



## Getting Past the Hype

How one firm discovered that the key to a successful time/billing implementation is part software and part “everything else.”

“[BigTime] seemed like a good choice. It was browser-based, integrated with QuickBooks, targeted to firms our size.” Even so, she was skeptical. “I figured all these packages were the same, and based on my previous experience, I figured we were headed for a train wreck.”

**Sherry Cross**  
**Controller**  
**Ashton Partners LLC.**

### SUCCESS STORY

**Ashton Partners LLC.**

### AT A GLANCE:

**Customer:**

Ashton Partners LLC.

**Location:**

Chicago

**Industry:**

Investor Relations

**Business Challenge:**

Getting past the marketing hype and getting real results from their time/billing system.

**Solution:**

BigTime delivers a simple, straight-forward solution that consultants and managers can get their heads around.

**Results:**

More billable time, better management oversight and a controller with bragging rights.

### Customer Profile

Ashton Partners is a national financial consulting firm with employees in 3 offices: Chicago, San Francisco and Boston.

### Business Challenge

The firm’s fifty plus employees needed a time/expense entry solution that could fit into their already over-busy schedules. Managers needed real-time reports on account budgets, time spent, expenses incurred, staff utilization and revenue projections. The firm’s controller just needed to avoid a train wreck.

### Solution Overview

BigTime’s browser-based interface gave managers and employees access to the data they needed, and it’s integration with QuickBooks made invoicing, costing and budgeting easy.

### Business Benefits

Employees get to spend less time on administrative work. Managers get the information and reports they need from anywhere in the country, and the firm’s controller gets to move on to the next business critical project.





**SUCCESS STORY**

**Ashton Partners**

"I'd been down this road before, and I wasn't looking forward to it." Sherry Cross had been given the task of locating and implementing a time billing system for Ashton Partners: a six million dollar financial consulting firm with employees in three offices. "I'd implemented a similar system at my last company, and it was a nightmare."

Cross' last employer had expected big gains from their time/billing software: administrative savings, increased billable hours, improved visibility. "We bought into the marketing hype," she says, "but what we ended up with was a program that basically sat on the managers' desktops." Her managers struggled to use the system, and she struggled to get staff to enter even basic time entry details.

This time, Cross was determined to take a different approach. Enter BigTime: a time/billing package from Edison's Attic that links automatically to QuickBooks. "It seemed like a good choice," she says, "It was browser-based, integrated with QuickBooks, targeted to firms our size." Even so, Cross was skeptical. "I figured all these packages were the same."

She was immediately impressed with BigTime's accessibility. "Every software package has a learning curve, but [Edison's Attic] was great at getting me up to speed quickly," she says. She purchased a plus package from Edison, so one of the software vendor's analysts took care of getting the system installed via a real-time web-based support session and then walked her through dozens of configuration options for her right on the spot. "It would have taken me weeks to figure that stuff out, but these consultants setup BigTime for other firms like us every day. Plus," she confesses, "I hate reading manuals." Cross was up and running and pulling projects and staff into BigTime from QuickBooks in a single afternoon.

Then came the hard part.

"We still had to use the system," she says. That meant training, and Cross was surprised again at how easy it was. "They have free online training sessions, so my install person said I should sign up for one. I signed up for twelve!"

That gave Cross a series one-hour tutorials on different aspects of the system that were important to her firm. Once she got the basics down, she moved on to budgeting, reporting, customizing their connection with QuickBooks, "Everything we needed to learn was in the online training sessions. I took Basics three times because I got so much out of it the first time."

Once her users started entering time and expense data, she knew she'd made the right choice. "None of them want to keep their timesheet open all day," she says of Ashton's staff, "so BigTime was perfect for us." The average person could enter timesheet details in just a few minutes at the end of their day, and all of the quick lookups and shortcuts make it easier for staff to get the right details into the system quickly. "They still complain about it," she admits, "but not nearly as much!" BigTime is also browser-based, so Ashton's employees and managers can get to it when they're on the road.

That was two years ago, and Cross is still confident she made the right choice. "We've just slowly started to use more and more of the product," she says. Invoicing, customized billing rates, revenue recognition for fixed-fee project, staff allocation budgets. "It's all in there," she says.

Does she still sign up for online training sessions? "Occasionally I login to take a peak," she admits, "the guys know me by first name at this point, and sometimes they'll shoot me a note and ask what I'm doing in *Basics* again! But I still get a lot out of it." Plus, she still hates reading manuals.

"Every software package has a learning curve, but these guys were great at getting me up to speed quickly...[we] were up and running and tracking time in a single afternoon."

**Sherry Cross**  
**Controller**  
**Ashton Partners LLC.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:**

**Edison's Attic, Inc.**  
<http://www.EdisonsAttic.com>

**Quick Books**  
[www.quickbooks.com](http://www.quickbooks.com)

BigTime and QuickBooks Financial Software work together to help simplify your business management. QuickBooks 2006 Financial Software helps you get more done faster, with a new Home page, simplified Customer and Vendor Centers, and sophisticated business planning tools.

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