

EASY RIDE

for time trackers



Easy riders

For motorcycle fan Jim Bennett (centre with Harley-Davidson) and his colleagues LeeAnne Hemry (left) an Innate administrator, and Chris Winkley (right), Director of Process Engineering at ADP Dealer Services, the time tracking highway is easily negotiated with Innate Timesheets.

IN ANOTHER LIFE Jim Bennett, Process Engineer at ADP Dealer Services in Portland, Oregon, might have been a detective. Since joining the auto/truck dealer and manufacturing systems division five years ago he has not only developed a highly effective time tracking software network, but has also analysed many of the human behavioural obstacles and worked out how to overcome them.

Time tracking

“Our software development teams provide auto retailers all over the US with technology solutions that improve dealership efficiency, client relationships and profitability. My job is to track

development team time. To do this, we use Microsoft Project to plan nearly 800 projects handled by the different development groups.

“We created an MSP template with 64 standard activities based on how senior management needs to see data. Project managers start with this template for their initial planning and proposals. That file is customised by project managers, within a given set of rules, for managing their projects. The customised MSP file becomes the load file for Innate.

Add task feature

“Our projects involve a great number of people, often including vendors, manufacturers, and other third-party providers. Initially we requested that managers put in start and finish dates and assign resources to tasks. The amount of work required to keep the MSP load file current

was overwhelming our project managers. So we decided to scale it back. We now load 64 standard activities, set all tasks to the same start and finish dates, and do not assign resources to tasks. Our associates use Innate's 'add task' feature to build their timesheets. Since Innate carries added tasks forward, it is not a significant burden on our associates. Our project managers appreciate the reduced burden while we still get useful data."

Greater clarity

The result has been far greater clarity of operation. Each development group can easily see how its people spend their time, and ensure that they are working on the most important tasks. In addition, profiles of the percentages of time spent on each phase in the lifecycle can be compared across the projects and across the groups.

Best quality for the buck

"What can we tell from this? We now know how much time we spend directly on new development, and how much is spent on maintaining the existing code base; the amount of support labour we provide to the groups doing the development and maintenance (performance testing, QA, process assurance etc); the time we spend on special one-off or 'boutique' development; and how much time we have in overhead. We can compare those numbers between projects, between departments, and with industry standards to give us some idea how things are going. Firm estimates can be made on how much we spend keeping old code active - which helps us decide what to sunset and what to keep going. Projects that went well can be compared, and we can see what their profiles look like. Those profiles with defect data can be examined to get some idea of how to get the best quality for the buck."

Intrigued by the variances that the software can pinpoint, Jim has started to analyse the underlying human behaviour patterns. "These software systems show only what people care to tell them. They rely on the individual's interpretation of the time spent on a task – but they should also be encouraged to examine their own personal standards. How should you organise yourself? What is your goal? People who want to get better at their jobs can use this data."

Completely sold on the system

From the managerial viewpoint, there is no doubt about the value of Innate Timesheets. They are completely sold on the system. Senior Vice Presidents downward can develop realistic plans and effectively measure group performance. They can see from the reports which groups are lagging behind – and can remedy the situation quickly.

The number of active users on Innate is now over 500. There are more than 380 active projects and 790 total projects in the system, averaging 1,100 man hours each. The Innate user base at Dealer Services is geographically dispersed, and covers three time zones. Locations include Oregon, California, and Texas, shortly to be joined by new ones in Maryland and Illinois. Timesheets are posted each morning at 9am and noon Pacific time. New timesheets are issued at 1pm Pacific time.

"Much of our success has resulted from choosing Innate Timesheets. We looked at 24 products before short-listing half a dozen. Innate was already in use elsewhere in ADP. Innate's web-based service easily accommodates the different data requirements of the vastly varied organisations of Dealer.

"We have found Innate simple to implement and maintain from a technical point of view. The web-base feature makes the addition of new users easy. User training is little more than a five-minute conversation between the associate and their manager going over our 'User Quick Reference Sheet'.

Good response time

"We have had many tool implementations here and I have had a lot of experience dealing with many different customer and technical support staffs. I would rate Innate better than average in this regard. Response time and staff knowledge is good. The whole system is easy and is working extremely well."

+44 (0) 1473 251550

www.innate.co.uk

