



Fiction vs. Fact:

*Why the Profession Still
Needs Timesheets—Done
Right*

Recently, an email asked accountants whether it's finally time to "ditch the timesheet." It plays into the long-standing sentiment that timesheets are burdensome, outdated, and ultimately irrelevant in a world moving toward value pricing and outcome-based engagements. The email references an article from the Journal of Accountancy (2010) that advocates for a post-timesheet world, urging firms to adopt project management and After-Action Reviews (AARs) instead.

As a business that has lived at the intersection of accounting innovation and operational efficiency and is passionate about improving the operations of accounting firms, we want to push back and not just rebrand old frustrations. Not to defend the timesheet as we once knew it, but to defend what it could and should be: a factual, continuous, and intelligent source of operational truth.

Let's separate the fiction from the facts.



Fiction #1: Timesheets Are *Inaccurate* and Always Will Be

The strongest argument the email makes is ironically also the best argument for fixing, not ditching, the timesheet: “timesheets are a work of fiction.”

That’s true—but only when you rely on human memory. People forget. They estimate. They fill in gaps with guesswork days later. It’s imprecise and often wrong.

But the solution to bad data isn’t no data—it’s better data. CloudCapcha’s approach to real-time time capture makes this point. Today’s technology can passively track activities, suggest time entries based on behaviour, and surface intelligent prompts to help people confirm what they did while they still remember it, with zero disruption to their workflow.

This modernised timesheet isn’t about control—it’s about clarity. It transforms time recording from fiction to fact. That fact, in turn, powers decision-making across billing, staffing, profitability, and client value.



Fiction #2: Project Management and AARs *Replace* Timesheets

The email argues for two substitutes: granular project management and After Action Reviews. Both are worthwhile. Both are complementary. But neither replaces what time data gives you.

Let's break that down:

- Project Management helps plan work. But planning is not measuring. You can't spot effort overrun, systemic underperformance, or hidden inefficiencies just from task status. Without time-based effort data, you don't know why a task took longer, or who is consistently overextended.
- After-action reviews are useful learning tools. But they're subjective, limited to who was present, and come at the end of a job. They don't help you adjust course mid-engagement. They are retrospective, not real-time.

Timesheets (done right) should be immediate. They show pressure points across the firm, job by job, client by client. And they don't require a one-hour meeting to extract meaning.



Fiction #3: You Don't Need Timesheets for *Value* Pricing

The Journal of Accountancy article (and the email) assert that you don't need timesheets because you're not billing by the hour. But this confuses pricing with costing.

Yes—value pricing means you don't charge clients based on time. That's a good thing. But to run a business—especially an accounting firm—you still need to know:

- Which types of work are profitable?
- Which clients consistently underconsume or overconsume capacity?
- Which team members are overloaded?
- Where can you automate or streamline?
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None of that comes from the invoice. It comes from operational data—time data.

Ron Baker, the godfather of value pricing, has acknowledged that while price is determined by value, costs still matter to the business. You can't assess productivity, ROI on hiring, or technology savings without it.



5 Challenges Timesheets Can Fix

The email downplays timesheets while ignoring how a modern activity and time capture solution directly resolves accounting firms' major operational headaches recording what people do and how long it took.

1. **Painful to Use:** This is true for legacy practice management systems. But passive, real-time capture removes this friction entirely. There is no more manual entry, and there is no more resentment.
2. **We Don't Bill All That Should Be Billed:** This is a direct result of inaccurate or incomplete time records. Real-time capture eliminates leakage.
3. **We Lack Accurate Performance Insights:** Without a baseline, you can't understand marginal cost, utilisation, or engagement health. That baseline is effort, which comes from time spent on work activities.
4. **Inconsistent Behaviour Across the Firm:** Firms that don't measure can't manage. Timesheets create consistent metrics across roles, teams, and offices.
5. **Outdated Technology:** Absolutely. But again, the problem isn't what you're measuring. It's how. Legacy timesheet technology is obsolete. Innovative timesheet technology isn't.



Let's Debunk More Myths (Straight from CloudCapcha)

From our previous [myth-busting article](#), here are three critical myths the email reinforces—and why they're wrong:

- “Timesheets kill morale”: It's not the timesheet that kills morale—it's asking people to reconstruct their work week manually. Modern tools integrate into workflows and eliminate the burden.
- “Timesheets don't reflect value”: True, but they do reflect effort. You still need that to evaluate scope creep, training needs, or bottlenecks—even if you're billing fixed fees.
- “Timesheets are just for billing”: False. The best firms use time data for resource planning, pricing calibration, profitability analysis, and client advisory.



Final Thought: Don't Throw Out the Compass

Ditching timesheets because they've been misused is like throwing away your compass because you once got lost.

“The recent judgment against Ernst & Young isn't an indictment of audit software—it's a signal that human oversight and digital tools must evolve together. Progress comes from fixing the cracks, not discarding the foundation.”

The answer isn't to fly blind. It's to modernise the technology. CloudCapcha exists to fix the timesheet problem, not perpetuate it. We don't ask accountants to track every six minutes. We empower them with real-time, intelligent data that reflects how work is done. Fact, not Fiction.

The profession doesn't need fewer timesheets. It needs better ones. Ones that find the truth and empower aspirational Firms to be exceptional.

Find truth.

Be *exceptional.*

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