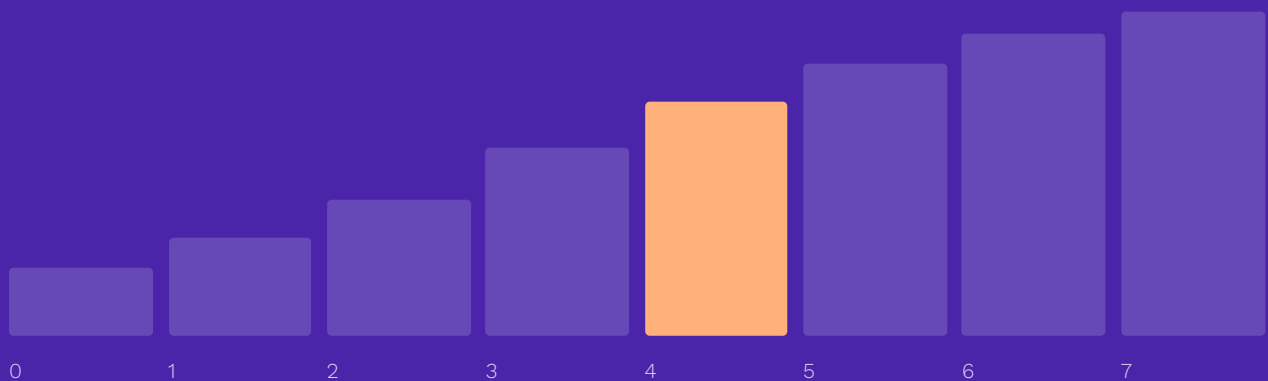


GUIDE

What to look for in time tracking software

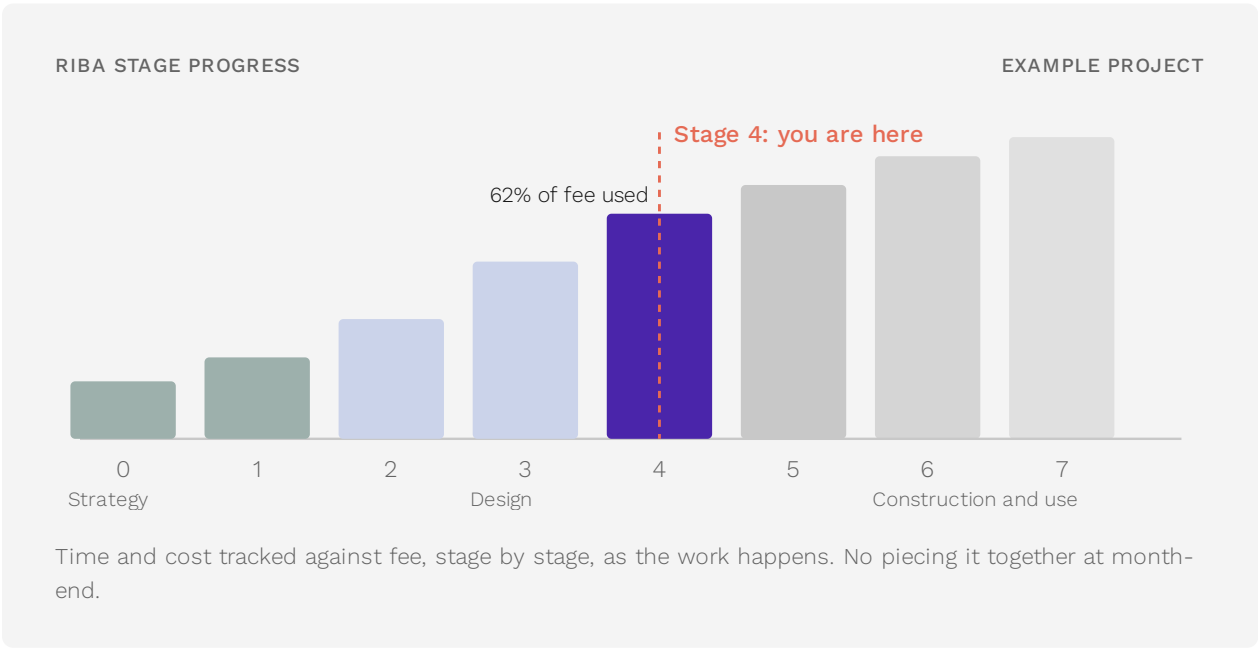
A practical guide for architecture and engineering practices, from stage tracking to invoicing and reporting.



Time tracking should tell you whether a job is within fee.

Most time tracking tools are built for billing hours to clients. Architecture and engineering practices work differently. Fees are fixed per stage, one job mixes people at different grades, and directors need to know a project is heading over fee while there is still time to act. This guide covers five areas to check when you review your time tracking, why margin matters as much as deadlines, and three questions to ask any supplier.

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01 TIME TRACKING

Track time against project stages

A total number of hours per project isn't enough for a practice. Fees are set per stage, and the cost of the work depends on who does it. Look for:

- Time logged against project stages (RIBA Stages 0–7), rather than only the project
- Mobile and on-site time entry for staff working away from the studio
- Tracking by role and grade, because how fast the fee is used depends on who does the work

EXAMPLE

A job has used 400 of its 600 budgeted hours, so the total looks fine. Logged by stage, you can see that Stage 3 has used 350 hours against the 250 it was given. You can plan Stage 4 around that now, instead of finding the overrun at the end.

02 TIMESHEETS

Make timesheets quick to fill in

Architects and engineers are focused on drawings and deadlines, so timesheets often arrive late or incomplete. The quicker logging is, the more reliable your numbers. Look for:

- Log time against the right stage and activity in a few clicks
- Bulk approval by project or by team for practice managers
- Chargeable time kept separate from business development and internal CPD

TIP

Approve timesheets every week rather than at month-end. Missing or misplaced hours get corrected while people still remember what they worked on, and your reports stay up to date.

03 INVOICING

Invoice the way you agree fees

Practices rarely bill by the hour alone. Most fees are fixed per stage or milestone, with hourly work and expenses on top. This is where generic time trackers usually fall shortest. Look for:

- Invoices generated from tracked time and completed fixed-fee stages
- Multiple currencies and VAT handling for UK and Irish practices
- Disbursements and expenses added without re-entering them

WHY IT MATTERS

If invoicing and time tracking sit in separate systems, someone on your team is reconciling them by hand every billing cycle.

04 REPORTING

See how much fee is left, stage by stage

Directors and finance leads need to know whether a job is on track before it overruns, not after. Look for:

- Time and cost against fee, by stage, in real time
- Work in progress (WIP) across all live projects
- Utilisation and profitability by project, team or office, without a spreadsheet

WATCH OUT FOR

If a tool can only report on last month, you find out about an overrun after it has happened.

05 CHANGING SYSTEMS

Change systems without disrupting live projects

You can't pause client work to change systems. Before you commit, get clear on how the move will work:

- Historical time and budgets imported stage by stage
- Onboarding from people who know how practices set up projects
- A realistic go-live date for a practice your size

06 MARGIN

A project can meet its deadline and still lose money

Delivering on time doesn't tell you whether the job made money. Track margin, labour cost, billable hours and actual versus forecast profit while the project runs, not only when it closes.

$$\text{Project margin} = (\text{Revenue} - \text{Costs}) \div \text{Revenue} \times 100$$

Watching margin as a project progresses shows whether extra hours, scope changes or resource costs are eating into the expected return, early enough to do something about it.

60–65%

Only 60–65% of architecture and engineering practices track project profitability in real time. Without it, unbilled hours, missed change orders and shrinking margins build up quietly over the life of a project.

Questions to ask any supplier

Take these to every demo, ours included.



MIGRATION

Can our historical project time and budgets be imported, stage by stage?



ONBOARDING

Who will train your team and get you up to speed: a dedicated consultant, or online videos you work through yourself?



TIMELINE

How long will it realistically take a practice our size to be fully live?

Get a walkthrough of Project Flow

Book a 30-minute demo with one of our team. Tell us how you track time today and we'll show you how it would work in Project Flow.

[Book a 30-minute demo](#)

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