Title:
Choosing The Best Timesheet Software Package For Your Business

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Summary:
We've all heard about the gains in productivity and accountability that
businesses can make from implementing a timesheet software system in their
organization. However, with so many timesheet packages available on the market
today, how do you know which package best meets your needs? The process of
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Keywords:
Timesheet, timesheet software, timesheets, time tracking, time tracking
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Article Body:
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The first step in choosing the right software is probably the most important,
yet all it requires is that you to ask yourself a simple question; what do I
want to achieve by using a timesheet system? It may be to improve quoting or
budgeting, tracking project progress, tracking attendance and automating
payroll, or to assist with client billing. Most of the better-known timesheet
packages tend to focus on one or two of these functions and do them well, but
may be deficient in other areas. When looking for the right timesheet package,
select your package based on the core function it is designed for. Determine
which features are critical and which are less important. A package that is
designed to be good for automating payroll may not collect enough information
for it to be useful for client billing. A timesheet system that is designed for
client billing may not have the project management functions you require. The
more specific your requirements are, the easier it is find the appropriate
software application. Thus, if you require a timesheet system that tracks
computer-based work, is simple to use, yet can perform many other functions, you

can narrow your product search down to just one product called Spherical Timesheet. Write a list of your requirements in order of importance, and keep this list handy while you're doing the product search.

When considering your requirements, also keep in mind what your think your future needs will be. As an example, if you currently have a number of staff and your organization continues to grow, the software you select should be scalable to cope for the anticipated growth. However, you need to be realistic with your needs as one could say that anything is possible in the future. You don't want to choose a product that can do nearly anything just because there is a chance you might need it one day. As a general rule, the more powerful the software, the more complex it will be to use, administer and support.

A decision you must make is whether you would like to go for a web-based solution or a desktop application. A web based timesheet system generally interacts with all users via a standard web browser. This type of timesheet system can be useful if you don't want to install software on each user's machine, and it can also be helpful as timesheet entry can normally be performed by any of your staff with an internet connection. You can also choose a subscription-based timesheet service (often call an ASP, or application service provider), where the provider stores your timesheet data on one of their servers. These solutions can be inexpensive with a periodical payment and very little up-front investment, but you need to consider the value you put on the confidentiality of your timesheet information and security, as timesheets and financial data may viewed by the provider, and any internet site can be a target for hackers. Web-based timesheet systems can also be a double-edged sword; they are often easy to operate but too simple in functionality to be very useful.

In comparison to web-based solutions, a desktop-based application is a program that is installed and run on each staff member's computer. Desktop applications can be setup within your company's firewall, preventing users from outside your company from accessing your timesheets. They also give the timesheet software developers a lot more freedom in terms of creating software interfaces and reporting engines, and as a result may be more sophisticated and powerful. If you have staff that work remotely and require access to your timesheet system, you should ensure that the timesheet software you choose provides the option for remote access (these systems commonly allow timesheets to be sent by email).

Once you have determined the base functionality you require and the type of timesheet system that is suitable for you, it's time to start looking for the right product. A quick internet search for timesheet software is a good place to start. If you are also looking for support and possibly installation

services, you may wish to consider adding you country or city to the search term. There are a lot of different timesheet packages out there, so you may wish to try a two-stage approach. Firstly, find a company you think may have a suitable product and service, print out some information such as a product brochure, and then move on to look at another company's offering. This way you can quickly create a shortlist of possible candidates before getting too far into the more time-consuming task of evaluating each product and determining which best suits your needs.

With your short-list of timesheet products, examine the intricacies of each against your criteria of needs. Prioritize those needs. Download a trial of the software and at the very least try out all of the features that are high on your requirements list. If a vendor does not offer a means to try the software before you purchase it, ask questions as to why this may be the case. Is it too hard to install and configure? Is it too hard to use? I recommend you avoid any system that you can't evaluate in your own working environment. A product trial gives you the insurance that the timesheet software product is really going to solve your business need. One feature to evaluate is the usefulness of the software link between it and third-party applications. Many vendors provide functionality just so that they can tick the box on their feature list, rather than to provide a genuinely useful data exchange between applications. If it is critical that your timesheet software can export invoice data into accounting software, than go and try the export procedure before you make your final purchasing decision. Be satisfied that it can perform all the tasks or at least some of the tasks that you require.

As with any new acquisition, it would not be appropriate to discuss purchasing without examining price and value for money. Within reason, the most suitable timesheet software for your company is going to be the one that addresses your needs the best, even if it is considerably more expensive then your next best option. The right timesheet software system will pay for itself very quickly. Critically consider customer testimonials such as those set out on the product website where clients have provided feedback on the cost effectiveness of the product. Clearly, where there are efficiency gains to be made and correspondingly fast return on investment, the purchase price becomes of less significance. If correctly chosen, the timesheet software you choose should pay for itself very quickly.

Finally, consider the timesheet vendor itself. Do they offer the appropriate level of technical support that you require? Again consider client testimonials to determine if they have happy clients (keeping in mind they never publish the bad comments!). Test their customer service by sending the technical support

department an email with a few simple questions. If they're slow in responding, don't expect better service once you've handed over your money.

Choosing the right timesheet software package for your business does not have to be a daunting task. By focusing on your business objectives and core requirements, you should find there are plenty of options from which to choose. Take your time, make the right choice and your business enterprise will enjoy all the benefits of efficiency and accountability that timesheet software can deliver.