

Review: Chrometa for Automatic Time Capture

By Bryan Sims

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Chrometa

www.chrometa.com

TechnoScore: 5

1 = Lowest Possible Score;
5 = Highest Possible Score

To accurately track all your time, you could hire someone to sit in your office and watch you work. But do you want someone staring at the back of your head all day? In this TechnoFeature article, Bryan Sims reviews an alternative solution — Chrometa, which tracks what you do on your PC. In his review, Bryan discusses how he uses Chrometa as well as an alternative method. Did Chrometa help Bryan capture more billable time? Read his review to find out.

INTRODUCTION

Every week or two I have one of those days when I get to the end of the day exhausted. I know I have worked nonstop, but rather than working on one or two large projects, I realize that I have spent all day working on 20 small tasks. Often, when I look back over my day's billing, I realize that my billings do not match the reality of what I did. By the end of the day, however, I have difficulty recalling everything I did.

I have discovered the solution to this problem, however — a Windows software utility called Chrometa. Chrometa works by keeping track of everything that you do. Basically, it tracks your active window keeping track of

how long you spend on that window. It doesn't matter how many windows you have open, it tracks only the one window in which you are working.

Further, if you are working with one window, switch to a different one, then go back to the first window, the program aggregates all of the time that you spent in the first window.

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TWO METHODS FOR USING CHROMETA

In my experience, there are two key ways to use Chrometa. First, it enables you to work for a period of time, such as a day or a week. At the end of that period, you can prepare your time entries by reviewing the information Chrometa captures. To improve this ability, the program enables you to assign your time entries to categories such as clients or matters.

Additionally, if you use an assistant to aid in your time entry, you can export your categorized time entries to Excel. You can then email this file to your assistant who can then enter your time into your firm's time and billing program.

The second method is the one that I use. I use the timer in my

time and billing program to track my work through the day. At the end of the day, I review the Chrometa entries to see if my timers missed anything. Rarely does a day go by that I do not find additional time during this audit.

My lost time often happens when I am work on something and I receive a call from a client or opposing counsel. Although Chrometa does not track my phone calls, it does track the documents I opened and referred to while I was on the telephone. By reviewing these entries, I am able to remember the call and capture time that would have otherwise been lost.

Speaking of lost time, this audit also enables me to see how I waste time. I know that I will spend some time every day reading posts in Google Reader. If I notice, however, that the time that I spend doing this, or the time I spend in TweetDeck increases, I can cut back my time on those activities.

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I now no longer have to wonder how much time I spend on any activity. Even if I forget to turn on my timer in my time and billing program, I know that Chrometa

will keep track of the documents in which I work.

Chrometa also keeps track of the time that I spend away from the computer. When I come back to the computer after being away from it, Chrometa tells me how long I have been away and asks me if I want to record this time. If I want to categorize the time, I can. If not, the window asking me goes away after a few seconds.

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IT'S ABOUT TIME

I am a big fan of utilities that perform one task, and do it well. Chrometa meets this criteria. It

keeps track of what I do. It runs in the background. Thus, I do not even need to think about it. As a bonus, although the program runs constantly, and keeps track of everything, I have noticed no drag on my system resources.

Although the program is set up by default to keep track of everything that you do, you can create some controls. For example, you can exclude certain programs from being tracked by Chrometa. One example I have seen is someone who uses Internet Explorer for work and Firefox personally so he excludes Firefox from Chrometa. This setting prevents him from having to distinguish personal activities from work activities.

If you wish, you can pause Chrometa's recording — just don't forget to restart it. Also, you can delete individual entries from Chrometa's records.

You can download Chrometa and evaluate it free for 30 days. If you want to purchase the program, the price is a very reasonable \$99. This \$99 not only gets you a license to use the program, but it also includes free email and telephone support. Additionally, Chrometa's Web site includes a quick start guide, community support, and Webinars that explain how to use the program.

CONCLUSION

If your practice involves hourly billing at all, you will benefit from Chrometa. In short, Chrometa works well, increases your revenue, and includes helpful and friendly support from its creators. I have no doubt that Chrometa will pay for itself in the first week that you own it, if not the first day. Although no program is ever perfect, I do not hesitate to give Chrometa a TechnoScore of 5 out of 5.

Bryan Sims is the sole shareholder in [Sims Law Firm, Ltd.](#), where he concentrates his practice in the areas of commercial litigation and civil appeals. Before entering private practice, Bryan worked as a law clerk for Illinois Supreme Court Justice S. Louis Rathje. Bryan is a Cum Laude graduate of Wheeling Jesuit University and a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Bryan has spoken on legal technology issues for both the Illinois State Bar Association and the Chicago Bar Association. He was named the 2005 TechnoLawyer of the year. Bryan blogs at www.theconnectedlawyer.com.

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