

# Case Study - How BurntToast® Marketing Improved Profitability

## The Challenge

As anyone who's been involved in a start-up business will know, one of the biggest challenges that you face in your first 12 months is how best to charge for your services to maximise your resources.

As a strategic marketing firm our competitive advantage stems from knowledge, so the most valuable resource that we have is time.

Our specialty is turning research into strategies for business. We know that by examining the goals of your business you can determine what information to track and how, when to report on it, and when to act on it.

The trouble is when it came to managing our own internal performance, we weren't doing this enough for ourselves.

So while we've always had a handle on our hourly rates for ad hoc work, it became obvious early on that our ongoing projects really drained our resources - we just weren't being compensated well for our time.

How did this happen? For the first 12 months all our quotes were being based on 'gut feel' for how many hours we thought we needed to work complete a job. This is because we tracked all our work using an excel spreadsheet. While this was fine for gaining a general idea of how many hours had been spent on a project, we never took the time to analyse the results against income - the process was just too onerous and time consuming.

We also never tracked our 'do not bill' time - the extra bits and pieces such as office admin or value-add services being performed for a client. So we weren't really considering the whole picture as part of our quotes.

## The Solution

BurntToast® has been working with Time & Data Management since May 2008 - we assist in delivering their email campaigns - so to build our "full picture" we decided it was time to learn more about Timeslips and how it could help to streamline our business.

After discussing our needs with Michele, we implemented

**As a start-up business, managing project profitability for BurntToast® Marketing was initially hit and miss. Then we found Timeslips...**

Timeslips in February of this year (2009) and immediately sought advice on customisation. At the time of installation, Michele setup our Timeslips to capture billable, do not bill and no charge time, enabling us to customise the database to best suit our needs. She also customised our invoice templates to capture the information we like to provide to our clients - and in particular, built custom fields that allow us to automatically display sponsorship monies raised as a percentage of every invoice.

Customising our setup and adding BurntToast® branding took about four hours, and after tracking our day-to-day work for just over a month the results are quite astonishing. Within a few short weeks our biggest drain has already been identified - do not bill time.

## The Results

Since implementing Timeslips we've learnt that at least half of our week is spent on general client admin - phone calls, client emails, new business enquiries, meeting preparation and broad market research. Because we've never tracked this before, this part of our service has been missed in our 'gut feel' calculations for quoting on a project and has therefore not been included in our billable hours. That's a big chunk of time not earning any income and something we are now planning to change.

We know we've only scratched the surface of what this software can do for our business but it's already paid for itself thanks to customisation. The next step? Contract reviews! For the first time since BurntToast® started, we're actually looking forward to this process. We now have confidence that what we are quoting will compensate us correctly, improve our profitability and ultimately benefit the most important people of all - our clients.

**Wendy Ackland**  
Director, BurntToast® Marketing

