

PROADVISOR review

BIGTime

Overall Rating

9.5

Summary



Professional services firms in need of a true automation tool which goes beyond time and billing that is robust, yet flexible and scalable should definitely look at BigTime. Not only does it handle the time and expense tracking through billing with fantastic features, but the project management functionality will facilitate tracking of contract arrangements, budgets and teams with ease. Reporting is robust, and the collaboration tools that exist for handling the sales pipeline, and dealing with document and contact management may meet or exceed your expectations for a CRM solution.

The integration with QuickBooks is probably one of the most detailed and flexible I have seen from a third party application (both in terms of the types of transactions as well as the options for how much detail will be transferred).

Strengths

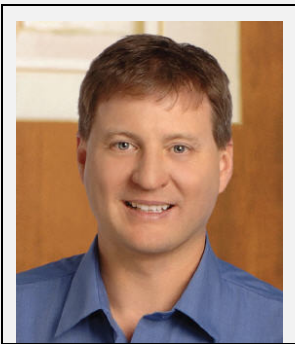
There are so many different types of professional services industries in the marketplace today, and BigTime is customizable to meet the varying needs of most any. What might be a critical strength for one industry might seem less important to another. As such, creating a list of strong features that exist within the product seems inappropriate for the purposes of this review. However, the following is a list of strengths which I would consider to be of value to a large cross section of potential users:

- **BigTime is customized to the needs of most professional services industries** - Out of the box, your BigTime install will be relevant to your industry using the same language you would use. Users will not have to struggle with generic jargon from some other industry.
- **The product is customizable** – The application was built with customization in mind. In the unlikely event you need or want something that is not already in the application, it is highly likely that the developers at Edison's Attic can make modification to help you achieve your goals. Of course, this is a fee based service.
- **The software is easy to use** – The software utilizes the concept of workflow which adds greatly to the ease of navigation. In addition this workflow is largely modifiable to mirror the way you work.

Product Name

BigTime by
Edison's Attic

Reviewed By



Steve Green

Date Reviewed

June 9, 2009

- **The application runs in a browser** – While there are several options as to how you might choose to install/deploy the application, ultimately the user interface is browser based. This makes it a great fit for those firms whose staff may be spread across different offices or for home based employees/subcontractors. Another related benefit is that it also leaves open the option for users to access BigTime from platforms such as Mac or Linux.
- **Training resources** – There are lots of them and they are very well done. There are training videos on the web, in-product links to helpful documentation, free topical webinars on most every subject you might need to cover, and a printed user guide that is well written and incredibly helpful. Of course, there is also paid consultation and training time available.
- **Reporting** – While the standard reports that are available in the application are very strong, there is also a custom reporting tool that provides access to the data in your file. You can memorize reports and they can be exported to Word and Excel. This type of business analysis is rarely seen in products at these price points.
- **QuickBooks integration** - It would seem that the developers have taken advantage of everything they could touch in QuickBooks to make the integration as seamless and meaningful as possible.
- **DCAA compatibility for government contracts**- While not tested in this review, BigTime has stated functionality for this.

Limitations

During the course of this review, we found no real limitations to speak of other than the fact the product is not well oriented to a single person operation.

Having said that, it should be noted that our review was limited to only one industry and, even within that same industry, the needs of one firm would often be different than the needs of another. Edison's Attic does encourage and provide custom demonstrations geared toward your needs. You can find links to the demonstration information on their website.

One key point worth noting is that this review was limited to BigTime's integration with the desktop versions of QuickBooks and did not include any testing relative to QuickBooks Online Edition. QuickBooks Online is known to have reduced functionality over the desktop versions which may impact how deeply BigTime can integrate with it.

Wish List

While I can always come up with a list of things I would want to see in a software application, BigTime proved feature rich enough for me that anything I listed here would be more about personal preference than functionality.

Product Ratings

Rating

Setup and Installation:

Setup and installation was a breeze. Edison's Attic basically offers three installations options:

- **Software as a Service (SaaS)** - They host both your BigTime and QuickBooks file on their servers
- **Host it yourself** - You install BigTime and QuickBooks on your servers
- **Mix-and-match** - They host BigTime and you maintain your own QuickBooks installation and date file

Since the third seemed the hardest when it was explained, I decided I would utilize that method during testing and it worked like a charm.

It is probably worth noting that Edison's Attic did most of the set-up and installation via remote access while I watched and learned. This installation method is what they refer to as their "Install+ Package".

9.5

Ratings Definitions

10.0 (Perfect):

This exceedingly rare score is reserved for a product that is as perfect as it could be.

9.0 to 9.9 (Spectacular):

A product that receives a rating in this range succeeds at meeting all of its intended users' needs and has no meaningful drawbacks.

8.0 to 8.9 (Excellent):

A product that receives a rating in this range is superior in so many ways that its relatively few drawbacks are not very important.

7.0 to 7.9 (Very good):

While the strengths of a product scoring in this range certainly outweigh its weaknesses, it has some minor faults that certain users should be aware of.

6.0 to 6.9 (Good):

This range represents a product that is above average. Its strengths slightly outweigh its weaknesses, making it good for most uses but not a standout.

5.0 to 5.9 (Average):

A product that scores in this range is functional but unremarkable.

4.0 to 4.9 (Mediocre):

Products in this range are below average. They fall in the middle of the pack for most features, but suffer from a few additional major flaws.

3.0 to 3.9 (Poor):

A customer should probably not consider purchasing a product in this range or lower. There may be one or two specialized circumstances, however, that could justify the purchase of this product for a very low price for a specific demand.

2.0 to 2.9 (Terrible):

A product that receives a rating in this range does not satisfy any of its intended users' needs and has no meaningful strengths.

1.0 to 1.9 (Abysmal):

A product in this range should never have been produced. This product has no redeeming qualities and worse, may actually harm the user or the user's productivity.

Interface:

The user interface is web-based and is driven largely by logical menu items centered on typical workflow. Each page includes easily identified links that lead to related tasks. On the left side of each screen is a detailed description of the page and how to use it (which eliminated a lot of the need to seek out help pages or other training resources).

The solution I chose was hosted on the developer's server. Before getting started with testing, I was concerned about performance issues. However, with my standard 1.5 DSL line, I detected no significant latency or page display issues that would have slowed data entry procedures.

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Features:

When you get beyond a couple of users, the native QuickBooks time tracking and project management features simply no longer meet the needs of most firms. BigTime picks up the slack and sends back to QuickBooks the information needed to do the accounting.

Beyond the QuickBooks Integration, BigTime really does provide a full featured package. In essence, I felt that it managed all phases of time and billing, including detailed project management from end to end.

Following is a list of some of the key features:

- Manage and track employee/subcontractor time and expenses with support for costing, multiple billing rates, task management and more.
- Project management functionality that address both the sales pipeline and jobs that have been won, including budgeting, team coordination, task management, document management and more.
- Invoicing with robust options suitable to most any industry or contract arrangement.
- Strong security and easy navigation

9.5



Ease of Use/Service and Support

9.5

Several of the strengths listed in this review were focused on the ease of use and this product is very easy to use. However, that being said, this is a full featured product which means there is a lot to know in terms of setup. I would not attempt to deploy this solution without adequate advance training and planning.

As for service and support, I was thrilled with the availability and knowledge of the staff people I worked with.

As of this writing, the purchase price of the product includes a year of support and free product upgrades.

Data Security / Privacy

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The data security model is based on roles with users then assigned to a specific role. It is at the role level where access privileges are defined for various areas of the application. The system comes with several default roles and you may customize your own.

Edison's Attic's privacy policy is clear and concise in its approach. If you would like to review this policy there is a prominently displayed link at the bottom of their home page.

Integration with QuickBooks

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I have the opportunity to work with many third party add-on applications and as previously stated, " The integration with QuickBooks is probably one of the most detailed and flexible I have seen"

The product uses the "BigTime Agent" to facilitate the transfer of data back and forth between the two applications. In essence, the agent is basically an applet that sits between QuickBooks and BigTime and looks for changes that should be posted one way or the other. There is also a nightly sync process that updates data between the two systems. Updates for specific transactions can also be posted (by approved personnel) as needed.