



## Professional Services Software Provider Grows Market Share with Time Billing Solution

### Overview

Country or Region: United States  
Industry: Information Technology

#### Customer Profile

BQE Software, Inc. creates software that automates timekeeping, project management, and billing processes for the professional services industry.

#### Business Situation

Already serving a growing market with its stand-alone time billing software, BQE Software wanted to tap into the broad base of Microsoft® Office System users.

#### Solution

In four months and requiring only two-thirds of the development resources originally budgeted, BQE Software developed an application that integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting.

#### Benefits

- Unprecedented business opportunities
- Advantageous integrated solution
- Superior development environment

**“We will be able to deliver a fully integrated, flexible, inexpensive and, more importantly, a complete business management solution to the professional services industry.”**

*Will Breiholz, General Manager, BQE Software*

In 1995, BQE Software, Inc. was founded to fill a unique niche: providing professional services organizations with a needed, easy, flexible, inexpensive way to track and bill time. Today, the company is successful with its award-winning, stand-alone time billing software, BillQuick. Nevertheless, BQE Software. wanted to increase its market share among small and midmarket organizations. The opportunity came when Microsoft asked BQE Software to tailor its time billing solution to meet the needs of Microsoft® Office Small Business Accounting users. Using only two-thirds of the development resources originally planned, in only four months' time, BQE Software developed a time billing application that integrates seamlessly with Small Business Accounting. Now, the company is poised to improve the BillQuick customer experience and increase its market share significantly.

### Fast Facts

Number of developer hours originally planned	6,000
Actual developer hours required	4,000
Number of months originally allotted for development	6
Months required	4

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Will Breiholz, General Manager, BQE Software

### Situation

BQE Software, Inc., based in Torrance, California, develops time billing and project management software for the professional services industry. With its flagship product BillQuick, BQE Software has established itself as a leader in delivering time and project management software. BillQuick is particularly suited to small and midmarket businesses in accounting, architecture, engineering, law, IT, and business consulting services. BillQuick has received significant recognition, including being given a Perfect Score award from the CPA Technology Advisor, an independent source for information on accounting software.

BillQuick provides robust time capture, budgeting, budget comparison analysis, job costing, pre-billing analysis, and flexible invoicing required by professional services organizations. To give small businesses general ledger capability, BQE Software integrated BillQuick with third-party software, such as the Intuit QuickBooks Pro family of products.

Shafat Qazi, BQE Software Chief Executive Officer and co-founder, says, “For time- and resource-strapped small businesses, ease of use is critical. If we can improve the customer experience with an integrated solution, our customer is happier; and we can solidify our relationship with them.”

Qazi and Will Breiholz, General Manager of BQE Software, wanted to increase market share for BillQuick by tapping into the vast number of Microsoft® Office System users.

### Solution

BQE Software saw the opportunity they were seeking when the company was asked to tailor its solution to meet the needs of Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting users. With the goal of providing an

integrated solution and fulfilling its commitment to improving customer experience, BQE Software developed BillQuick for Small Business Accounting. Built using an alpha version of Small Business Accounting and its software development kit (SDK), the application integrates tightly with Small Business Accounting.

Development of BillQuick for Small Business Accounting is complete, and release has been planned to coincide with the release of the new edition of Microsoft Office for small business management, of which Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting is a major component.

### Anticipating the Release of Small Business Accounting

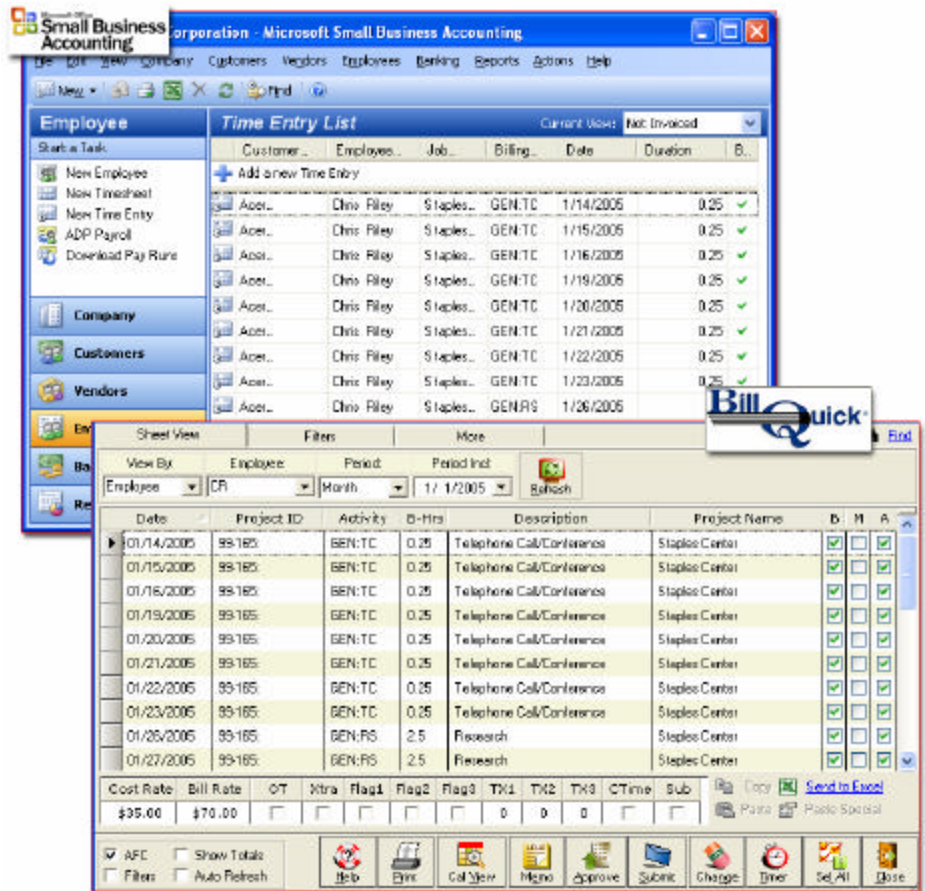
From the moment Microsoft Corporation publicly announced the Small Business Accounting software’s inception, Breiholz and Qazi eagerly anticipated the pre-release versions.

“We knew that Small Business Accounting would be a good product, and we knew that it would have great integration tools,” remarks Qazi. “We were not disappointed.”

Adds Breiholz, “Almost all of our customers use Microsoft Office. We saw tremendous opportunity for us and a huge boost in usability for our customers.”

BillQuick for Small Business Accounting supports retainers, discounts, write-up/downs, return to Work in Progress (WIP), and other billing options. More than 300 customizable reports and 60 customizable invoice formats are standard. Project management includes billing type (for example, recurring, hourly, fixed fee, percent complete), status, project-specific invoice format, project bill rate and custom fee schedules, budgets, budget comparisons,

As shown in these screen captures, users can synchronize time entries between BillQuick and Small Business Accounting.



retainers, project dollar maximum, processing rules, and more.

**Developing an Integrated Solution**  
 BQE Software has always developed for the Microsoft Windows® operating system platform and used Microsoft development tools and support. The company's development team of engineers is well-versed in the Microsoft Visual C++® development system, the Microsoft Visual Basic® development system, the Microsoft Visual Basic .NET development language, the Microsoft Visual C#® development tool, and Microsoft ASP.NET technology for creating dynamic Web applications.

BillQuick was one of the very first applications written by using the Microsoft .NET Framework 1.0—an integral component of the Windows operating system that provides a programming model and runtime for Web services, Web applications, and smart client applications. The fact that both BillQuick and Small Business Accounting are written using the .NET Framework helped contribute to a smooth development cycle. Says Qazi, "Our experience on the .NET Framework meant the structure of the integration in Small Business Accounting was already familiar. We hit the ground running and didn't look back."

The other big advantage was the Small Business Accounting SDK. The BQE Software

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Shafat Qazi, CEO and Co-founder, BQE Software

development team used an early version of the SDK, in which some of the Help files were incomplete. Says Qazi, “We were able to develop an entire product by using the pre-release SDK without making a single technical support call to Microsoft. Our hats are off to the Microsoft developers who created a great SDK.”

BillQuick uses the same database as Small Business Accounting: Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 Desktop Engine (MSDE 2000), a version of the SQL Server database optimized for the needs of smaller organizations. “The fact that both the database engine and the development environment were identical in both software products paved the way for us to develop a highly integrated solution,” says Qazi.

At first, BQE Software allotted 6 engineers and 6 months to complete the application, planning for approximately 1,000 hours per person—altogether, 6,000 hours of developer time. Early on, the company had to take two developers off the BillQuick for Small Business Accounting project. Managers planned to return the two to the project once they had completed another assignment, but never had to. The application was completed on time and under budget with only 4 developers and 4,000 developer hours.

To set up BillQuick, a user steps through a startup wizard. During this process, the user is asked to select the business type, customize the lexicon and business terms, select industry-appropriate invoice templates, and so on. Once setup has been completed, BillQuick for Small Business Accounting runs hands-off, updating the BillQuick and Small Business Accounting databases behind the scenes.

To make the synchronization happen, the team wrote some of the Dynamic Link Libraries (DLLs) in Visual C++. To create the

user interface, the team used both the Visual Basic .NET and C# development languages.

Explains Qazi, “We found some advantages in each, so where Visual Basic was strong, we used that; and where C# was strong, we used that.”

## Benefits

Benefiting from tight integration, a superior development environment, and a large Microsoft Office System user base, BQE Software is poised to take advantage of new opportunities in vertical markets. “We will be able to deliver a fully integrated, flexible, inexpensive and, more importantly, a complete business management solution to the professional services industry,” says Breiholz.

### Unprecedented Business Opportunities

The release of Small Business Accounting and BillQuick for Small Business Accounting promises huge returns for BQE Software, which has grown as small business owners have adapted to sweeping changes in technology, and users have become more comfortable using technology solutions.

Qazi elaborates, “Small business owners are getting more comfortable with technology. As that comfort level grows, so does small business owners' courage to use software beyond Microsoft Office Word and Microsoft Office Excel. With the release of Small Business Accounting, computer users in small businesses will gain the comfort level to move beyond Excel and Word and start using a small-scale accounting product like Small Business Accounting. If our customers who use Office programs buy Small Business Accounting and continue using BillQuick, it will be a win for them and a win for us.”

Growing numbers and types of businesses are required to fill out time sheets, do staff

utilization reviews, and perform human resources analyses and project costing. Even professional services providers that bill on a fixed fee or project basis are doing timekeeping. As a result, the market for BillQuick is growing.

"The fact that Small Business Accounting is part of Office—such a recognized offering of core programs—will expose BillQuick to more people and businesses within verticals that we already serve and to more companies that need the capabilities that our software provides. Having our product integrate with Small Business Accounting exposes us to a growing market."

#### Advantageous Integrated Solution

Small businesses look for solutions that save time and expense, and integration can help them accomplish this. The combination of BillQuick with Small Business Accounting gives small business users the time billing and accounting solution they need within a familiar user interface. Because the two are tightly integrated, users do not have to enter billing information into BillQuick and then re-enter the same information into Small Business Accounting. That single-entry aspect saves time and avoids errors.

Because of the high cost, time lost, and lack of in-house IT, small businesses avoid having to switch products or rip and replace systems. Because it's a Microsoft Office System program, Small Business Accounting lowers the adoption threshold.

BillQuick for Small Business Accounting further reduces obstacles to adoption for existing BillQuick users by automatically importing BillQuick records into Small Business Accounting.

"Someone who has been using BillQuick has accounting, invoices, time records, and so on in the BillQuick database. During setup of

BillQuick for Small Business Accounting, the program automatically creates a database and transfers that data to Small Business Accounting, seamlessly and automatically. People will be 'up and running' quickly with no IT intervention, a very low learning curve, and little or no downtime, thanks to tight integration" says Qazi.

#### Superior Development Environment

The BQE Software development team was able to completely rely on the Microsoft .NET Framework and the Small Business Accounting SDK.

Says Qazi, "The ease of development was amazing and the framework was very well structured. That made it possible for us to develop a powerful, integrated solution quickly and with no issues. We didn't even have to rely on documentation or make technical help calls."

Concludes Breiholz, "We were able to complete the entire development with only 4 developers using 4,000 developer hours. To have a project come in under budget—what could be better?"

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For more information about BQE Software products and services, call (888) 245-5669 or visit the Web site at: [www.bqe.com](http://www.bqe.com)

## Microsoft Office System

The Microsoft Office System is the business world's chosen environment for information work, providing the programs, servers, and services that help you succeed by transforming information into impact.

For more information about the Microsoft Office System, go to: [www.microsoft.com/office](http://www.microsoft.com/office)

### Software and Services

- Microsoft Office System
  - Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting
- Microsoft Visual C++
- Microsoft Visual Basic
- Microsoft Visual Basic .NET
- Microsoft Visual C#
- Microsoft ASP .NET

### ■ Technologies

- Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Desktop Engine

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Document published February 2005

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