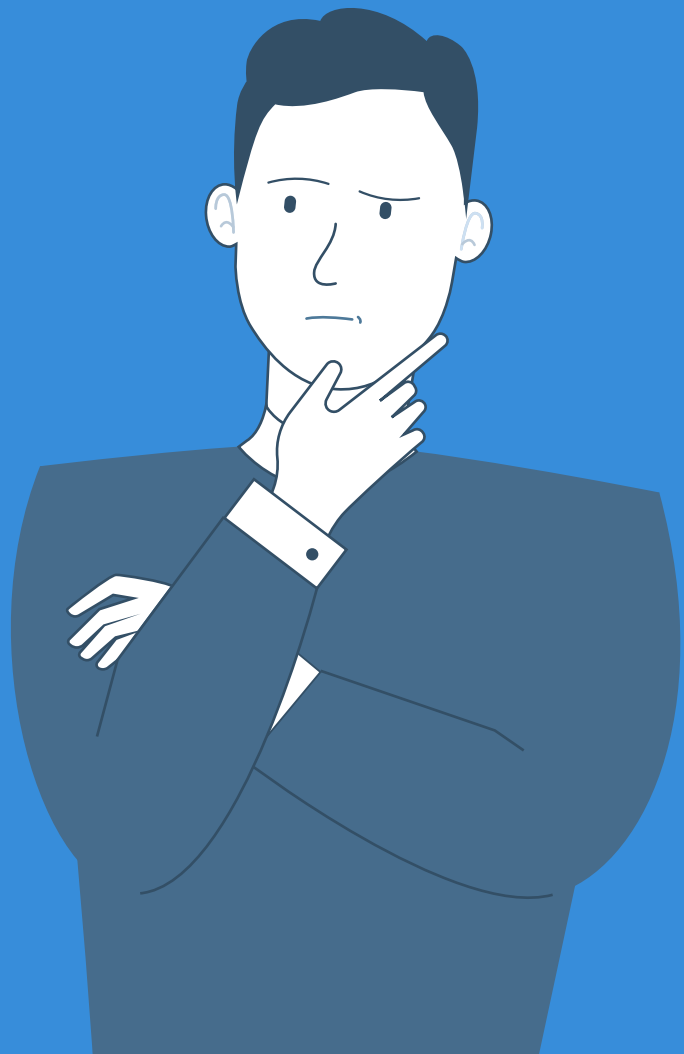


How to Choose The Right Time Tracker



Introduction

There is no universal instruction of choosing the right software, and usually the successful choice is the result of lasting trial and error.

However developing a time tracking solution for more than 10 years, we've collected some valuable market insights and a general understanding of our clients' various needs. In this ebook we would like to share a somewhat systematic approach to choosing a time tracking solution for different types of businesses based on our expertise.

The right time tracker fits the specifics of how you organize your work. If you have a clear understanding of your work processes and how the new tool will facilitate them, then it'll be easy to determine the must-have features it needs. This ebook step by step takes you to your best choice:

- In the first section of this ebook we'll go through the [5 types of work organization](#) that represent different usage scenarios of a time tracker.
- After that, we offer you to complete our questionnaire and get a [feature list of your ideal time tracker](#).
- Lastly, we'll provide you with a [comprehensive comparison of the time tracking market leaders](#) including their features and pricing.

This information at hand will save you hours of research and trial.

Freelancers



TYPE 01 | 05

Needs



- Have low budget
- Need to understand the efficiency of non-billable work
- Need to send invoices to the clients

Features



- Free or cheap basic solution
- Tagging / categories for different types of work
- Basic invoicing / integration with billing system

Being a freelancer means taking personal responsibility for organizing your time and income so no wonder time tracking solution is on top of the must-have tools for this type of workers.

At a glance, it seems that a freelance time tracking solution should be as simple and straightforward as possible. Freelancers usually work on their own and don't have a big budget. A basic free extension with timer and time logs will be a perfect fit in most cases. Don't forget about the manual time editing option which is handy when you need to make some adjustments.

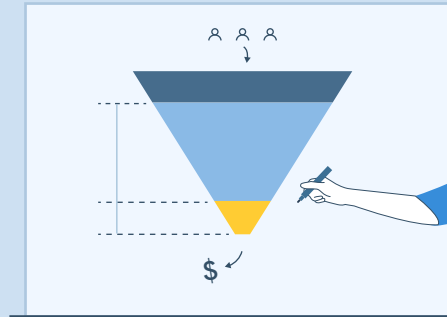
But if you want to go further, opt for a solution with basic reporting and invoicing.

Besides doing the clients' projects, you also spend your time on strategic activities: searching for the new clients, maintaining your social network presence, collecting good reviews, etc. Look for a time tracker that enables you to tag your activities and run monthly reports on them. Such reports will help you estimate your hour rate more accurately (taking into account "non-billable" activities) and improve your efficiency. For instance, if the search of the new clients takes more than a half of all work time, maybe it's time to change the way you're doing it.

Another important feature for freelancers is basic invoicing or integration with an invoicing system. Having everything in one place for billing your customers, will save you hours of work in advance.

Agencies or Project-Oriented Organizations

TYPE 02 | 05



Needs



- Avoid employee downtime and overtime
- Run all projects on time
- Enable managers to rearrange people on their projects more efficiently
- Provide detailed invoices for their clients
- Keep track of projects statuses, resources, and costs

Working with several clients or having multiple projects simultaneously implies specific challenges. Most of the client / project-oriented organizations have two interdependent problems: projects break deadlines and there are not enough people to work on them. A well-selected time tracking solution will help you improve the resource management and achieve more with the team of the same size.

Your time tracking solution should definitely have robust team management features and permissions. There should be a multi-level structure with clients, projects, and tasks where each element can be assigned to a different team member. Team leads will have permissions to rearrange people within their projects.

You will also need advanced time and financial reports on individuals, teams, and projects. They will provide you with insights regarding the time breakdown between different clients, projects profitability, under- and over-performing employees, and much more. This is an indispensable tool to maximize the profit and optimize employees' work balance.

Having advanced invoicing on top of that will enable you to generate invoices from custom reports where you can specify the list of activities with different rates for your clients.

Some time trackers offer integration with a CRM system so if you use one, this can be an important advantage.

Features



- Multi-level workspace structure
- Team management
- Permissions
- Custom time & financial reports
- Advanced invoicing
- Resource/budget control
- Estimates

Product Development Companies

TYPE 03 | 05



Needs



- Keep all project-related data together
- Facilitate time tracking for different departments
- Facilitate overtime and PTO calculation
- Support of PM methodology

Features



- Basic PM features / integration with PM system
- Dashboards
- Backlog
- Absence management features
- Custom workflow

Product development companies search for the software that will support their workflow, help them optimize the work on every stage, and deliver a great product on time.

If you have a single project management system across the whole company, using the built-in time tracking might be the handiest solution. All project details will be connected in one place without the need to duplicate it to other systems. However, built-in time trackers usually have limited functionality and may not provide advanced time reports.

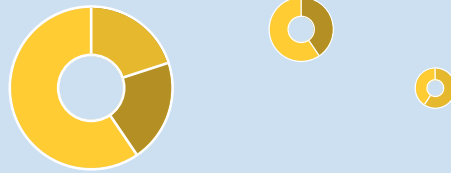
If you use several project management systems (or some departments simply don't need it), you may go for a stand-alone time tracker with integrations or with basic PM features.

In the first case, all data logged into the time tracker will be automatically synced with your PM software. Departments who only need the time logs (like HR and accounting) will be spared of adopting another complicated tool. Your HR department will also thank you for choosing a time tracker with absence management. For instance, actiTIME is integrated to actiPLANS, an absence management system from the same suite. All time logs and time off are synced between the two systems which facilitates the calculation of PTO, overtime payments and salaries.

Time tracker with basic project management features will work great for teams with simple workflow who don't need a separate PM solution. Here you can create and assign projects and tasks, leave comments, and time logs. Pay attention to custom workflow features for your specific type of work like Backlog or Kanban boards.

Enterprise

TYPE 04 | 05



Needs



- Operational efficiency
- Easy overtime calculation for different branches
- Customization
- Control
- Security

Enterprises require advanced time tracking solutions with rich functionality, customization, high level of security and privacy. Such instruments not only track employees' hours, but show operational efficiency at the company level.

One of the biggest headaches of managing hundreds of employees is calculating their overtime payments especially if they're located in different states or internationally. Look for the software where you can create user groups for different branches and set hour rates for regular time and overtime. Running automated payroll reports will save hours of your accounting department.

Features



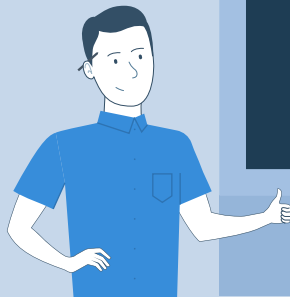
- User groups
- Hourly rate
- Custom reports
- Time approvals and time blocking
- Work monitoring
- API
- Integrations
- Self-hosting

Large companies often have formal workflows in place, so it can be imperative to have time approvals and employee monitoring features. Time approval means that all employees time logs should be approved by their manager. Time logs also can be blocked for editing after some time which is necessary for running audits, payroll or issuing invoices for past activities. Employee monitoring feature makes regular screenshots of employees monitor and / or track keyboard and mouse activity to ensure they're working.

When choosing an enterprise time tracker, you also need to make sure that it complies with your security policies and integrates with ERP, HR, billing, and other systems. Your requirements may include self-hosting solution and two-factor authentication.

Distributed Team

TYPE 05 | 05



Needs



- Keep everyone on the same page
- Calculate overtime and PTO for different locations
- Ability to track time from anywhere

Syncing efforts of distributed team and avoiding staff downtime is much harder than when all of you are in the same office. Time tracker you're looking for should provide everyone with a team view showing when colleagues are available.

You'll also need a user group feature to group users in different locations for easier reporting and payroll job in case there's different overtime and PTO legislation.

Features



- Team view
- User groups
- Hourly rate
- Mobile apps
- Offline mode

A special type of distributed team is a field team that spends a lot of time in different locations every day. For managing such team pay attention to a handy mobile version available both on iOS and Android and offline mode. Offline mode enables to add time logs even with unstable or lacking Internet connection, and all changes will be automatically synced afterwards.

Checklist for choosing the right time tracker

Check the statements that are true and you'll get the feature list of your ideal time tracker.

Your Needs

I will use time tracker on my own.

Your Features

Free plan • Manual time editing • Tagging • Invoicing • Integration with accounting systems

We need a time tracker for the team manager and their team.

Team management • Team dashboard • Basic reports

Time tracker will be used by in-house and field staff.

Team dashboard • Offline mode

Time tracker will be used by HR.

Vacation & absence management

Time tracker will be used by payroll / accounting.

Invoicing • Hourly rate • Integration with accounting systems

We already have a project management system.

Integration with PM systems

We're looking for a project management system / We need just basic project management features.

Basic project management

I need to plan my team's capacity over several projects / clients.

Staff scheduling

I want to improve the workload transparency within team.

Team dashboard

I want to measure profitability of my projects with different clients.

Advanced reports (incl. performance & billing) • Integration with CRM system

I want to approve my team's time logs.

Approvals • Integration with CRM system

We use timesheets for invoicing, payroll job or time audit.

Locking timesheets

I need to calculate overtime for different locations.

User groups • Hourly rate

It's important for us to get detailed information about profit and performance.

Advanced reports (incl. performance & billing)

We have corporate policies regarding work monitoring.







Work monitoring

Our development team uses a special tool for their tasks.

Integration with developer tools

Comparison of The Top Time Trackers with Key Features and Pricing*

*Price per user per month

Time tracker	Works Best For	Key Features	What You May Lack
 actiTIME  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freelancers • Agencies & project-oriented organizations • Product development companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual time editing • Tagging • Basic project management • Team management • User groups • Approvals • Locking timesheets • Advanced reports • Invoicing • Hourly rate • Absence management • Integration with Quickbooks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff scheduling • Integrations with PM systems
 Hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freelancers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Clients/projects/tasks structure • Basic team management • Basic reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Android app • Tagging • Integrations with other systems
 Clockify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Tagging • Basic project management • Team management • User groups • Locking timesheets • Advanced reports • Hourly rate • Offline mode • Self-hosting • Integrations with PM, CRM, developer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoicing • Staff • Scheduling • Approvals

Time tracker	Works Best For	Key Features	What You May Lack
 Time Doctor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual time editing • Basic project management • Team management • User groups • Staff scheduling • Approvals • Time locking • Advanced reports • Invoicing • Hourly rate • Integrations with PM, CRM, invoicing, developer tools, chats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagging • Estimates • Profitability reports
 toggl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual time editing • Basic project management • Tagging • Handy projects/clients structure • Basic project management • Team management • User groups • Time locking • Advanced reports • Hourly rate • Offline mode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoicing • Staff scheduling
HARVEST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies & project-oriented organizations • Product development companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Tagging • Basic project management • Limited team management • Staff scheduling • Basic reports • Invoicing • Hourly rate • Offline mode • Integrations with PM, invoicing, CRM customer support, analytics, developer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User groups • Team dashboard • Approvals

Time tracker	Works Best For	Key Features	What You May Lack
 Hubstaff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Multiple organizations in one account • Basic project management • Basic team management • User groups • Staff scheduling • Approvals • Basic reports • Invoicing • Hourly rate • Work monitoring • Integrations with PM, invoicing, CRM customer support, analytics, developer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagging • Profitability reports • Time locking
 TSHEETS  + \$20-100 base fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product development companies • Enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Basic project management • Basic team management • User groups • Staff scheduling • Approvals • Advanced reports • Integration with accounting software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profitability reports • Invoicing • Integrations with PM systems
 timecamp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies & project-oriented organizations • Freelancers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Tagging • Basic project management • Team management • User groups • Staff scheduling • Approvals • Advanced reports Invoicing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time locking

Time tracker	Works Best For	Key Features	What You May Lack
 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freelancers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagging • Basic project management • Team management • Staff scheduling • Basic reports • Invoicing • Hourly rate • Integrations with PM, accounting, developer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Time locking • Profitability reports • Approvals
 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freelancers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free plan • Manual time editing • Basic reports • Offline mode • Integrations with Trello, Asana, Github 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tagging • Invoicing

Useful Resources for Choosing a Time Tracker



Feature selector

Select features you need, and you'll automatically get a list of time trackers that fit your requirements



Brief guide to time tracking software

Get an overview of different time tracking methods



Essentials of preparing employee performance report

Learn how to collect the valuable data from your time tracker



Top productivity tools

Check the digests of the handiest tools we recommend for your work



actiTIME