

# Review: AIRTIME-A4P for Automated Time Capture

By Caren Schwartz

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## AIRTIME-A4P

[www.airtimemanager.com](http://www.airtimemanager.com)

**TechnoScore: 4.5**

1 = Lowest Possible Score;  
5 = Highest Possible Score

**L**egal technology consultant Caren Schwartz spends a lot of time on the road. To help her capture time spent on email and phone calls on her BlackBerry, Caren used Airtime Manager's AIRTIME-A4P for a few months. In this TechnoFeature, she reviews A4P, including setting it up, daily use, and technical support. If you find yourself increasingly reliant on your smartphone, and concerned about billable time slipping through the cracks when you're out of the office, read Caren's review to find out if AIRTIME-A4P could help you and your colleagues.

## INTRODUCTION

Smartphones have become a necessity rather than a luxury. They enable us to talk to clients and respond to email when we're out of the office. But do you capture this time for billing? If it's only a minute or two, it may not be a big deal, but 10 five minute calls can add up. Similarly, you may spend time reviewing an email from a client and constructing an answer. It takes five minutes, but then your client responds with further questions, and pretty soon you've spent 30 minutes. You should capture this time for billing.

At an hourly billing rate of just \$250 per hour, seven minutes per day of missed billing, five days per week adds up to more than \$7,500 per year. That's a nice vacation or contribution to a college fund! Keeping track of your time when you are out of the office has always been more difficult than when sitting at your desk.

Airtime Manager's AIRTIME-A4P (A4P) makes it easy to capture the time you spend on your BlackBerry and to get that time to your billing system. iPhone support is en route.

Airtime Manager offers three products — A4P, A4Mail, and A4Biz. A4P captures time spent on calls and email, and delivers it to your billing system. A4Mail helps manage email messages by enabling you to file them directly to document libraries in the office. You can then search and retrieve email and documents via your BlackBerry. A4Biz helps separate business and personal use of smartphones, and allocates the business expense to cost centers.

## GETTING STARTED WITH AIRTIME-A4P

Over the past several months I have worked with A4P on my BlackBerry Curve. To get started I created two CSV files from my billing software. One file listed every matter and included the matter, matter number, client/contact, and client/contact number.

The second list consisted of favorite clients and matters for each timekeeper. Depending on your BlackBerry's available memory, you are probably safe with up to 200 Favorites. The process for creating these files depends on your software. I work with Time Matters and Timeslips. It was relatively easy to create these files from either program. For Time Matters I used the billing contact as the client and generated the Favorites based on last billed date. For Timeslips, which does not use client numbers, you can use the same name and number for the matter and the client.

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Once you create the files, you upload them to your Airtime Monitor online account. I was provided with easy to follow directions using a free FTP program and a user name and password. We initially had some problems with my upload that turned out to be related to the use of an ampersand in my company name, "Time & Cents Consultants, LLC." Technical support quickly figured out the problem and fixed it.

While I was not able to find an easy way to automatically update my CSV files, it was not hard to do it manually. I was able to create a batch file that can be run to upload the revised files to Airtime Manager and download my data file. I then reviewed the data and used a simple import process to pull the data into my billing system. Depending on your billing system and the steps you choose to take, the whole process could be automated. In a small practice, with only one or two timekeepers, it is not necessary to completely automate this system.

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#### USING AIRTIME-A4P ON THE GO

Day to day use of A4P was simple and automatic. I did not want to capture time for short email messages or calls that resulted in a voicemail, so I customized the settings to only capture calls and email of more than a minute. You can change this setting on each BlackBerry that uses A4P.

When a call or email is completed, a screen pops up showing the information from the phone (phone number, email address, name if recognized from your phone directory). You can then choose a matter number or a contact number from your Favorites and fill in the memo field if desired. You can find Favor-

ites by name or by number. If a matter or contact doesn't exist in your Favorites you can just fill in some information on the memo and update it on the A4P portal or when pulled into your system.

The handling of time entries without a contact or matter is determined by the firm but is usually set to something that can be pulled into the billing system and then easily identified for handling. You also have the option to mark a phone number as personal. When you do, A4P will not prompt you about calls to and from that number in the future. If you have previously associated the phone number or email with a matter and contact A4P will remember the association and fill it in for you. You can override this pre-fill if necessary.

The ability to automatically capture time spent on phone calls and email is a killer feature. Even with few out of the office phone calls and email I was able to capture several hours per week that might otherwise have been lost. Even if the time was not billable, the reminders of who I spoke with or corresponded with helped me keep my office records up-to-date.

#### ADDITIONAL FEATURES

In addition to the time capture, A4P also includes time entry functions: TimeNote and Stopwatch. TimeNote enables you to choose a Favorite and enter the time spent with a note. TimeNote can automatically capture the date and time of the entry. It offers a good way to capture an out of office appointment or any work other than email or phone

calls that you cannot capture automatically.

The Stopwatch enables you to run a timer. When you stop it, A4P will open a screen for you to record notes and the related client and matter. All entries from TimeNote and Stopwatch are sent to your Airtime Monitor account for integration into your billing system.

A4P also offers the ability to consolidate time so that five one minute calls to the same person over a designated time period automatically get accumulated into one overall entry. This feature ensures that you capture as much billable time as possible, and is customizable for each individual.

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#### OPTIMIZING A4P

While uploading the lists and downloading the information into my billing software was easy, my biggest frustration stemmed from the dynamics of my business. As a consultant, working with many different firms, I found that the people who called weren't necessarily in my Favorites as often as I would have expected. I had based my Favorites on the previous 60 days of billing records. Using different criteria for my Favorites would likely have resulted in a better list. Over time I will get

better at defining my Favorites and expect this issue to become less of a problem.

When a Favorite did not exist, it was easy to record the party in the notes and then change the records before importing, but I would like the ability to add someone to my Favorites “on the fly.” This enhancement would make it much easier to keep my Favorites up to date.

Another suggested enhancement would be the ability to review the A4P captures on the phone and make changes.

Sometimes, when in a rush, I realized I completed a time entry incompletely or incorrectly. I then had to wait until I could download the file or visit Airtime Monitor to make additions and/or corrections.

How entries not properly matched or completed are handled depends on the billing package you use. You can customize A4P to leave the entries for you to correct, or auto fill them with default information to enable importing. When you purchase A4P, the company will discuss these options with you, and

help you make the best choice for your firm and your software.

### CONCLUSION

For an attorney on the go, A4P is a valuable tool to help capture all of your time. The technical support staff I spoke with was eager to help and knew the product. When they didn't have the solution they took ownership and resolved the issue quickly by return call or email. Ease of implementation will depend on your billing software, but if you can export names from your billing software and import time entries, you can implement A4P.

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*Caren Schwartz is the founder of [Time & Cents Consultants](#), a Connecticut firm that specializes in helping professionals select, install, and get the most out of their software. She is also a member of the 7 Second System, a LexisNexis Premier Certified Independent Consultant Group. Caren's philosophy is that companies can save time and money when their software works for them.*

*Caren is an Advanced Certified Professional Advisor for QuickBooks®, a Certified Consultant for Timeslips® by Sage, Peachtree® by Sage, Amicus Attorney® and Amicus Accounting by Gavel and Gown Software and BillQuick software. She is also a Premier Certified Independent Consultant for Time Matters®, Billing Matters™, and PCLaw® by LexisNexis and a Qvinci Master Guru.*

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