (e.g., designate which Outlook folders to watch).

Smart Time exports time entries to any accounting system. You can customize forms for fields such as phase, task, location, and activity. Smart Time validates the data prior to export, and creates an audit log for every transaction to protect users from mistakenly exporting data twice.

What Else Should You Know?

Smart WebParts sells Smart Time via an annual subscription based on the number of timekeepers at your firm. According to Smart WebParts, firms typically recoup their annual investment within weeks if not days of deploying Smart Time.

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