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Involving Creative Staff in the Project Management

By [Volker Bendel](#)

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Historically in many agencies creative staff members only do creative work and record their time for this work in a time recording system - ideally electronically.

Experience from many training classes for creative teams in using a computerised timesheet system has however shown that the majority of them are also open to learn about how their projects perform in a commercial sense.*

When showing them time enquiries and time reporting they are not only interested in if they have or have not entered their required weekly hours but often ask additional questions relating the job bag and the project financials as well:

- "Why does this project say it has a fee value of 1000.00 if the time I have entered is valued at 1500.00?"
- "Half of the time I entered on XY-job was due to amendments asked for by the customer, do we not invoice for that?"
- "There is a figure in the job bag saying the job has run over its time budget. I could have helped in estimating how long it would take to do this type of work and calculate a more realistic budget."

These are only some of the comments heard when doing timesheet trainings for creative staff. Which raises the question: Would it make sense to involve those creative colleagues a bit more in the project management side of their work?

Organisations who have gone that way and who integrate all their staff in the monitoring of project-profitability have found that this enhances the motivation for the entire enterprise. Creative members of staff feel much more valued and hence have a much better incentive to ensure their projects are profitable.** Based on their expertise on working on similar projects both in their current employment but often also in previous jobs they come up with suggestions about how to improve the project realisation from the outset of the project.

Companies who take that approach find that the involvement of their creative team works best if they get trained in understanding a selected number of project reports and enquiry screens rather than asking them to find their own favourite reports. Not only does that produce the desired motivational effect, but it is also most cost effective as no additional specialist training for creative staff is required. The training is either delivered in-house by project managers or is added on to the timesheet training. They find that this is an economical and straight forward way to at all levels raise everyone's identification with the organisation as a whole and by doing so resulting in an improved project profitability throughout.

* There are - of course - always creative minds, who don't want to get involved in anything else but their creative work, who see any project management as a potential restriction of their art. They desire to deliver the highest quality of creative results regardless of how little the project value is and ignore the fact that they could spend their creativity on much higher value projects.

** see related article in this forum: Bendel, Volker "Timesheets Are Not The End Of It." Timesheets Are Not The End Of It. 25 May. 2008. EzineArticles.com. 22 Jun 2008.

Volker Bendel is manager of the training department of Agency Software Worldwide, the

producers of the "Paprika/Rebus" job costing software (<http://www.paprika-software.com>) - (<http://www.rebus-software.com>). Originally from a legal background, he has several years experience in planning and implementing Job Costing and Accounting Software Systems in the Creative Industry. He has also delivered training courses in the UK, Europe, Dubai, the US, China and Australia. Prior to that he worked as a senior business consultant in Hong Kong and as a department manager of a design department in Hong Kong.

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