



Managing Scope Creep:

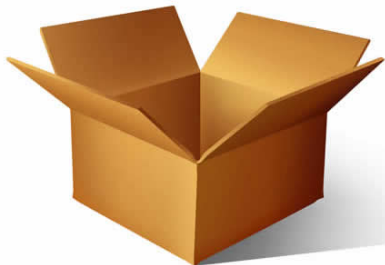
How to keep your project from being late, costing more, and under delivering

Managing a project's scope is one of the most challenging processes project managers face. It requires clarity of definition, specific boundaries, and a working change management process. This article examines the importance of project scope change management and presents tips and guidelines for a scope change management process.

Project Scope

A familiar project management adage states that there is no such thing as scope creep...only scope gallop. Once change begins on your project, it can quickly get away from you. The key to preventing your project scope from getting away from you is defining, communicating, and resolving change requests throughout the project lifecycle.

Think of project scope as the box that defines the work of your project.



The boundaries of the box separate your project's areas of responsibility from those areas for which your project will not be responsible. Project scope provides the baseline against which you perform scope change management throughout your project.

Two Major Types of Scope Creep

Scope creep is the name that project managers give the extra deliverables that *creep* into your project. These extras, or changes, occur naturally in our regular work – sometimes called process improvements. However, with a project, these little extras could mean the difference between a successful project and a failed project. Too many changes and your project will be over budget, off schedule, and focusing on the wrong deliverables.

Business Process Scope Creep

Business process scope creep occurs during a project when project team members or customer constituents begin changing the business requirements of the project deliverables. Usually this happens when business processes are not thoroughly detailed during planning.

Prior to the start of your project, requirements should be detailed and broken down into two categories – “must-haves” and “nice to have” – and they should be tracked throughout the project.

Technology Scope Creep

Technology scope creep occurs when the business process requirements are incomplete or ambiguous. Unnecessary or extra technical solutions increase the amount of risk on the project resulting in higher costs or delays.

The Importance of Scope Change Management

While scope is defined in the early planning phases of a project, there are many reasons for changing it later on — for instance, a customer constituent may acquire additional insight into a problem during the course of the project. External factors such as government regulations can also drive requests that extend beyond the initial project scope.

Following are four strong reasons why scope management must be a top priority for successful projects:

1. **Cost:** Scope change can affect upcoming work as well as work that has already been performed. This means rework costs for work that has already started or worse, been completed.
2. **Schedule:** With each scope change, scarce project resources are diverted to activities not identified in the original project scope, leading to pressure on the project schedule. The project manager must also consider impact on the project’s critical path.
3. **Quality:** When not analyzed thoroughly, scope changes lead to

quick fixes that can affect product quality.

4. **Morale:** Scope changes can cause a loss of control of the team’s planned work. Changing focus or direction to meet the change requests adversely impacts team morale.

The timing of change within a project can also have an impact. The later in the project that a change is addressed, the greater the likely impact in terms of costs, risks, and duration. See figure #1.

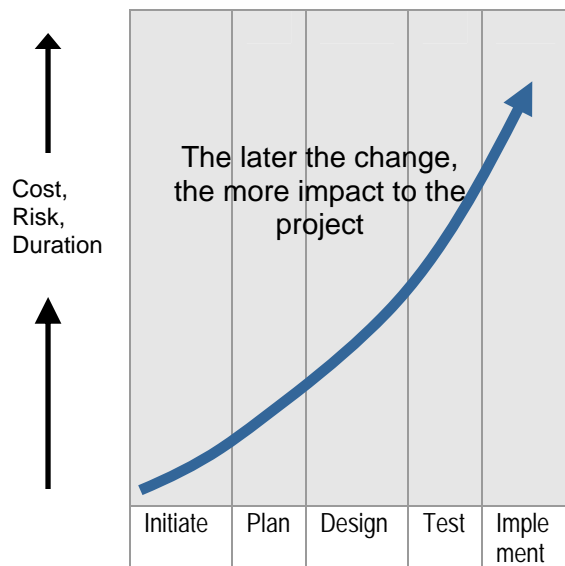


Figure 1

The Scope Change Management Plan

One of the best ways to manage the scope creep on your project is to develop and implement a simple scope change management plan. The plan should include the following:

- Definition of scope change for the project
- A process for submitting and reviewing scope changes
- Documentation needed for the change process

- Tool to track change requests and their resolutions

We have developed a sample plan that you can use as a start for your scope change management plan.

The Scope Change Management Process

Within your Scope Change Management plan, you will outline a step-by-step change request process for your project. Following are the basic steps that should be included in a change management process.

1. Requester initiates Change Request by completing the Change Request Information section on the Change Request Form and submitting to Change Management Team (or other group such as the implementation team, core team, or steering team).
2. Change Management Team reviews with the requester; identifies needed information and next steps to complete; enters into Change Request Log. Communicate and coordinate (as needed) with appropriate personnel to gather needed information.
3. Requesters prepare and submit Change Request form with the Change Request Impact Analysis section completed to the Change Management Team.
4. Implementation Team (and other interested constituent groups) receives weekly updates of pending change requests and provides input as needed / requested.
5. Change Management Team approves/denies change request, provides Final Recommendation on the Change Request Form and advises project Managers.
6. If appropriate, forward for review and disposition.
7. Change Management Team communicates the decision to the appropriate constituents.
8. Make appropriate entries into the Change Management Request Log.
9. If approved, modify project documentation as needed to incorporate the change.

Avoid Scope Creep

Take steps to avoid scope creep on your project. Develop a clear and detailed scope. Gain approval from your customers. Develop comprehensive business process requirements. Finally, develop and implement a scope change management plan – preventive medicine to avoid the creep.

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