"Review of Time & Billing Programs"
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Best Firm Fit:
Small firms, especially those taking advantage of the tax software integration available.

Strengths:

- Ribbon interface similar to Microsoft Office
- Integration with tax software & QuickBooks
- Synchronization with Outlook, including viewing staff calendars side-by-side.

Potential Limitations:

- No SaaS version.

Much more than a simple time and billing software, ImagineTime offers features including due date monitoring, project/engagement management, staff scheduling and document management. Although used by professionals in many industries, including attorneys and engineers, ImagineTime can be installed with features specific to tax and accounting firms.

ImagineTime runs on a Microsoft Access database. A SQL version is in development and scheduled for release later this year. After its release, firms purchasing the software will have the option to implement either the Access or SQL version. The data can be hosted on a cloud server, but ImagineTime is currently a desktop-only product.

Basic System Functions:
Fans of the interface used in the 2007 and 2010 versions of Microsoft Office will love the similar “office button” and ribbon menus in ImagineTime, which make the program easily navigable. Users frustrated with Microsoft’s new ribbon interface who prefer a DOS-like menu screen and keyboard shortcuts may navigate the program that way, as well. Like many of today’s web browsers, multiple screens can be open and running at the same time within the ImagineTime window because of its tabbed interface. Some screens, such as the contact manager and calendar, can be opened in a separate floating window. As with Microsoft Access, users can scroll between records in the database or pages of a report with a navigation bar at the bottom left side of the screen. However, mouse-over Help text for imaged buttons and right-click menu options don’t exist in all areas of the program, which users of Microsoft applications may be accustomed to.

Time Management Capabilities:
Time can be recorded in the program either with slip timers or entered after-the-fact. Multiple timers can be shown on the screen for different clients and engagements; the user can pause one and start running another, making it a useful feature when multi-tasking. Many options are available for customizing timekeeping, including either allowing one timer to run at any time or many timers to run at once. Upon closing a timer, a screen appears that allows the user to adjust the amount of time and change the slip text.

The after-the-fact time entry screen is in a spreadsheet layout with text boxes utilizing auto-fill and drop-down lists for easy and quick time entry. Users can enter non-billable time and expenses in a similar layout on other tabs within this screen.

The remote transfer feature allows users to record time on a copy of the database residing on a computer at a remote location. Changes made to the database while the user worked remotely can be exported to the home office through e-mail, by uploading the data or by direct connection when the user returns to the office.

ImagineTime comes preconfigured with some work codes, but firms may edit them or add new ones based on the firm’s unique services provided or timekeeping needs. Work codes can be designated as billable or non-billable and can be selected as subject to sales tax. Multiple rates per work code are supported.

Invoicing Functions:
In the billing dashboard, users can see a list of clients with corresponding amounts of time and expenses, select a bill type with varying amounts of detail, and click a checkbox to bill a specific client. Bills can be posted and printed either individually or in batches. A built-in word processor allows for complete customization of invoice text and formats. Within ImagineTime, bills can be e-mailed as PDF attachments, and e-mails can be customized with logos, signatures and disclaimer text. For a monthly and per-transaction fee, ImagineTime can process credit card and ACH payments from clients through its strategic alliances with payment processing companies.

For recurring engagements with fixed fees, ImagineTime is capable of handling up to five customizable types of fixed fees per client.

Management Features:
Management can run several different reports to monitor time and measure profitability. One of the most useful reports is the client snapshot, which shows key information such as accounts receivable, time at standard rates, percentage of standard rates realized, and weighted average number of days to collect an invoice.

Reports can also be created to evaluate staff performance, including charts showing staff billable production over a certain time period. Calendars for staff can be viewed side-by-side. ImagineTime also tracks certifications and continuing professional education credits for all staff.

Security settings can be adjusted to restrict users' access to various parts of the program based on three levels: system manager, supervisor and staff. The program offers extensive customization options for menu items, setup options, reports and billing abilities accessible to each security level. An option prevents staff charge rates from being displayed to users with the staff permission level.

Integration & Data Management:
ImagineTime can synchronize appointments, tasks and contacts with Microsoft Outlook, and includes several synchronization options such as preventing synchronization of specific clients. ImagineTime plans to introduce integration with Google contacts and calendar later this year.

The latest version of the software imports client contact and invoice information from the Lacerte, UltraTax and ATX tax preparation programs. Customer information and accounts receivable transactions can be imported from QuickBooks, and ImagineTime can export time slips to QuickBooks. The application also imports payment transactions from the GoToBilling universal merchant payment processing platform.

Help/Support
The built-in Help window appears when the F1 button is pressed and goes straight to the topic related to the window of the program the user currently has open. With screenshots and hyperlinks, the Help text is a useful resource. The product website contains software fixes and updates, frequently asked questions (FAQs), manuals and many training videos that cover nearly every aspect of the program. Users can follow ImagineTime on Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook for product news and tips.

ImagineTime offers three levels of support plans, and users can also purchase per-issue support on an as-needed basis. System managers are notified of new updates, and after the first update is installed other workstations will install it automatically. Users must have a current support agreement to receive program updates.

Summary & Pricing
ImagineTime is a time and billing system best suited for small accounting firms, and when integrated with its offering of add-on modules, it becomes a powerful comprehensive practice management system. Pricing is based on the number of concurrent users, and starts at $295 for the stand-alone single-user version. The add-on modules, including due date tracker, Outlook synchronization, document management, QuickBooks and tax software integration are available individually with optional one-time charges.