***Team meetings: How well do we manage change control?***

When we take on a job with a customer we’ll agree the price and the scope of the work. If the scope of the work expands, but the price doesn’t change, we’ll make less profit. Or make a loss on the job!

Or we’re given our team objectives at the start of the year, and given a budget. if the objectives (the scope) expand but the budget (the price) doesn’t, we’ll probably over-run on our budget.

So it’s important that we have a thought-out system of change control, so that if the scope of work expected from us expands, so does the price or our budget.

Throughout this article, read “customer” as either the external customer we are working for, or your boss, director or company who decides your team’s objectives (and budget). Read “scope” as the scope of work defined in the customer contract, or the objectives that have been established for your team.

**Change control**

This is simply making sure that if the scope of work expands, so does the price. We can’t be expected to deliver more and more with the same resources, at the same cost. we can be expected to find some flexibility, but it isn’t infinite!

**What is the scope?**

The first question is how well your team understands the scope! Is it communicated to them? Do they know the overall picture that they’re working within, or do they just know what they’re doing?

As a team leader this part of the discussion could be uncomfortable!

**Where do changes in the scope come from?**

There will always be changes in the scope, because we live in a changing world. But who do those requests come from? Our bosses or directors? Other teams within the business? The customer contact who agreed the contract? The customer contact who’ll be eventually using what we’re doing?

**Who receives the requests for a change in scope?**

Ideally every change in scope will be requested from you, the team leader. In practice many requests will come to members of your team. “Can you just do this?” “Can we change this aspect of the product?”

So who do the requests for changes in the scope come to? And do they always recognise them as a scope change?

**How do we decide whether the scope change needs a price change?**

What process does the team need to have to decide whether the change in scope needs to result in a change in price? Whether the additional tasks can be done out of existing resources, or whether it needs additional resources?

Remember that we have most negotiating power when someone wants something from us. If we ask for an increase in budget or price after we’ve fulfilled the request, the answer will probably be “No”. If we’re unable to fulfil the request without an increase in price or budget, the answer is more likely to be “Yes”

**Preparing for this team meeting**

In your last year, or the last couple of projects you managed, were you under budget or over budget? How much of being over budget resulted from increases in the scope without corresponding increases in the price? A bit of performance data goes a long way in terms of illustrating the size of the problem.

How well is the scope of your work defined? If you’re working on customer contracts it will be well defined. If you run an internal budget, how clearly did you agree what you’d deliver for the budget you’d been allocated? There’s more on this in the “Managing your budget” section of the Finance Vault.