



ARDENT WORKSHOP

THE TRADES BILLABLE-HOUR CHECK

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How many of the hours you pay for can you actually invoice?

Free tool

Measuring your crew's billable utilization, and what an hour costs

There is a number sitting underneath every price a trades business quotes, and it is easier to estimate than to measure. Not the wage. Not the burden. **The share of the hours you pay for that you can actually put on a customer's invoice — your billable utilization.**

Toolbox talks are paid. An apprentice's class day is paid. The drive from the yard to the job is paid, and so is the half hour at the supply house. None of it is billable. Price an hour as though all of it were, and every job you quote is quietly short — by the same percentage, every time, on every job.

WHY THIS IS WORTH MEASURING RATHER THAN ESTIMATING

Rate calculators typically ask you to type this percentage in. So does the billable-rate tab of a flat-rate price book, and so does the cost-per-hour tab of a route-based workbook. In our view it is the most leveraged number in the whole calculation, and the easiest one to guess wrong. A crew that assumes 80% and runs at 70% is under-pricing every hour by about an eighth.

Four steps

- 1 Replace the six example rows with your own crew — name, role, base hourly wage, and the hours you PAID them last week. Use a real week, not a typical one. There is room for twelve rows — delete the CONTENTS of any example row you do not need, the hours columns included, or its paid hours keep counting against your utilization.
- 2 Fill the three non-billable columns from what you already record: toolbox-talk time, apprentice class or classroom time, and drive plus shop time.
- 3 Put your own payroll burden percentage in the box under the table. If you do not know it, your payroll reports and your workers' comp rates will give it to you.
- 4 Read the two shaded rows in WHAT IT COMES TO, under the table — **Shop billable utilization** (what share of paid hours you actually bill) and **Burdened cost per BILLABLE hour** (what one of those hours costs you). The four rows around them are the workings.

The worked example that ships with it

Crew member (invented)	Role	Wage	Paid hrs	Non-billable
R. Calderon	Lead Carpenter	\$34.00	42	7
T. Whitlock	Journeyman Plumber	\$38.00	40	7.5
M. Osei	Journeyman Electrician	\$39.00	40	6.5
D. Braithwaite	Apprentice — 2nd year	\$22.00	40	14
J. Ferrante	Apprentice — 1st year	\$19.50	38	13.5
K. Sandoval	Service Technician	\$30.00	40	8.5

Six invented people, one invented week. Every name and figure in it is made up — it is there so the sheet computes something real before you have typed anything, and so you can see what a filled-in version looks like. Clear it and put your own crew in.

It comes to 76.3% billable utilization at \$53.67 a billable hour — 240 paid crew hours, 57 of them in the three non-billable buckets this sheet counts, against a wage bill carrying a 34% payroll burden (a starting estimate, not a looked-up figure). Those are the two figures your own crew will replace.

What this free sheet does not do

This measures one number honestly and stops there. It is genuinely useful on its own — if it tells you that you bill sixty-five percent of the hours you pay for and you had been assuming eighty, that alone is worth the download. But knowing what an hour costs is not the same as knowing what to charge for it.

- **A fourth bucket of non-billable time.** This sheet counts three: toolbox talks, class time, drive and shop. The full panel adds one for everything else that is paid and not billable — admin, waiting on a supplier, a day rained out. On the same example crew the panel reads **70.2%** where this sheet reads **76.3%** — six points lower, and \$58.28 a billable hour rather than \$53.67. Treat this sheet's figure as a ceiling: whatever it tells you, the truth is a little worse.
- **Overhead.** The trucks, the insurance, the yard, the phone and the person who answers it all have to be recovered across those billable hours before a rate is real.
- **The rate you have to charge.** All-in cost divided by one minus your target net margin — and, just as usefully, how far the rate you charge today sits from it.
- **Where each number goes.** Working a figure out is half the job; the other half is getting it into the estimating workbook and the price book so they stop disagreeing.
- **Whether it held.** A rate is a hypothesis until finished jobs have tested it. Bid against actual, change orders included, with the burden your own work proved handed back as a number to re-enter.
- **Who you can send.** Refresher dates and toolbox-talk attendance turned into Ready, Expiring or Lapsed, per crew member, before you schedule the week.

The rest of it

The **Trades & Service-Business Bundle** is seven finished Ardent Workshop products — estimating, flat-rate pricing, crew scheduling, route and job management, safety training, apprenticeship hours, and sixteen client documents — plus the eight-tab Control Panel, of which this free sheet is a stripped-back version of one tab.

THE FULL TRADES & SERVICE-BUSINESS BUNDLE

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