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# The Mathis Group's Messenger

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## Getting Your Project In Sight

Have you ever had a project that took longer than was expected, cost more, or ended up totally different than the original plan? You're not alone. Most projects sway from the initial idea, but they shouldn't and don't have to. By keeping the proper scope of your project, you will be able to finish on time, on budget, and with less headaches.

The scope of the project is the span of work to be completed when the project is finished. It is the customer's desired goal. The scope is the most important element to understand about any project. All planning and allocation of resources are anchored to this understanding.



When determining the scope of your project, there are some helpful questions you can ask.

- What will be covered in the project?
- What will not be covered in the project?
- Where will the project end up?
- What is the project going to achieve?
- What will the project do after completion?
- What does the project look like after it is finished?
- How will the project perform after it is completed?

Answering these questions will make it easier to establish what direction your project is to go. If the path of the project is not clear, the scope may become skewed. Some examples of skewing the scope are: defining the scope with limited detail, documenting with language which is hard to measure, scope is misunderstood or not clear to project team, or the scope is not communicated thoroughly.

Once you have ascertained the scope, you must freeze it. Freezing the scope is locking the scope of the project so the planning process can be completed. This must be done as early as possible to reduce the rate of failure. To be successful, a commitment from project sponsors, managers and the entire team is required. Freezing can result in faster projects and higher productivity.

Even after the scope has been frozen, there may be some tolerance allowed. Tolerance can be defined as how much a scope or a section of the project can depart or vary from the defined plan, budget, quality, process or performance. To assist in proper tolerance, it is important to develop a scale for rating tolerance deviation. However, it is possible for scopes or projects to have zero tolerance.

There are six prerequisites for scope management.

1. Prescope concept--The overview of how the project must function or what objectives should be met. It is loosely setting the parameters of the scope. In most cases it will change and shift in this stage.
2. Scope definition--Nails down the scope specifics. It gives quantitative and qualitative details.

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*If I had to sum up in one word what makes a good manager. I'd say decisiveness. You can use the fanciest computers to gather the numbers, but in the end you have to set a timetable and act.*

*Lee Iacocca  
Auto Executive*

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3. Labor authorization--Project and human capital is approved for project advancement. Human resources is designated and scheduled for this level of work.
4. Scope communication--Communicating the project upline to upper management or internally to the project team.
5. Control management--Driving the project forward. Control management includes leveling resources of time and human resources for better productivity.
6. Project closedown--Bringing the project to an end. All of the components of the project are brought together for final handoff to the customer. Document all details for future references.

Having a draft plan of the project is very beneficial. You are able to put your thoughts in order and allow them to evolve. While making the plan, you can brainstorm ideas with your team and think through the process over time. You can adjust the structure of the plan and make it more concise. Oftentimes, people will neglect making a draft plan because they are rushed to get a plan so drafts are considered a waste of time. People want to have a plan in place in the shortest time possible. People think that draft plans make you sound unsure and hesitant. None of these excuses are valid. While making a draft plan does require a little more time at the beginning of a project, their benefits far outweigh the time spent figuring out the direction of the project without a plan.

What about when changes need to be made? Let's face it. No matter how much planning we do and even if we freeze the scope, there will be changes to deal with. Next month we will look further into how to handle delays and changes and also how to schedule our projects.



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