

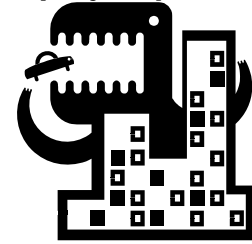
Avoiding Those Monster Projects

By: Victoria B Haney, MBA, PMP®

The success of your project hinges on ONE core piece of the project plan – the project scope.

Yesterday I had a meeting with a former colleague where we discussed successful projects and those monster projects we've worked on. You're familiar with monster projects. They're the ones on which people run around doing lots of work with no direction and without delivering anything useful.

Usually on monster projects management was so focused on getting on with the work that they didn't scope-out what they wanted to accomplish. One thing became clear: Projects Need a Scope!!



“The hardest single part of building a software system is deciding precisely what to build.” – Fred Brooks

Most engineers or IT professionals are wizards at what they do (myself included). We're geniuses at developing our products, so long as we know what the product is. Too often I hear “the requirements will surface after we get started” or “just show me what you can do, then we'll decide what we need.” Neither of these are helpful ways of managing a project. Not understanding the scope of the project just leads to rework, wasted efforts and frustrated developers and engineers.

So, how do you go about creating a Scope Statement? I've been studying project management and business analysis processes for years. The scope statement is one of the basic concepts that they have in common. Even though details vary between the two standards, the basic process for scoping the project is the same:

1. **Identify the business need or problem.** In today's environment, this is usually related to efficiencies or market demands. If there is no need, there should be no project.
2. **Develop a goal or objectives that relate to the business case.** This will become the vision or mission for the project. A well written goal can become the guiding light for the entire project team.
3. **Build a charter or business case.** The business case or charter is a formal description of the business need that authorizes the project; it is the beginning of making the concept 'gel'. There may or may not be a project manager involved at this point. If the project manager is not known yet, that doesn't mean that this should be skipped, just that someone else needs to do it.
4. **Create the Scope Statement.** At this point we officially have a project and just need to formalize a description of what the project will deliver. Interview the sponsor and key stakeholders then combine that information with the project charter and goal. This is NOT 'complete all the requirements and project planning.' The scope statement may have key

- milestones, budget constraints and high level requirements in it, but it does not contain detailed planning.
5. **Get approval of the scope statement** by the project sponsor and key stakeholders. Approval does several things at this point, a) it helps to verify that you are heading down the right road with your project and b) verifies what needs to be delivered as a result of the project.

Scoping the project prior to beginning any work can dramatically improve the success of the project. The scope will clearly define the project's goal and what is expected as an outcome of the project. It will also help to avoid those run-away, monster projects.

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