



Smart WebParts

HowardRice



# Smart Time Case Study

**One-on-One with Matthew Reynolds**

Chief Information Officer, Howard Rice

*Smart Time Transforms Law Firm's Timekeeping Process*

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Matt Reynolds, Chief Information Officer for Howard Rice in San Francisco, was one of Smart Time's "early adopters." Since implementation, the firm's attorneys have been especially enjoying the one-click, single view of how they've spent their time. As for Matt, he

tells us he's impressed enough that he's considering upgrading his firm from Smart Time Professional to Enterprise, which packages time capture and time entry in one cohesive package.

## Why implement a time capture solution?

For us, it was easy, because we were able to implement it as the firm underwent a rather dramatic revision to its time entry policy, which essentially compressed the period that timekeepers had to get time recorded into our legacy time entry system. Smart Time became a tool we could offer to help them achieve this.

Another reason was my technological interest. Essentially, Smart Time brings multiple sources of data into a single view for timekeepers, and there's no other product on the market that does that. And not only that, but as we bring on systems that may be of interest, it gives me the ability to add to that view. Smart WebParts has done a good job of making sure their system is nimble.

One of the things I had been doing prior to implementation of Smart Time was I'd been talking to timekeepers—especially the mid-level associate, who was kind of my priority—about their struggles in time entry. I know everyone manages their time differently, and I wanted to be able to deliver all of their calendared events, emails and documents to them. The timekeepers agreed this was appealing.

Like any other law firm, we have leaked time, and our time is only as good as the lawyer's memory or chicken scratch notes or what they've entered into Outlook. I wanted to close that gap as much as I possibly could. Hence, we implemented Smart Time.

Really, the decisions were not at the senior management level. There was a lot of intrinsic interest in it on my part, and I wanted to see what it could do for us.

## What are the key benefits of the system for the attorneys?

I think it's a tickler system. Generally, once you go into Smart Time, you can see what you've forgotten. You might see that last week you had a teleconference call, and it was a 15-minute conversation that came in from the client, and if you didn't make a note, that call could easily not get recorded. In those instances, Smart Time has been awesome, capturing small but incremental billing elements.

It also allows a timekeeper to build a more complete time chit, which more accurately reflects the billed time and the services provided.

## Tell us about your viral deployment.

We've had Smart Time for over a year—we were one of the early adopters. At the time, I was quite enthusiastic about it, and was also enthusiastic on behalf of the timekeepers, but a management decision had been made not to implement Smart Time enterprise-wide for all the timekeepers as we normally would with something like Word or Outlook.

It was just a different type of implementation. I had to put on my marketing cap and go talk to timekeepers, lawyers and legal assistants. What I found is that it was a grassroots effort: if you have Lawyer A talking about this wonderful mousetrap, then Lawyer B and C will want to check out that mousetrap as well, and that's essentially what's happened with the timekeepers.

## What features do the attorneys like best?

By far, the attorneys love getting their nightly email journal report and running their own time capture queries. Sure, they can easily look in their inbox and sent items, but there's no other interface that allows them to see in a single window, in chronological order, all the emails, the documents they've touched, and their calendar; and, they can look at all these things concurrently. That to me is pretty powerful. In a single click you can get all the information you want, and probably even more than you want.

Yes, you can get the same information elsewhere, but you'll have to spend several clicks and you have to enter some data. This optimizes their time far more.

Now, not everyone uses it week in and week out. If you have a lawyer who is working on a single case and researching it for three weeks, they know what they've been doing and don't need to check Smart Time.

Where I see the activity is when you have several matters up in the air, and you're billing several small time chits within a week's time, and here Smart Time is second to none. You can look at everything under the sun for that period of time or you can parse it. You can look at just the calendar, calls in or out, documents you've touched.

So the timekeepers who are using the system like this primarily rely on it not to build the time chit but to supplement the time chit they've just entered—just to cement the information that's being recorded and ultimately billed.

## What do you think of the new user interface?

The Silverlight interface is much improved. What we're finding is a clean, sophisticated, good-looking interface. The timekeepers also like that it's customizable. Silverlight has also dramatically improved Smart Time's overall performance and speed.

## Has the system increased booked hours?

That should be easy to answer, but it's not. It's not as if I can put a firm wide survey out to get feedback. There are a few timekeepers who use it religiously: it's part of their time construction process. Others use it a couple of times a month, depending on what they're working on.

Timekeeping in the law firm is a big challenge. There's no doubt about it: I think every firm who is honest probably understates their billing. So whatever that is—3 percent, 5 percent—I think Smart Time assists in closing that gap. I don't think it will ever be closed 100 percent, but it's a great tool.

## What else can you say about Smart WebParts?

One thing is clear to me: the market is changing in the time entry space, with fewer vendors. Smart WebParts has survived, and I do think we're going to see some vendors percolate to the top. Later this year, when we do a time and billing upgrade, I'm going to be looking at Smart Time as not only a means for inventorying the historical information for timekeepers, but also for their time entry system.

Smart WebParts has a distinct advantage in that they write their own software from the ground up and can take into consideration some of the strengths of the other time entry products. There's no other product on the market that brings information from multiple repositories—from the BES, Document Management and Exchange servers—and now they're taking it to the next step. Not only can they bring in this information that is stored in other databases, but they're going to allow you to enter time from Smart Time in their new enterprise edition. That will be our next phase for testing, where we will see if we can replace our legacy time entry system.

Todd Gerstein (Smart WebParts founder) and all the other players are really strong contributors. They've taken the time to develop their own software, and because it's very costly, some companies can't do it, but they made a business decision to go this way. Todd has been in the industry long enough, and knows a lot about time entry and the workflow of lawyers. I think they have something here of importance.

## About Howard Rice

**Howard Rice Nemerovski Canady Falk & Rabkin, P.C.** is a San Francisco law firm with leading national and international practices, representing entities and individuals across a comprehensive range of practice areas. Our clients are among the most sophisticated consumers of legal services and include: Beverages & more!; The Charles Schwab Corporation; Citigroup Global Markets Inc.; Clear Channel Communications; The Clorox Company; Digital River, Inc.; Google, Inc.; Hewlett-Packard Company; JP Morgan Chase & Co.; The New York Times Company; The Oakland Raiders; PMI Mortgage Insurance Co.; Recology (formerly Norcal Waste Systems); Regents of the University of California; Renesas Electronics Corporation; UBS; The United States Olympic Committee; and Wells Fargo & Company. For more information, please visit [www.howardrice.com](http://www.howardrice.com).

## About Smart WebParts

**Smart WebParts** provides innovative software solutions that maximize profits for law and accounting firms as well as professional services organizations. Our flagship product, Smart Time, is programmed to close revenue leaks and increase billable hours for firms who embed it into their timekeeping process.

Our team consists of experts in finance, accounting, process engineering and technology. Our staff has over 100 years of experience in the industries we serve. We utilize best-of-breed technologies, tools and production processes and we innovate and create new tools when necessary. We have built a dedicated team of software developers who offer solutions that are unique in the industry.

Smart WebParts is privately held and is headquartered in Los Gatos, California.



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