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Freshbooks: My Gold Standard for Timekeeping and Billing

by SAM GLOVER *on* JULY 6, 2010

I have been using Freshbooks for timekeeping and billing for over two years, since March 2008. I discovered Freshbooks in December 2007, started testing it with the free account, and quickly decided that Freshbooks is a better solution than anything I had used before (Time Matters, Timeslips, ProLaw, and Amicus). I've used it ever since, and it is getting better as my practice grows. Freshbooks has become one of my "gold standard" applications*—it is the standard by which I judge all other timekeeping and billing software.

Easy Timekeeping and Billing

Freshbooks makes timekeeping simple and easy to use. You can set up clients, then set up one or more projects for each client. You can bill based on the timekeeper's default rate, a project rate, or different rates for different tasks. You can also track expenses and assign them to clients and/or projects. There is a pop-up timer, if you like to bill that way, or you can just enter your time manually.

If you want to, you can allow clients to log into Freshbooks to see the progress on their file. They get their own login information and you can control what they can see.

Billing is easy with Freshbooks, too. The easiest way to do it is to simply send your invoices by e-mail. Freshbooks sends an e-mail with a link to the invoice, and your client can just click to see it (no login necessary). This keeps the confidential information on Freshbooks's secure server, instead of in your client's e-mail inbox. You can also connect your Freshbooks account to a PayPal or credit card merchant account so your clients can pay their bills by credit card just by clicking on a link.

If you prefer sending bills by mail, you can download and print them to send yourself, or you can have Freshbooks send them for you. I love having the option to

just click a button and have Freshbooks send a paper invoice so I don't have to lick the envelope myself.

Freshbooks Plays Well with Others

Since I frequently work with independent contractors and co-counsel, the software I use must be easy for them to interface with, too. Freshbooks has two important features that make this possible: (1) a free account for up to 3 clients; and (2) easy contractor integration. The first means it is easy to ask contractors to use Freshbooks to track their time on my projects. The second means I can receive their invoices in Freshbooks, then convert them to an expense or add their time to an invoice.

I am not aware of any other timekeeping and billing software with such easy contractor integration, and it has become one of the most useful features for my practice.

Freshbooks is also easy to use as your practice grows. Your staff can easily access Freshbooks through their own login from any web browser. You can assign them projects, set their billing rates, and so on. Since it is web-based, you don't have to muck around with setting up servers, either. Just get them a computer with a web browser, and they are good to go.

Mobile Options

If you like tracking time from an iPhone, Freshbooks has got you covered. However, there is no Freshbooks app for Blackberry, Android, or Palm's WebOS, yet. Instead, you can access Freshbooks from your mobile browser, although there is not a special mobile site. This works well enough, but I do hope an Android app is in the works.

Customer Service

Freshbooks has the best customer service I have ever used, although I have only used it twice. The first time, I wasn't seeing what I wanted in the default Freshbooks pricing plans, so I called. To my surprise, an actual human—Levi—answered the phone and helped me construct a custom plan (1 staff and up to 150 active clients for $19/month).

The second time, I needed to figure out how to use a particular setting. Levi answered and got me straightened out quickly and pleasantly.

In short, I love Freshbooks. I have been a loyal customer for over two years, and I think it's the best timekeeping and billing software available. Best of all, you can even start using Freshbooks for free.

My other "gold standard" applications include Gmail, Google Calendar, Basecamp, and Remember the Milk.