

FREE MAP

Billable Time Leak Map

Where billable work slips out of the timesheet, why each source leaks, and how to capture it, plus a weekly self-audit

MIRA · miranow.ai · Updated October 2026

6 min

One tenth of an hour (0.1), the smallest unit at most firms

0.5 h

Five unrecorded 6-minute tasks in one day

2.5 h

The same five tasks a day over a 5-day week

125 h

The same habit over a 50-week year

1 The leak map: eight sources of unrecorded time

Leak source	Why it leaks	How to capture it
Email	Short replies feel too small to log; reading time is invisible	Log by thread per matter; review sent items daily
↗ Click to open the full map (full screen)		Full-size infographic · free PDF below

Teams and video meetings	Prep and follow-up time sit outside the calendar slot	Pair each meeting with prep and follow-up lines
Document drafting	Work spreads over many short sessions and versions	Use DMS edit history per matter workspace to rebuild sessions
Legal research	Research runs across tabs and tools without a matter tag	Note the matter before each search; check research tool logs
Travel	Billing policy is unclear, so time is skipped	Follow the engagement letter; record travel as its own entry
Interruptions	Hallway questions and quick calls break focus	Keep a running scratch list; enter it before the day ends
End-of-week reconstruction	Memory fades; short tasks drop out first	Enter time the same day; review drafts daily

Bill only work your engagement letter and client guidelines allow. Capture first, then decide what is billable.

2 Root causes behind time leakage

TIMING

Delayed entry

Every day between the work and the entry loses detail and short tasks.

WORKFLOW

Context switching

Moving between matters breaks timers and blurs which client the work belongs to.

HABIT

Too small to bill

Lawyers self-censor short tasks before the billing partner ever sees them.

DATA

No matter number at hand

Work with no obvious client-matter code waits and is often forgotten.

MOBILITY

Work away from the desk

Calls, court and travel leave no trace in desktop tools.

POLICY

Unclear policy

Without written rules on travel, internal calls and admin, lawyers skip entries.

3 Daily capture routine (10 minutes)

1

Scan the calendar

Turn each meeting and call into an entry, with prep and follow-up as separate lines.

2

Scan sent email and call log

Add any client contact that has no entry yet.

3

Check document history

Look at documents opened or edited today in each matter workspace.

4

Clear the scratch list

Enter interruptions and quick questions noted during the day.

5

Write narratives now

Describe each task while the detail is fresh: action, object, purpose.

4 Weekly leak self-audit

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Every calendar meeting this week has a matching entry or a non-billable note | ☐ No day this week has zero entries without a reason |
| ☐ Prep and follow-up time for meetings is recorded | ☐ No entry was created more than one working day after the work |
| ☐ Every client call in the call log has an entry | ☐ Short tasks of 0.1 and 0.2 were recorded |
| ☐ Sent email to clients and opposing counsel is reflected in entries | ☐ Each entry covers one task with its own time |
| ☐ Documents edited this week appear in the matching matters | ☐ Draft entries were reviewed and released before the weekly cutoff |
| ☐ Research sessions are tagged to a matter | ☐ Non-billable work is recorded and marked as such |
| ☐ Travel time is recorded per the engagement letter | ☐ Hours this week match your own sense of the week |

5 Capture habits

Do

- ✓ Enter time the same day the work happens
- ✓ Record short tasks and let the reviewer decide on write-downs
- ✓ Tag research and drafting to a matter before you start
- ✓ Record non-billable work so firm data stays complete

Avoid

- ✗ Rebuild a whole week from memory on Friday
- ✗ Round a cluster of short tasks into one vague block
- ✗ Guess durations when a calendar or document log exists
- ✗ Add time that did not happen to make up a shortfall

6

Recover real time only

ABA Formal Opinion 93-379 says a lawyer billing by the hour may bill only time actually spent and may not bill the same hour to two clients. Closing leaks means recording work that happened, at its real duration.

7

Where MIRA fits

MIRA captures activity signals from documents, calendars, files, email and browser activity, and lets lawyers review, merge, edit or release draft entries inside Microsoft Teams. It does not submit unapproved activity to billing. Integrations include iManage, Outlook, OneDrive, Chrome, Aderant and Elite.

Sources and references: ABA Formal Opinion 93-379 (Billing for Professional Fees, Disbursements and Other Expenses, 1993); ABA Model Rule 1.5 (Fees); Arithmetic: 0.1 hour = 6 minutes; $5 \times 0.1 = 0.5$ hour; $0.5 \times 5 = 2.5$ hours; $2.5 \times 50 = 125$ hours. General information, not legal advice. Check your jurisdiction's rules and your client billing guidelines.

MIRA
www.miranow.ai/solutions/billable-time-tracking-for-law-firms