Introduction

At this step we are going to talk about how to plan projects the right way.

Planning projects

Planning is kind of a delicate art. If you plan every single thing out from the very beginning of the project then you're in trouble if things go off the rails later. This is similar to the key weakness that people see in Waterfall project management: if you create a set in stone plan, task every single thing and later requirements or constraints change, then all of that planning is wasted.

Of course you want to have a general idea of where the project is going to avoid scope creep, but you probably should be flexible in case something unexpected comes up.

Milestones

Create **milestones** based on the goals and the objectives that are outlined during the kickoff meeting. If you don't have some kind of a kickoff meeting with clients to jump start a new project, I highly recommend that you start incorporating that as part of your project management.You want to get concrete goals and objectives, and then you want to create milestones based on those.

We talked in the previous step about getting concrete goals and objectives, but the key here is that you want to make this concrete milestones. For example, when you are 25% done as a milestone, generally, everybody can agree with that, but not everybody might agree on what 25% done looks like. You might be saying: "When we get to halfway through the project, we'll plan the second half of the project, and you will pay me X dollars". However if 50% done looks something different to the client than it does to you, then that's not very helpfu. Therefore you want to break down the milestones based on a portion or a version of the deliverables: a website mock up, a prototype of the app that you're developing, a revised version of the homepage, and so on.

It's really important to do this at the beginning of the project so that you can plan each milestone in detail as you near it. And I'm not saying that you should not make any plans at all for the second half of the project: you can definitely write down the bigger picture tasks. The idea here is just to avoid creating an intricate, delicate plan that can easily go off the rails. You might, for example, plan the first 25% up to that first milestone out in great detail. However, you don't necessarily need to have every single thing planned out for the third or fourth milestone, because if something changes, this will result in wasted time and efforts.

Turn milestones into tasks

So, you want to create a plan but stay flexible. After you create milestones, you're going to turn them into tasks. Tasks are specific and concrete, they are one single thing. If you're putting tasks that aren't actually tasks into your project plan and if you're using those when you're planning your time inside your business, it's likely that you're going to get overwhelmed, because it's harder to make time estimates. And as a freelancer, you live and die by your time estimates, because that's what all of your client interactions revolve around.