

OBHT Lawyers Avoid Time Slippage with AIRTIME for Professionals and AT&T Mobility

Company: Oppenheimer, Blend, Harrison and Tate, Inc., San Antonio, TX

Industry: Professional Services - Legal

Company Size: Small - 75 employees

Type of Solution: Mobile Time Capture, Voice, email, Internet,

AT&T Mobility Partner Solution: AIRTIME for Professionals (A4P)

Business Challenge:

OBHT, a law firm built on strong Texas traditions, wanted to give its attorneys, who spend many hours “on the road”, a tool to communicate with their clients more easily while also helping them more efficiently perform other aspects of their jobs while they are away from the office. The goal was to give them access both to voice and electronic communications, the ability to receive and send emails, and ultimately be able to accurately and easily recover billable client time that might otherwise be cumbersome to track.

Solution:

AT&T Mobility offered AIRTIME for Professionals (A4P) to OBHT as part of a data package providing an easy way for attorneys to use their BlackBerry® 8700 smart phones for capturing and entering billable events in a format compatible with the company’s billing system.

Results:

- More billable time captured for increased profitability
- Convenience and ease of use for attorneys and associated office personnel
- Higher accuracy including opportunity for attorney review prior to billing
- Fast ROI

The Challenge: Maintaining responsive client communications while accurately recouping billable time

Oppenheimer, Blend, Harrison and Tate, Inc. is a Texas-based law firm with a regional, national and international reach. The firm’s practice areas have evolved considerably over the years from an initial focus on corporate and securities law, business litigation, taxation, and real estate transactions. Today OBHT has a wider reach with additional involvement in arbitration, creditor rights and bankruptcy, mediation, health care law and related services, labor and employment law, employee benefits, mergers and acquisitions, estate planning and probate and international law.

While the company has expanded, its priorities have remained stable and conservatively simple. OBHT takes pride in having clients and friends think of the firm as “a team with traditional values that achieves innovative results in a timely manner.” To this end, responsive client communications, accessibility via voice and electronic means, accountability, and accurate client billing are high priorities, even when team members are out of the office.

OBHT worked with AT&T Mobility to provide a solution for its team of 30+ highly mobile lawyers that would make it more convenient for the office and clients to reach them at any time while also allowing them to more easily perform many of their normal office functions, including pulling up background information from office computers and the Internet, sending and receiving email, logging time spent on client projects, and more – while away from the office. An innate wariness of technology for technology's sake meant it would also be important for any solution to be easy to use and not get in the way of the lawyers' primary tasks.

The Solution: BlackBerry Smart Phone from AT&T Mobility with a data plan including AIRTIME4Professionals

Says Chris Henneke, network administrator at OBHT, "When AT&T proposed the BlackBerrys and companion data plan to us, they also provided an introduction to AIRTIME, whose AIRTIME4Professionals (A4P) software would give us a way to easily capture 'time slippage'. For example, a lawyer can spend 30 minutes on the phone with a client and by the time he gets back to the office, it is all too easy to forget to log who he talked to and for how long. At \$400 or more an hour, that's significant slippage. We knew about the concept of time capture on mobile phones and thought of it as a great way to provide an ROI counterbalancing the BlackBerrys themselves."

After meeting with AIRTIME and seeing how unobtrusive and easy its software was to use, OBHT purchased 20 BlackBerrys with data plans and 20 A4P licenses.

"As it turns out, AIRTIME sold us on the BlackBerrys, not vice versa," says Raymond Battaglia, a partner with OBHT. "The BlackBerrys have solved a basic business problem for us – how to do our jobs more easily and manage our time on the road -- while A4P provided the ROI justifying the sale. We also appreciate the fact that they crafted some solutions specifically at our request such as emailing a daily recap to each user to confirm submission of time)."

Easy-to-use and timely logging of billable time

Tools that are cumbersome to use or too obtrusive into normal routines are unlikely to see widespread adoption by busy lawyers. AIRTIME's A4P is "very simple and easy to set-up", says Henneke. The client software package resides on the BlackBerry itself and most of the real work in getting up and running was done on the back end in the office system.

Training time for individual users was insignificant. OBHT ran a formal training class, not so much to teach lawyers the software but to ensure they attorneys were familiar with the new way they would be tracking their time and handling billing in a slightly different way.

A4P automatically logs time spent on phone calls or email events and allows the lawyer to allocate the time to a specific client number or project. Each time a lawyer completes an activity such as talking on the phone or emailing a client, the software asks whether or not he wants to record the time. A simple answer and number are all the lawyer needs to provide. There is also a Time Note feature in A4P that acts as a very handy stopwatch the lawyer can activate to mark and log the beginning and end of any billable event such as meeting time. Not only is this approach more accurate, it frees the lawyer from having to remember details later thereby reducing slippage.

The intuitive user interface means fast and timely recording of billable events in real time. A4P software provides a list of favorites or most frequently used billable matters used at the firm which the OBHT lawyers can assign to recorded events. An AutoText feature on BlackBerry smart phones lets lawyers use their own personal shorthand to quickly enter notes.

Logged time is automatically sent to the AIRTIME server as it occurs, and each night a batch file on the main computer at OBHT logs into the server, downloads the information and pulls it into the OBHT accounting software. Billing information for each lawyer is then sent to each attorney for internal verification. During this review process they can also add any additional information to the log.

Results: Reduced slippage, more billable time captured

OBHT has seen numerous benefits from its adoption of BlackBerry smart phone technology from AT&T Mobility and AIRTIME4Professionals software.

Among these, increased recovery of billable hours has been key. A4P has allowed OBHT lawyers to quickly and easily capture and log time they might otherwise have forgotten, regardless of where they are during the day. This is especially useful to a lawyer juggling multiple calls, activities and distractions. The log of entries also helps them recover adjacent time as well, such as ancillary functions performed in relation to phone calls and emails which are not captured directly but are flagged indirectly when they review their logs. A4p also supplies a higher degree of granularity than manual time keeping methods, especially those performed after the fact (hours or days later).

In addition, the entire process for timekeeping has been greatly simplified lessening the burden on accounting and administrative staff and reducing redundant work. They no longer need to use manual methods for recording time; the attorney creates a finished time entry at the time the billable event occurs and the administrative staff has less work deciphering notes and making corrections.

To learn more about AIRTIME-Manager and its innovative wireless solutions please visit www.airtimemanager.com, email info@airtimemanager.com or call +1 (877) 247 4464.

ABOUT AIRTIME-Manager:

AIRTIME-Manager designs, develops, and delivers a suite of mission critical applications for wireless devices. AIRTIME's applications fall into three product groups designed to meet the needs of professional services firms and business enterprises by mobilizing their offices on wireless devices:

- AIRTIME-A4P automatically captures time associated with wireless calls and emails and delivers billable hours directly to the accounting system
 - AIRTIME-A4Mail helps mobile professionals manage wireless client communications and retrieve documents on demand
 - AIRTIME-A4Biz differentiates personal from business use of wireless devices for the purpose of expense management and allocation
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