



# Avoiding Construction Scope Creep

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Project management professionals have to remain aware of potential risks that threaten the success of certain assignments. One such possibility is Scope Creep. This refers to uncontrolled changes in a project scope for approved jobs. For example, if a project team drifts out of control from its original duties, it's violating the contractor-to-client agreement and committing scope Creep.

Uncontrolled changes would lead to project delays, but that is often not the extent to which Scope Creep affects projects. Runaway scope can also lead to enormous costs, client frustration and dissent within the project team. In addition, when teams rush to complete tasks and try to prevent Scope Creep, quality of work can suffer, as resources aren't being completely utilized. This whitepaper will look at how Scope Creep happens, and how to mitigate such risks from threatening the outcome of the project. At the end of this paper, you'll be better equipped with the resources you need to effectively manage projects and minimize the risk of Scope Creep.

## How Does It Happen?

Scope Creep can happen as a result of a variety of miscommunications. However, the primary way to prevent it from threatening a project is by crafting a thorough contract from the start. The language used in this document needs to

be detailed and worded in such a way that misinterpretations are avoided. In some cases, passive language in the Statement of Work (SOW) can create issues, as tasks and special instructions are missed. In addition, when processes aren't listed in the appropriate order and language variations take on various meanings, readers can easily get confused and projects become mismanaged.



While writing a complete contract with active language can go a long way in reducing the risk of Scope Creep, the event typically happens in the later stages of a project. Therefore, project managers need to keep abreast of design changes and evolutions. In some cases, changes in scope are caused by external entities to the organization such as legislation, regulatory changes, market conditions or changes in the technologies being used. Managers need to remain in constant contacts with each team member to minimize risk and become aware of potential threats to the scope so an action plan can be put into place.



Throughout a project, communication is key to preventing Scope Creep. In fact, the event can be avoided when careful planning techniques are employed. Here are seven tips to consider when attempting to prevent Scope Creep:

1. Contractors need to understand the project's vision.
2. They also need to understand their priorities and the priorities of the project drivers.
3. They should also make sure deliverables are defined and are approved by the project drivers.
4. These deliverables should also be broken down into specific requirements and written as detailed as possible.
5. After getting the schedule approved, the manager needs to assign the necessary resources to determine which team members who benefit the project most.
6. Finally, it's important to realize Scope Creep might occur, so having predetermined plans to resolve the issues can help minimize its effects.

### **What to do when Scope Creep occurs**

When Scope Creep happens, professionals can approach the situation

in three ways: a request for change order, a change order evaluation and the implementation of project control and reporting tools.

*Request for Change* - Implementing and enforcing a strong change control process effectively puts boundaries around project requirements. It also adds a level of security that helps projects bend and evolve over time. Within a request for change order there is the direct change option and the constructive change order option. The former is when an organization is required to seek approval from the sponsoring agency when the scope of the project changes and new assessments need to be complete. Constructive change orders are when remedies are afforded as though they were directed changes. Under this circumstance, any money spent trying to follow the faulty drawings, specifications or direction is recoverable under the theory of constructive change.

*Change Order Evaluation* - Typically, there is some obligation to progress work, but when pricing disputes are prevalent during a Change Order Evaluation, situations become a little trickier. It is advised to implement change order forms early and educate the project drivers on specific processes as they occur to avoid future issues.

### *Project Control and Reporting Tools -*

Proactive and prepared contractors are less likely to fall victim to Scope Creep. If following the best practices for effectively handling Scope Creep do not work, a management tool may be used. Tools are essential to help manage files critical to the success of the project, baseline documents to manage Scope Creep and give managers the opportunity to connect with their entire team of professionals.

### **How To Control And Avoid Scope Creep**

Project managers can effectively avoid Scope Creep when they leverage various tools. In order to make sure project scope concurrently grows with compensation, managers need to establish the tasks initial path and have a formal project process evaluation plan for revising efforts once work begins. When a project manager creates a logical change-management methodology, they improve inter-team communication and keep tasks on target.

In addition, it's important to have a good handle of the contract agreement and requirements. Managers need to organize requirements management documents that include mission statements and background statements that include needs and as many minor details as possible to complete this process.

Reporting tools are invaluable resources in preventing Scope Creep, as they track and manage costs and productivity. Request for Information (RFI) is a formal way of asking for data from different suppliers. This request can help a manager keep abreast of evolving costs of necessary goods and keep a better eye on their budgets. Trend Longs are also important tools to wield, as these documents gather data from a variety of other resources and help identify potential problems that may occur down the line.



### **Is Scope Creep The End Of The World?**

Scope Creep does not mean failure unless it is not effectively remedied. Qualified project managers who put the proper plans and tools in place to handle variations from contracts can easily amend any potential risks that appear. However, if Scope Creep can be avoided altogether, the final project outcome and business-to-business relationship will remain fully intact.

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