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**The Unhappy Client: How To Fight Back And Keep The Business**

**By Laura Schweiker**

Historically, there have been unavoidable situations that test an agency's client relationships.

Today, there are tools that can minimize, or even eliminate these threats.

As an example, one situation that plagues all relationships is the unexpected surge in project cost.

Its an old story. You send your client an invoice that is 30% higher than the estimate. The client goes nuts. Your response is that the copy was changed thirteen times in two days. And THEN there were the layout changes . . .

Nobody is happy. Your client really doesn't think they made all those changes, and after-all, you're told, it should have been right the first time.

So now you have to recreate all the time records and find all the copy versions. You discover that because things were happening so fast, vital information never made it into the traffic system or on to a conference report. Plus, you have to go through the emails of multiple agency people to see who said what to whom.

The result? You give-up and figure out exactly how much of your hard-earned revenue you are willing to sacrifice to keep the client happy.

This cycle is repeated everyday in agencies everywhere.

Which leads us to the central proposition:

How an extranet can make you rich, and keep your client happy

Let's look at this same scenario at an agency that uses an extranet.

You send your client an invoice that is 30% higher than the estimate. Along with the invoice, you send a copy of all the comments, requests, and approvals made by the client.

## The Unhappy Client: How To Fight Back And Keep The Business

Time spent creating the report: 90 seconds.

Quality of the evidence: irrefutable.

Net result: you get paid, the client realizes their mistake, and everybody is happy.

This sounds way too good to be true.

Maybe. But it's not. A client extranet automatically organizes all the comments, requests and approvals made by your client, your staff and your vendors. Not only that, it also compiles a complete record of who saw what, when they saw it, and what they did with it. All the information is in one place, and can be available to anyone at any time.

Entries into the extranet can be made by any user at any computer, 24 hours a day. And everyone with an interest in the project can be notified and see all the entries immediately.

The bottom-line is that having a complete record of what everyone did and when they did it can be the saving grace. It can save time, save money and save your sanity. Most importantly, it can save your relationship. All it takes is the implementation of a client service extranet.

Laura Schweiker writes extensively on the use of technology by businesspeople and is an evangelist for extranet (

<http://www.trichys.com>

) and intranet software (

<http://www.trichys.com/intranet-extranet/intranet-software.vm>

)

### **Project Management: Avoid Work Scope Creep!**

**By Wendy Maynard**

Project Management: Avoid Work Scope Creep!

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Congratulations! You've just got a new client for an exciting project that is going to be fun and profitable. You carefully discuss the work with her and she sends in a down payment.

**BANG!** You are off and running!

## The Unhappy Client: How To Fight Back And Keep The Business

The following week, you are happily working on this exciting project and your phone rings. It is your great new client...wanting to make a slight change to the project. Hmmm...

Being the wonderful and oh-so-easy-to-work with consultant that you are, you agree, hang up the phone, and get back to work.

A couple of days later, the phone rings. It's your {AHEM} great new client again with a "few more ideas for changes."

"Well, okay," you agree, somewhat reluctantly, and hang up the phone. Now, you have to go back and revise some of your work to date and your original estimate no longer covers the scope of work. Your new and exciting project just officially became a stressful time suck that won't be such a great moneymaker.

Yes, it's the Dread Work Scope Creep. {B-horror film sound effects kick in here with a woman's scream at seeing the monster}

Does this sound familiar? If you – like many consultants – aren't managing the change process properly, the result will be:

# stress # long hours # inadequate compensation # missed deadlines # an unhappy client # an unhappy YOU

Well, there is hope. Here are some tips to help you manage those "little" changes to keep them from growing into the monster project with no end in sight:

**Create a Contract:** Ever heard the expression contracts keep friends? Well, it's true. Your written agreement should describe what you doing for this specific project, what each party is responsible for (deliverables), and how much it will cost. Also, make sure to include a line that explains costs for additional services, revisions, meetings, and so on that are requested by the client and are outside the scope of the agreed-upon project. Both parties should sign this BEFORE the onset of the project.

**Communicate Changes:** When your client calls asking for changes, make a note of the conversation. Then, write them down and e-mail or fax them to your client. Make sure you are clear about how this affects the project budget and/or deadlines. If it is a new client, you may want to consider a follow-up

call to ensure they understand how their request will impact the project.

**Don't Overcommit:** Don't say "yes" just because you are afraid to say "no." It is perfectly acceptable to tell your client "it won't work." Make sure to follow up with a valid explanation and tell them what you are willing to do. If your client doesn't respect you, your abilities, and your time constraints, he or she is not a client you want to keep.

By managing your work change process effectively, you will avoid the Dreaded Work Scope Creep {Horror flick scream again}. This will help ensure your projects and client relationships are profitable,

pleasant, and manageable.

Wendy Maynard, your friendly Marketing Maven, publishes REMARKABLE MARKETING, a weekly ezine for business owners, freelancers, and entrepreneurs. If you're ready to skyrocket your sales, easily attract customers, and have more fun, get your FREE REPORT at:

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