

The Ultimate Guide to Resource Utilisation for Professional Service Firms



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1. What resource utilisation actually means

Resource utilisation measures how effectively your team's available time is used for productive, revenue-generating work.

At its simplest:

$$\text{Utilisation} = \text{Billable (or productive) time} \div \text{Available working time}$$

But in reality, it's more than a percentage. It reflects:

- How well work is planned
- How accurately capacity is forecast
- How efficiently projects are delivered
- How profitable your business can be

Utilisation is a **health indicator for your entire operation**, not just a performance metric.

2. Why it matters more than ever

Professional services firms face increasing pressure to do more with limited resources. Rising costs, tighter margins, and growing client expectations mean idle time is more expensive than ever.

High-performing firms use utilisation to:

- ✓ Protect profit margins
- ✓ Forecast hiring needs
- ✓ Prevent burnout and over-allocation
- ✓ Improve delivery timelines
- ✓ Increase revenue without increasing headcount

Put simply:

If you don't manage utilisation deliberately, profitability becomes unpredictable.



3. How utilisation is calculated

There are multiple ways to calculate utilisation depending on what you want to measure.

Basic utilisation rate

Billable hours ÷ Total available hours × 100

Example:

- 32 billable hours
- 40 available hours

Utilisation = 80%

Productive utilisation

Includes internal but valuable work (training, planning, innovation). Useful for understanding true **operational efficiency**, not just billing performance.

Target vs actual utilisation

Compare planned capacity with actual time spent.

This helps identify:

- Scheduling problems
- Estimation errors
- Workflow bottlenecks

4. Types of utilisation you should track

Most firms track only billable utilisation — which is a mistake.

A complete view includes:

Billable utilisation

Revenue-generating work.

Strategic utilisation

Work that supports growth (R&D, marketing, process improvement).

Capacity utilisation

How much of total available time is scheduled.

Forecast utilisation

Expected future allocation based on pipeline and workload.

Tracking multiple types gives **operational visibility instead of just financial hindsight.**

5. What good utilisation looks like

There is no universal “perfect” rate. It varies by role and industry.

Typical benchmarks:

Role	Typical Target
Fee-earning consultants	70-85%
Senior Specialists	60-75%
Managers	40-60%
Leadership	20-40%

Important:

100% utilisation is usually a warning sign, not a goal. It often leads to burnout, poor quality, and zero capacity for growth.

6. The hidden costs of poor utilisation

Low utilisation doesn't just reduce revenue — it creates cascading problems.

Impact		
Financial	Operational	Human
Lost billable opportunity	Underused skills	Employee disengagement
Reduced margins	Poor forecasting	Stress from uneven workload
Overstaffing risk	Ineffecient scheduling	Talent attrition

Poor utilisation is rarely just a scheduling issue — it's a planning issue.

8. Common mistakes to avoid

- ✗ Treating utilisation as only a finance metric
- ✗ Targeting 100% allocation
- ✗ Ignoring non-billable strategic work
- ✗ Planning resources project-by-project instead of portfolio-wide
- ✗ Measuring without acting on insights

Measurement without adjustment delivers no value.



9. Tools that make utilisation management easier

Manual spreadsheets break down quickly as complexity grows.

Effective resource management platforms help you:

- Forecast capacity
- Plan allocations visually
- Track utilisation automatically
- Identify gaps and overload early
- Optimise staffing decisions

The key is having **real-time operational visibility**, not retrospective reporting.

10. Key takeaways

- Resource utilisation measures operational efficiency and profitability potential
- Healthy utilisation balances productivity and sustainability
- Forecasting and visibility are more important than tracking alone
- The goal is optimisation — not maximum workload

When managed well, utilisation becomes a strategic advantage, not just a metric.

Turn utilisation insight into real operational control

Understanding resource utilisation is one thing. Managing it effectively across multiple projects, teams, and changing demand is another.

That's where purpose-built resource management software makes the difference.

Coretime is designed specifically for professional services firms that need real visibility over their people, projects, and capacity.

With Coretime, you can:

- ✓ See real-time utilisation across your entire organisation
- ✓ Forecast future capacity and hiring needs with confidence
- ✓ Balance workloads to prevent burnout and idle time
- ✓ Improve project planning and estimation accuracy
- ✓ Make data-driven decisions that protect profitability

Instead of reacting to utilisation reports after the fact, you can **plan proactively and optimise continuously.**

Ready to improve your resource utilisation?

If you want clearer visibility, better forecasting, and more control over how your team's time is used, Coretime can help.

👉 [Book a demo](#) to see how smarter resource management works in practice.

👉 [Explore](#) how Coretime helps professional services firms improve utilisation and profitability.