

Introduction

At this step we are going to talk about managing your own projects as a freelancer.

Avoiding scope creep

The first thing that we're going to talk about is avoiding **scope creep**. According to Wikipedia, scope creep is uncontrolled changes or continuous growth in a project's scope. This is generally considered to be a very bad thing. Basically this is a situation when you get to what should be 75% of the way through the project and all of a sudden your client requests a bunch of changes, revisions and additions to deliverables. This is especially bad, if you charge project fees or if you charge per deliverables. For example if you get paid based on the website, or based on the amount of apps that you deliver, or if you're just getting paid for like the whole project, then this is really bad. It cuts into your profit margins, and it can wind up making you get a really low hourly fee from that particular project.

It's still bad even if you're charging hourly. It might not have the same monetary effect but, for example, if you told client B that you would be able to start on their work on some specific date and then the project for Client A takes so long that you have to push back the settled date, that can wind up making Client B find another person.

One of the ways that you can make sure you avoid scope creep is by clearly defining not just your objectives, but the specific outcomes and the deliverables that you'll be working on during a kick-off meeting with the the client. You need to nail out at the very beginning of the project, because if you don't it will come back and bite you later. And you really need to get those outcomes and deliverables in writing, because memories are notoriously unreliable, people forget things or they misremember them. So you need to have it in writing, even if it's just an email. You can send e-mail to your client after the meeting and say something like "I just want to make sure we're on the same page, and so that you sign off on these deliverables, here's what I've got, please just reply to this email, confirm that you've received it and that you agree". This can save you much time and energy and effort later in the project because they can't add things on without paying you extra or without at least acknowledging that they shouldn't be adding those things on.

Another thing that you can do here is make sure you know the priorities, and what can be cut if it has to be. So if you're working on a new app, make sure that you know the priorities in the feature set. For example, if you are coding three features and it takes much longer than you thought it would, then you know that you can cut features four and five and still get the product to market - other features can be added in a later version.

Another thing that you can do that's really helpful is having communication turnaround guidelines and laying them out again in writing at the beginning of the project and before you start the work. For example, I always tell clients that Tuesday through Thursday are my work days, so if I send them something on Tuesday, and don't hear back until Thursday evening, I'm not going to be able to take into account those revision requests until next Tuesday. And once again, it is a good idea to have these expectations in writing. One of the things that causes scope creep is that it takes people, for example, five days to respond to an email. So, you make a change, then you have to get approval for it, and you wait for five days, not knowing when you're going to hear back from them. So having communication turnaround guidelines helps avoiding scope creep.

And of course, you want to write your contract with all the fees: for example, there might be a fee if the project stretches out too long due to something on their end. This is especially important if you charge per project. It's totally worth it to pay a lawyer to help you with contract. For example, your contract may contain a point that if a week passes without any feedback, and then client requests more revisions, then those revisions will be charged differently. Of course, get contract signed, because sometimes clients just don't see any consequences to causing scope creep. So you need to make them aware that there are very real consequences if this project is going to stretch out and make it an undesirable outcome for them.

Managing feedback

In the previous lesson we talked about managing feedback. One of the things that you can do here is minimizing the project stakeholders, the people who can give their stamp of approval, because less stakeholders generally means less feedback. However, balance is required here, because otherwise you might wind up with only one person who can approve everything - this will become a bottleneck. On the other hand, you should allow situations when too many people give feedback and none of them can decide on what they want and you have to wait while they argue about it internally.

A big mistake that freelancers make is that they have to wait for feedback from, for example, three people. They get feedback from person number one, and and make requested changes. Then person number two has some extra feedback on top of that, but also, he wants you to change some of the things that you changed to make person number one happier. Instead wait for all feedback to come and then summarize it before starting to implement.

Effective email communication

Effective email communication is important as well. You want to ask better questions when you have to ask them via email. Send emails during working hours - no email on weekends or after 6PM.

I highly recommend that you check out [this article](#). It covers many useful things and applies it to real world. In a nutshell, author advises to number your points, cut out the soft questions, empathize, offer solutions instead of asking questions, check email just once or twice a day and more.

Time for administrative and business development work

Make sure you leave time for administrative work and business development. You need to account for the pre-project work and the post-project work. This includes things like consultations, pitching, invoicing, writing emails and so on. So you need to account for this when you're making time estimates and when you're giving people potential rates.