# Decentralized Project Management Centralized Timesheets with TimeControl

For more information contact:
**HMS Software**
189 Hymus, Suite 402
Pointe-Claire, Quebec H9R 1E9
Tel: 514-695-8122
Fax: 514-695-8121
Email: info@hms.ca
Web: TimeControl.com

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# Overview: to Centralize EPM or not - the business challenge

Over the last 15 years or so there has been a significant initiative among project management software vendors to promote the centralization of enterprise project management systems into a single, centrally managed system with all users. The advantages, according to the vendors, were numerous. Management would be able to see from the top of the organization to the bottom all in one place. The most senior portfolio decision would be inextricably linked to the most detailed daily task and all interconnected so that management would be kept in the loop in "real-time".

The attraction for management was obvious. Areas of the business that seemed to be beyond their daily control would instantly become manageable.

The vendors could easily demonstrate how these many levels of organization would be all tied together. Demonstrations with multiple levels of project data were prepared and in boardrooms all over the world, managers could see a massive hub with all world-wide users pushing their data into one place.

It may be a surprise then, that there are so many organizations that have not successfully adopted this centralized behemoth of a process. There are many reasons for this. First, the challenge in deploying enterprise project management systems is more about centralized process than about centralized tools. Second, it takes more effort than was often expected.

The project management vendors have mostly moved on to greener pastures. Now their focus is on empowering individual teams or providing suites of functionality to be adopted however the organization decides.

The result is that there are many organizations who still have many individually managed project scheduling and resource management tools and who have never been able to successfully bring an enterprise project management process into a single system.

There is often a desire in an organization, regardless of its size to say that they'd like some aspects of their environment to be centralized (those that must be) and some to remain independent but there is really no one software vendor to ask how that would be possible.

This paper will talk about a very common business challenge, keeping the project scheduling system in the hands of project managers with multiple individual or smaller systems being used in a decentralized fashion but having all timesheets come together in one place and having that timesheet system interact with all the individual systems.

There may be numerous reasons why a large centralized project system is not desirable.

## It's harder than it looks

The most likely scenario is that establishing a centralized enterprise project management system seemed like an easy thing to do and even easier if we just subscribe to some software in the cloud. The Project Management Office would get the software, everyone's project would look somewhat similar to what they're used to and instantly we'd have everyone working in the same direction.

It's not obviously easy. As soon as you think of the collaboration that's required between all project managers to work in similar ways, adopt common standards, use the same coding, schedule at similar levels of resolution and even just when to update the projects, the centralized plan becomes a lot harder.

What do project managers do instead? They keep their individual tools because they see themselves as more productive when they do and then just pay lip service or deliver minimal results to the central system.

## Management has to be involved?

It's quite common for senior management to have played a big part in trying to establish a central project management system but that's often because these same managers are hoping they will be able to minimalize their investment in the future. In Enterprise Project Management, that's often not the case. Portfolio selection for example, requires a higher degree of time from management to resolve what projects should get priority. Centralized resource capacity planning decisions require more time from management to decide who gets what resources. Many executive suites find themselves unable or unprepared to deliver the kind of investment such systems require.

## The data isn't centralized.

When project managers work remotely from a central location, it can be more of a challenge to get them to adopt centralized processes and standards. It is done when absolutely required but otherwise resisted.

## The link to the central system is a challenge

If you live in an urban area, you may think of the Internet as ubiquitous and always on. That's not true everywhere. There are many situations for project managers where getting access to central systems is a challenge or even if there is access, bandwidth (speed of access) is a challenge. For these project managers, working on a disconnected laptop is a fact of life.

## Government compliance

For some organizations, reaching headquarters may mean moving sensitive data over international borders or having to show how the data is protected.  In these situations, project managers tend to keep the data close-held and work off their own system.  Then they can comply with central directives only under controlled circumstance.

## Multiple divisions select different enterprise project management tools

Perhaps engineering is highly committed to project management tools popular in their industry and the IT department is equally committed to project management tools more popular for IT. If you want a single centralized system, this is a problem and it's common to find such groups entrenched in their views.  The most common result is that the different groups each go their own way on project management but the centralized need for timesheets is abandoned and the organization ends up with multiple timesheet systems.

## Everything I learned about sharing, I learned in kindergarten

It's not that project managers don't want to work with centralized systems, but we often hear about their desires in a kindergarten fashion.  "You share your data with me.  I'll share my data when I want or when I have to."  That's an oversimplification of course but if you push back to find out why, you will often find numerous anecdotal references to how there has been little advantage to project managers sharing their working data and many disadvantages.

## Enterprise project management isn't impossible!

Despite everything on these pages, there are still many organizations who have been successful in deploying enterprise project management despite the obstacles.  When sufficiently funded, with sufficient guidance and investment from management and a commitment to both process and systems, these organizations have been successful at implementing the promise of EPM and keeping it functional.

# Why should we care about centralizing the collection of actuals?

Timesheets are one of those business functions that most organizations are unable to escape. It's not that anyone wakes up on a particular morning, rubs their hands together and says "Ooooo, timesheets today!" No, most people look at timesheets as a barrier to the end of their day rather than something to look forward to.

But, these same people who are reluctant to fill in their timesheet are highly committed to the results that come out of it. They'd like to be paid, for example. Or they'd like to make sure that billing works or that their vacation is properly recorded. They might be committed to the funding that comes to the organization of Research and Development Tax Credits or just being able to record the progress they've personally contributed on a particular project.

These things are rarely decentralized processes. Quite the opposite. Because they're so critical to an organization, they are often overseen by very senior management personnel. A project report might be a week late and this would probably cause minimal inconvenience to the organization. But imagine the payroll being a week late? This would be quite an impactful event.

Processes like payroll or billing are so critical to the viability of organizations that their priority often supersedes anything that project management might require. This can result in a bizarre collection of systems and processes which are managed and populated separately. It is not unusual to find one timesheet system for collecting attendance information for payroll. Then a completely separate second timesheet system which collects time per person per role and per client for billing. While you'd think these systems are the same, in many organizations they are not. But we're not done. A completely separate third timesheet system records "entitlements" that's a timesheet with the reasons for non-attendance and includes vacation approvals, sick leave accrued and taken and other personal time off. This is somewhat related to payroll but is almost always separate. We haven't talked about project management yet. Every project manager probably wants to find out how much time was spent on the tasks in the project or projects they're managing. They could deploy a project-based timesheet locally so they get what they want from their project resources.

It is not uncommon to find organizations where some employees are completing two, three or even four timesheets every week.

Now, it's true that most people don't look forward to filling in their timesheet at the end of the week, so you can imagine how these people feel about filling in more than one timesheet to fulfill "management's" needs.

So, having a centralized timesheet that could fulfill more than one of these requirements is certainly desirable. Yet, is there any way to link that centralized timesheets with the decentralized project management systems?
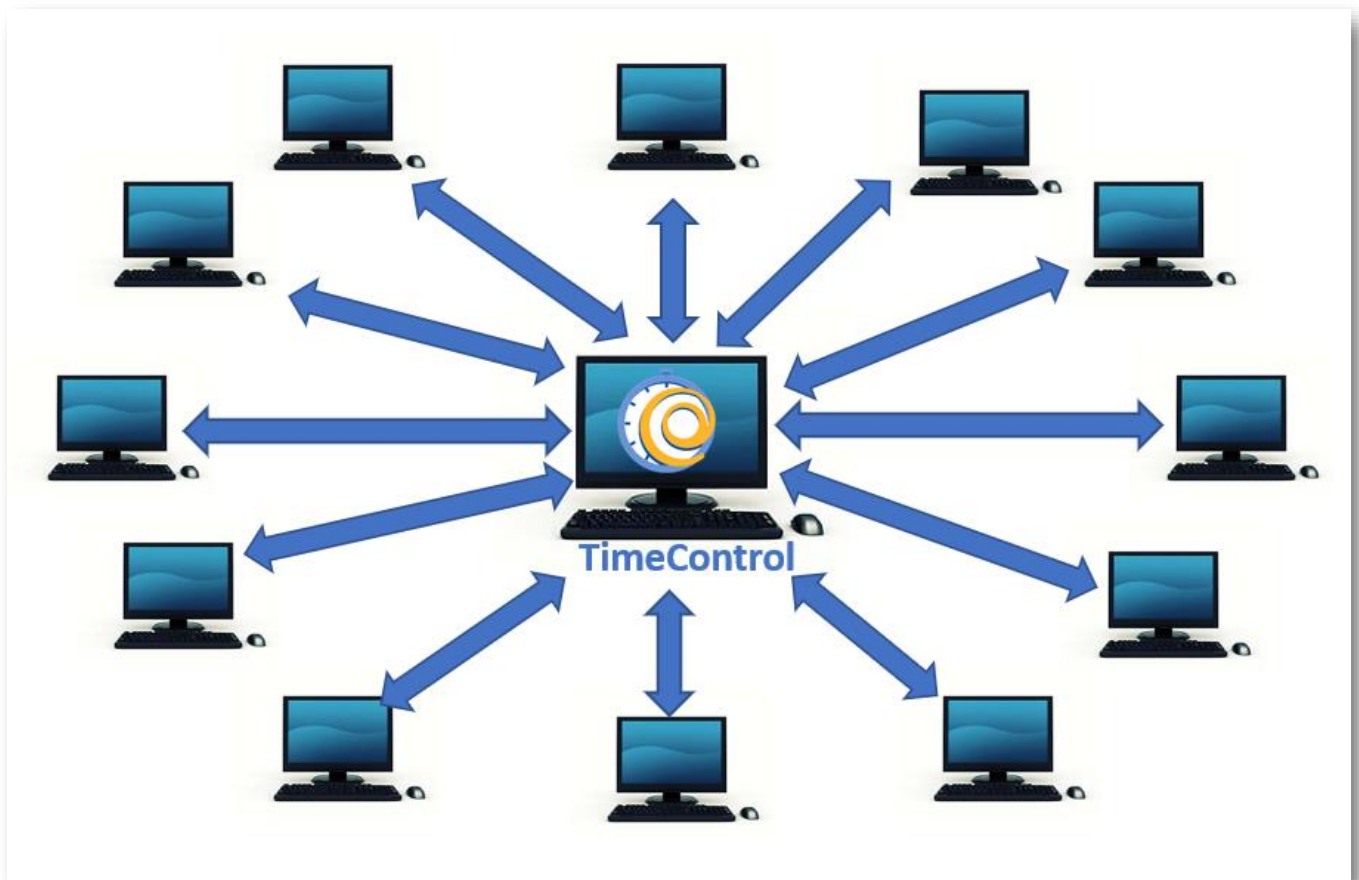
TimeControl was conceived from its origins in the 1980s to be a multi-purpose timesheet and, because of when it entered the market in 1994, its links to project management were originally designed to link with decentralized stand-alone project management systems.

In each of these systems, there would be one or multiple projects and TimeControl would need to bidirectionally link to those projects to pull project and task data and then push back the actuals to update the projects.

Yet TimeControl was a centralized timesheet with more than one purpose. Centrally TimeControl would be used not only to collate the project actuals, but also to approve the timesheets both for financial purposes and project purposes and then feed the data to systems such as payroll, billing, R&D reporting and more.

Needless to say, TimeControl was designed to be highly flexible.
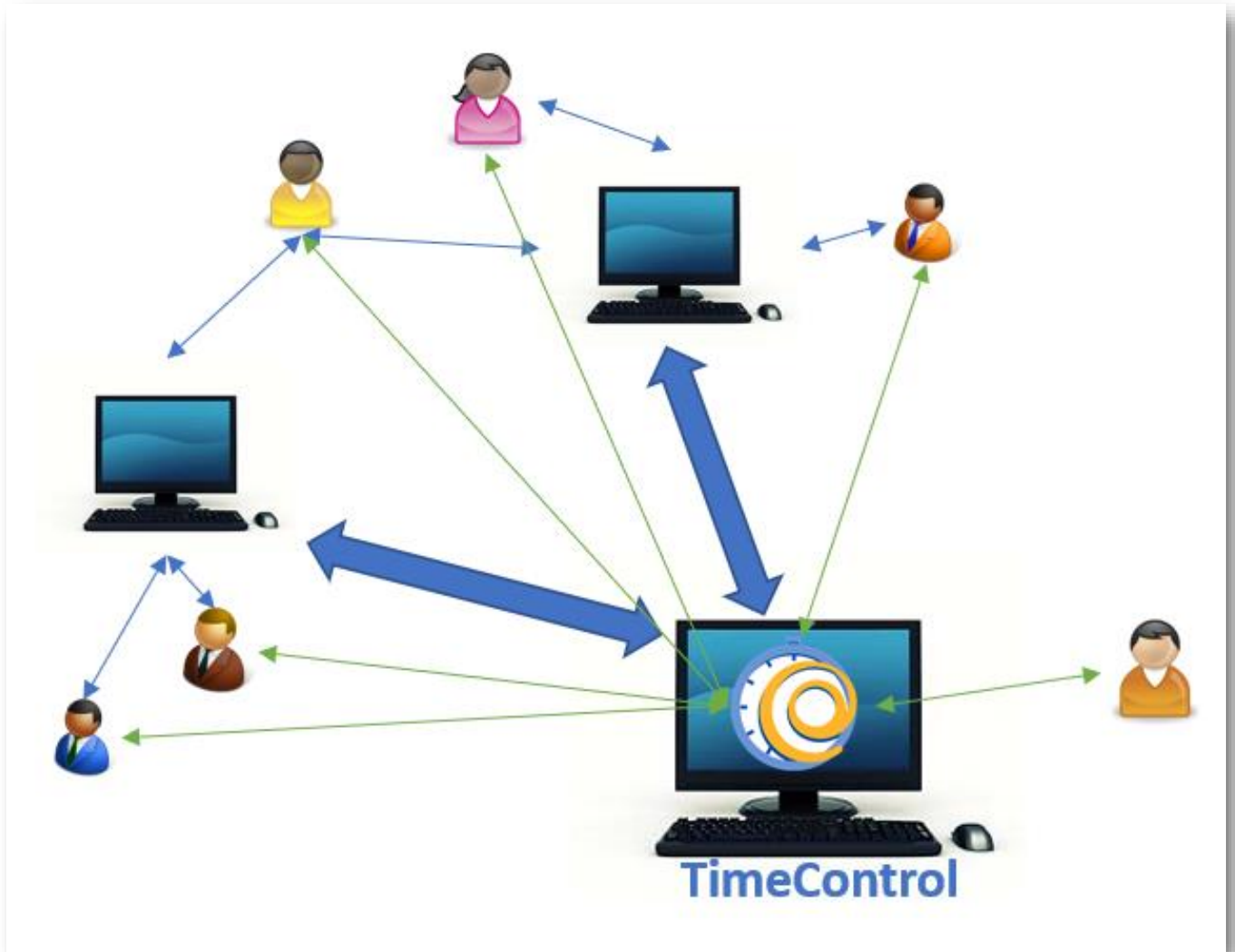
A centralized TimeControl with multiple individual project systems might look like this.



Each project manager has data which is exchanged with TimeControl and are happy to do so because the responsibility for collecting all the timesheets rests with someone else and they become the beneficiary of all the data which is already conditioned for their use and can

update their project files for them.  Some resources might work for more than one project manager.  Here's a picture of how that works:



In this graphic, the blue lines are links between a person/resource and the decentralized project management system and the green lines are the links to the centralized project management system.  The large bi-directional arrows are the movement of data between the separated project systems and the centralized TimeControl.

In practice this became stunningly easy.  An employee works they way they do now, answering to the one or more project managers to whom they've been assigned.  At the end of the day or week, a person enters one timesheet and files it for approval.  The timesheet goes through approvals by both the organizational and project parts of the business and the data is then distributed to the systems that require it.  In TimeControl, this file-and-forget format is so popular we have named the approval button "Release" as in "Release this timesheet for approval" but many users think of it as "Release me from my timesheet obligation for the week!"

# What about linking with EPM Systems as well as stand-alone?

The beauty of TimeControl's long-standing integration architecture is that as enterprise project management systems became available, the TimeControl system's links evolved. Now any of the little satellite systems that we imaged above could be an enterprise project system. TimeControl now includes more project management integrations out of the box than any other timesheet in the industry.

This allows for several scenarios that might not be obvious:

## Support for multiple project management system vendors

Perhaps the engineering branch of your organization has chosen a project tool like Primavera but the IT department is committed to JIRA. Still other project managers in your company won't give up their individual copies of Microsoft Project. How do you bring the timesheet actuals together in this kind of disparate scenario? With TimeControl, this wouldn't be complex. TimeControl includes pre-configured integrations for Primavera Professional, Primavera EPPM, Microsoft Project Professional, Project Server and Project Online and JIRA. Integrating everyone together is a matter of directing TimeControl to the particular systems and projects.

## Support for different versions of a project system at the same time

Given the TimeControl architecture of simultaneously integrating multiple project management systems, one scenario is where there are multiple versions of a project management system that have to be supported. Perhaps some of the users are on Microsoft Project Server on-premise 2016 and others are using Microsoft Project Online. Microsoft wouldn't have a single timesheet to support this scenario but TimeControl certainly could. It would treat each project separately in their respective systems and move timesheet data back from TimeControl to the proper project and task regardless of where that was.

## Simultaneous support for both enterprise and individual project systems

In some organizations there may be an initiative to deploy an enterprise project system such as Oracle-Primavera EPPM, but the initiative may have been restricted to only part of the organization. Perhaps in other parts or the company, there are individual copies of Oracle-Primavera Professional which are not centrally managed. TimeControl can be the timesheet for both as integrations for both these systems are included. For TimeControl, it's just another project with tasks to collect the time for and an employee's timesheet could include lines from a centrally managed EPM system, a remotely managed individual project system and even internal projects that don't warrant a full project system. There is no requirement for the end user to worry about that. They just do their timesheet and TimeControl figures out where the data needs to be integrated

## What about non-project work?

Timesheets like TimeControl that are used for different purposes need to be able to do more than just update the tasks from a project.  It is very common to have numerous timesheet lines that are not related to a project.  These charge codes can be conditioned for multiple purposes also so that when an end user enters time against them, the finance, payroll, HR or ERP systems knows already how to code them.

## Restricting all that data so it's not overwhelming

There can be concerns that with so many different systems, users might be overwhelmed with the number of charge codes they are presented with or worse, enter data in the wrong place. TimeControl's remarkable flexibility makes managing that concern relatively easy.  First of all, dynamic filters restrict what tasks an employee sees so that closed or not-yet-opened projects and tasks are invisible.  Similarly, employees can be restricted to not see projects and tasks that aren't at all relevant to them.  So, projects in another country for example, or from another business division might not be seen by people who aren't supposed to see them.  Second, TimeControl can pre-load a timesheet with the data that was expected from assignments or user preferences, making the timesheet already partly completed with what to select in advance.  Finally, TimeControl's Business Validation Rules can implement rules that checks timesheets in advance of being submitted for approval for any business rules that you may want to follow.

Solving a business challenge is often benefit enough but there are many advantages to selecting a multi-purpose timesheet like TimeControl with the kinds of integrations and flexibility it includes. Some of these are:

## It deploys so quickly

TimeControl arrives with all the integrations we described included. There's no writing of code or creating a link. For some organizations, they can be up and running with TimeControl only days after getting access to it.

## It is available in the Cloud or on-premise

Many organizations are interested in accessing TimeControl as a subscription from our in-the-cloud service. TimeControl Online has identical functionality to TimeControl for on-premise and has been running non-stop since 2011 with an impressive 99.9% up-time over its lifetime. Other organizations desire a system that can be implemented on their servers on-premise. TimeControl supports both and we have programs designed to allow an organization to select one path then later change their mind and migrate to another. So, an organization could start with on-premise and then migrate to online or the reverse.

## It reduces the number of timesheets you have to maintain

As a multi-function timesheet, TimeControl can fulfill the auditable-quality requirements of a payroll timesheet, a billing timesheet, a timesheet that will be used for auditing R&D tax credits or Sarbanes-Oxley compliance. Yet, it still maintains all those links to the project management systems. This makes TimeControl an ideal solution for eliminating multiple timesheets each week in favor of one.

## You can have your cake and eat it too

When project managers are insisting they need to be independent yet Finance is insisting that the centralized needs for processes like payroll are non-negotiable , you can support both parties. The project managers can stay independent and use their project management tools and the Finance department can use a centrally managed timesheet that will feed its various systems.

## The culture change is minimal

While there may be great culture change in getting everyone to adapt to a new centralized enterprise project management system, the same challenge is not true for TimeControl. That's because people are almost certainly already entering a timesheet and a TimeControl timesheet is never going to look that different to the end user than what they do now.

## It's inexpensive.

TimeControl subscriptions start at less than $0.30 a day per user and can go down below $0.08 per user per day in volume. At those rates, it's hard to resist.

Is using a centralized timesheet and a decentralized project system for you? Only you can say but if working with multiple project management system sources is part of the challenge, then TimeControl is worth a look.

One challenge that has plagued enterprise project management systems has been the definition of the word "enterprise". For the system vendors of course, "every person in the company" is what they'd like to strive for but if you step back, you might find that the definition of enterprise is probably best to be whatever works for you. We've seen many successful deployments where one division used project management systems for one set of requirements and another division had very different needs and selected something else.
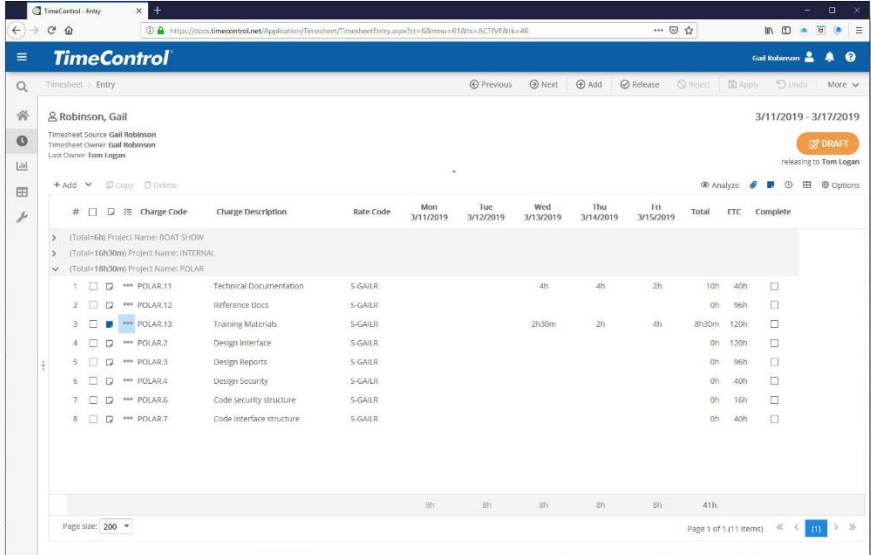
Perhaps allowing the part of the enterprise that needs to manage in a particular way latitude to do so can make you more effective overall.

Our view is to integrate when integration pays dividends and don't integrate when there are little to no benefits to do so.

TimeControl is designed to support your timesheet needs regardless of which path you take.

In today's challenging economy, tracking productivity is more important than ever. It is no longer enough to know only how much time has been spent. Now management demands that you know what was done with the time. Many organizations are turning to project and task-based management as a way of being more effective. One of the most difficult aspects of implementing project control is the capture and approval of labor actuals. *TimeControl* provides an electronic timesheet system designed to serve both Finance and Project Management

## Subscribe to TimeControl in the Cloud or Install On-premise

*TimeControl* is available as a subscription with our Timesheet as a Service TimeControlOnline or as a purchasable license to be installed on your premises. You can find out more about our online subscription at www.timecontrol.net.

## Open Architecture

*TimeControl* is an open architecture system which supports a variety of databases including Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, Sybase and MySQL. Customizable user profiles allow the *TimeControl* interface to be tailored to each user's requirements.

## Easy to use web interface

*TimeControl's* interface is browser-based and user-intuitive. User Profiles determines what the user will be presented with and the user can define where TimeControl should start and what defaults they wish. End users can use a variety of browsers such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Mozilla or even an iPad. (Administrators must use Internet Explorer.)

## The TimeControl Mobile App is included

*TimeControl* includes *both* a browser-based web interface *and* the free TimeControl Mobile App available on Google Play for Android phones and tablets and on the Apple Store for iOS devices. Whatever your mobile device, you can access your TimeControl from wherever you are.

## Multi-lingual

We know that not every user speaks English as their first language. TimeControl comes with numerous languages already in the system and every label and message is open to the TimeControl Manage Languages module so you can change the existing translations or even add your own. This is a great feature for adjusting terminology in the system to match your organization's

(The only word you can't change is: "TimeControl").

## Timesheet Approvals

*TimeControl* supports HMS Software's unique Matrix Approval Process for Labor Actuals which allows for quick authorization of project data. This process resolves the inherent conflict that is found when both the financial and project management hierarchies must approve timesheet data simultaneously. Automated validation of timesheet data is handled by TimeControl's remarkable Validation Rules. Additional approvals can be done manually with a simple Approve/Reject or Approve/Update process. The Project Manager Validation screen displays an easy-to-view hierarchical interface for managing project approvals.

## Total Flexibility with User Profiles

*TimeControl's* User Profiles allows the Administrator to determine which menu choices, reports and fields are accessible by each user. The entire interface can be tailored to the user's individual needs. No other system on the market today offers this much flexibility.

Field level security ensures that only the information which is important to each user, is displayed. Fields can be made read-only or invisible, removing them from view entirely. This makes *TimeControl* at once a secure, deployable system and an easy-to-use one as well.

## Links to Project Management Systems

*TimeControl* includes direct integration to more project management systems than any other timesheet in the industry. This includes Oracle-Primavera EPPM and Oracle-Primavera Professional, Microsoft Project, Project Server and Project Online, JIRA, Deltek's EPM products Open Plan and Cobra, BrightWork, SharePoint, VersionOne, ARES PRISM and InEight's Hard Dollar. In fact, multiple products and versions can be supported simultaneously.

Integrating with a project management system drastically reduces timesheet errors as only valid tasks will be available in which to charge time. Hours entered in *TimeControl* are returned directly to the project management system as activity and resource progress.

## Vacation Approvals with TimeRequest™

The TimeRequest module allows users to make a request for certain types of times to be approved for entry in future timesheets. The most common application of this module may be for requesting Vacation time off. Once approved, the time is then automatically entered by *TimeControl* into the appropriate timesheet in the future.

The TimeRequest module is, not restricted to just Vacation requests. Any category of time can be managed by this module. This allows an infinite number of applications such as for travel time, training time, offsite or onsite time or any other type of time category where the organization wishes it to be approved in advance.

## E-mail Enabled

*TimeControl* allows email notifications to be sent for various events such as missing timesheets, incomplete or non-approved timesheets as well as timesheets that were rejected or re-released for approval.  The TimeControl Workflow module allows emails to be sent to specific users when timesheets trigger certain conditions such as going over budget on a project.

## Expense Reports

TimeControl includes extensive expense report functionality.  Users can enter an unlimited number of expense report items for each timesheet line.

## Links to Payroll, HR and ERP/Finance

*TimeControl* is designed with a Links module that lets you define links to corporate systems and software including Payroll  software or online services, Human Resources systems and ERP/Finance systems.

Using TimeControl to fulfill the requirements of not only project management but also Finance, HR and Payroll means you can eliminate the costs and inefficency of mlutiple timesheets.

## Reporting

TimeControl includes a full-service Report Writer which allows existing reports to be edited or new reports to be created.  Reports can include tabular, graphic and chart information. Once they are generated, reports can be saved in Excel, PDF, Word, CSV or image formats.

*TimeControl's*  Reporting Wizards make report generation easy.  *TimeControl's* field-level security is always active so only the fields which a user has permission for will be shown.

Predefined reports are available in a variety of  formats which include posted timesheet data, table lists, printouts of the timesheets themselves and missing timesheet reports.

HMS Software, a division of Montreal, Canada-based Heuristic Management Systems Inc., is a leading provider of enterprise timesheet and project management systems. HMS is an Oracle Gold partner.

Founded in 1984, HMS Software's expertise in implementing enterprise project-management and enterprise timesheet systems is recognized worldwide by some of the world's best known organizations. HMS's signature product, TimeControl, an enterprise timekeeping system designed to serve the needs of both Finance and Project Management, is distributed worldwide through an extensive list of distributors and dealers located on every continent with representatives in the US, the UK, Australia, Mexico, Europe, Asia, South Africa and the Middle East.

HMS Software's client list includes some of the world's leading corporations in the telecommunications, IT, finance, engineering, defense/aerospace and government sectors including such organizations as Acergy, Aecon Construction, Alcan, the Atlanta Airport, Akzo Nobel, The Canadian Business Development Bank, The City of Montreal, EDS, Ericsson, General Motors, the Government of Saskatchewan, John Deere, Kelly Services, The UK's National Health Service, Standard Life, UPS, Volvo Novabus and hundreds of others. HMS maintains offices in Montreal, Quebec and Toronto, Ontario.

For more information about HMS, please:

visit www.hms.ca, email info@hms.ca or phone +1 514-695-8122

## TimeControl

First published by HMS in 1994, TimeControl has been adopted hundreds of clients and over hundreds of thousands of users around the world. TimeControl is designed to serve the needs of both project and finance simultaneously. It allows an organization to use a single timesheet for project tracking, time and attendance, time and billing, HR tracking, R&D Tax Credits, DCAA and project costing instead of having to deploy many timesheets to serve these needs. TimeControl is available in the cloud as a subscription based service or for purchase for an on-premises implementation. TimeControl's architecture is flexible and extensive supporting numerous databases such as Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL. It supports multiple browsers including Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, Mozilla, Internet Explorer and Chrome and includes the free TimeControl Mobile App for both iOS and Android devices.

For more information about TimeControl, please visit: TimeControl.com.

For more information about TimeControl Industrial please visit: industrial.timecontrol.com.

To try TimeControl for free, visit our free hosted trial at: freetrial.timecontrol.com.