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Web-Based Apps and Services Examined

## Punch Your Time Clock Online

By **Greg Holden**  
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Time is money, especially when it comes to keeping track of the time you and your employees spend at work.

If you record your time the old-fashioned way—manually entering employees' work hours into a database or sending (shudder) papers to your accounting staff—the burden of recording time falls on one financial administrator and causes a sluggish administrative bottleneck. One busy individual has to crunch the time sheet data and print out invoices, reports, or paychecks, costing your business hours and dollars.

## Fast, Flexible Online Tracking

It doesn't have to be this way. By using a Web-based application to account for employee time, your company can track time more efficiently and gain several advantages:

- Employees and administrators can submit and review data from any location, at any time.
- You can enter time sheet data from any machine with a Web browser—no proprietary software needed.
- Time sheet services free up you or your payroll employee for other duties.

Here's how the magic works: You access your Web-based time sheet service through its Web site, enter a username and a password to protect your information, and record your data on an online form. Once you submit the form, the time sheet service records your numbers and adds them to any figures you submitted in the past.

Now, you, your accountants, and your managers can call up your time sheet information at any time; just connect to the same Web site to calculate pay, track the progress of individual jobs, or prepare for a billing cycle. (The time sheet service doesn't actually calculate payroll or send out invoices. That still has to be done in-house, unless you outsource your payroll, as described in my previous [column](#).)

## Try Training Wheels First

Not sure if you're ready to commit to a Web-based time sheet service? [Journyx](#), which provides its time sheet software as a hosted application on the Web, provides a free service called [Freetimesheet](#). This service lets groups of five individuals or fewer record time sheet data online for free.

Once you try out a free service for a single project or a small workgroup, you can decide whether to pay the monthly fee and expand the Web time sheets to your entire company. Be prepared, however, for an expensive-looking bill. Journyx, for example, charges a one-time \$10 per-user setup fee, plus \$6 per user per month. Sound pricey? Well, depending on your situation, one of these plans could actually save you a bundle, not on the software itself, but in valuable time.

## Time Saved = Money Saved

Here's an example. PJHM Architects, a company that plans and designs public school facilities, uses Journyx to record time sheet information over the Web. Before they started using Journyx, PJHM employees recorded their time on Excel spreadsheets, and a single employee tallied the results on a separate spreadsheet. Now, PJHM pays \$250 per month for Journyx (plus a \$500 setup fee) but saves many hours on the process and actually gets a 5 percent discount for paying in advance.

PJHM's 35 employees work in different locations and may have 100 to 150 active projects at a time, so the Web is ideal for tracking everyone's work easily without overburdening the administrative staff. Brad Mathias, PJHM's operations and business manager explains, "We have two offices—one in southern California and another in southern Utah. Several of our employees only get in to the office once a week, so the Web hosting solution is perfect for all our needs."

## Do Your Homework First

However, before you follow PJHM's example, make sure your time tracker gives you the ability to print reports and offers a suitable level of security, and don't start to use the system companywide until you've tested it. (See my [previous column](#) for descriptions of the different levels of security that hosted applications should include.) Also, if there are any restrictions on the time-reporting information your employees can record, spell them out clearly to your staff before the data goes online.

Besides Journyx, consider [TimeDirect](#), which provides Web-based time and expense services, or [RedGorilla](#), a free time- and expense-tracking service that provides access from wireless devices such as PDAs.

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**Greg Holden** is a freelance author who has written hundreds of articles and books, including *Starting an Online Business For Dummies*. Got a comment or a question for him? [Tell us](#).

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