

Business Intelligence Experts Find a Smarter Way to Track Project Time



Industry

Professional Services, Consulting

Headquarters

Portland, Oregon

Replicon Solution

TimeBill

Benefits

- ▶ Submit timesheets into a single Web-based system.
- ▶ Track time and costs against projects in real-time.
- ▶ Break each project into individual tasks.
- ▶ Manage employee time off more easily and efficiently.
- ▶ Get greater visibility into billable vs. non-billable time.
- ▶ Get up-to-the-minute reporting, allowing for faster client invoicing.

Company Profile

Since 1998, CornerStar has been helping companies transform their business data into more meaningful information. The company builds customized business intelligence systems for clients around the world, helping them meet complex reporting requirements that lead to enhanced operations and increased profitability.

Headquartered in Portland, Oregon, CornerStar gives its customers a competitive advantage by implementing smarter technology and more efficient reporting platforms. However, up until 2003, the company lacked its own efficient solution for tracking time spent on developing these systems.

The Challenge

At the time, CornerStar was using only spreadsheets to track employee time. This proved to be cumbersome and ineffective for monitoring the true costs associated with each project. In turn, this affected several other business processes, including client billing and managing employee time off.

Since CornerStar works on a project basis for its customers, it was critical to be able to track time against projects, both for invoicing purposes and for understanding how its resources were being used, but without real-time visibility into this data, it took longer to generate reports and to bill clients for completed work.

Juggling with spreadsheets also made it increasingly difficult to track staff vacation time. With just six employees, managing time off was more complicated and time-consuming than it needed to be, which ultimately affected the bottom line.

The Solution

All Costs, All in One Place

In order to optimize its own business operations and gain a better understanding of project costs, CornerStar set out to find a solution that would streamline all of these processes into one easy-to-use system.

The company found the integrated solution it was looking for in Replicon's TimeBill and WebExpense. The software's intuitive design and web-based platform immediately appealed to the company, as did its detailed cost-tracking ability.

"We especially liked that it was a web application, which eliminated the need for generating separate spreadsheets and reports," said Bryn Dearborn, COO of CornerStar. "We could add projects in TimeBill and break them up by tasks to track the exact time and costs associated with each."

With TimeBill and WebExpense, all employees could enter their time online, along with any additional expenses related to a project. All data would be tracked in a single system, giving managers a real-time view into all project costs with the ability to generate highly detailed reports in just seconds.

“ We are a project-based company, so we need to know where our time and money is going at all times. TimeBill gives us a clearer view of the profitability of each project and allows us to maximize revenue going forward. ”

Bryn Dearborn, COO, CornerStar

About Replicon

Replicon is the leading provider of cloud-based time sheet software with over 1.5 million users in 70 countries.

For over 15 years, Replicon has empowered thousands of companies of all sizes to increase their productivity and profitability by providing hassle-free time and expense management capabilities and superior customer service.

Our growing suite of fully integrated applications provides a complete solution for any time tracking need including professional services, IT chargebacks, project costing, time & attendance, time off and more.

In 2010, CornerStar also began using Replicon's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model, seeing the value in a remotely hosted system.

“SaaS was the right choice for us because, as a small company, we don't have a dedicated IT department,” said Dearborn. “Using SaaS meant we would not have to use those resources on our own server or worry about maintaining the system on-site.”

Quick, Seamless Transition

For employees at CornerStar, the transition from old-fashioned spreadsheet tracking to Replicon's TimeBill was fast and painless. Dearborn, who joined CornerStar in 2005, says the system was “so easy to figure out” without requiring extensive training or guidance.

Today, everyone in the company uses Replicon's TimeBill on a regular basis.

“Every hour that someone works on a project is entered and submitted weekly,” Dearborn said. “We do monthly reports for billing and invoicing, quarterly reports for project costing and we also use it for tracking vacation time.”

The company's switch to SaaS was just as seamless. In preparation for the transition, CornerStar tried a dry run of the system for about a week, but the full switch was completed in about a day.

“The team at Replicon walked us through all of the steps,” said Dearborn. “All of our questions were answered quickly, and they were very knowledgeable.”

The Results

Faster, More Accurate Billing

CornerStar now uses Replicon for all invoicing. With reports on project time available in real-time, billing goes out much quicker – and without hassle.

CornerStar's customers get the benefit of receiving highly detailed, accurate invoices, supported by actual data. For every project, the company uses Replicon to create PDFs of employee timesheets, which it sends to clients along with the invoices.

Using TimeBill's comment feature, CornerStar employees can also add details next to their entered time, when necessary. This creates an even more specific timesheet, which gives both CornerStar and its clients a better picture of how each task was completed.

“It's easy for us to run a report, see how much time was billed and track comments,” said Dearborn. “So if someone entered that it took them four hours to do a seemingly simple task, they can look at the comment to see why it took them so long.”

Reports comparing billable and non-billable time also help CornerStar take a closer look at how employees are spending their time. In many cases, the company has discovered, time initially marked as non-billable could actually be attached to a project and marked as billable. Without a clear picture of this data, this revenue would have otherwise been lost.

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Maximized Revenue

Understanding how its resources are being used has proved to be one of the biggest benefits of implementing Replicon at CornerStar.

“We are a project-based company, so we need to know where our time and money is going at all times,” said Dearborn. “TimeBill gives us a clearer view of the profitability of each project and allows us to maximize revenue going forward.”

More accurate, on-demand reporting enables the company to closely monitor the bottom line on each project. Beyond speeding up billing processes, this allows CornerStar to make informed decisions about future projects: how long they might take, what they might cost, and how they should be billed.

Managers can use this information to optimize profitability – not only by billing more accurately, but also by working more efficiently.