

Hal Macomber

The Project Reformer's e-Tip of the Week

033: **Contract Only for that which You Understand**

This tip derives from a lean principle *commit at the last responsible moment*. A reader from South Africa sees this as sound advice, but argues it can result in much effort managing expectations. He suggests that we contract (promise) for only that which we understand. By breaking the project into a development phase and a performance phase you can develop an understanding of client wants and needs then make commitments based on that understanding.

Here's their two-step contracting process:

- spend time with the client to understand his problem
- contract with the client to develop the plan
- conceptualize the solution
- develop a project plan (time & budget)
- contract with the client to implement
- implement the solution

Results:

- We have far less pain around scope changes
- We have far less effort to manage expectations. These are clear. First contract: we'll tell you how and why. Second Contract: we'll implement.
- We have a better relationship with the client - he feels more in control.

Projects run shorter. What we have done is buy some time for decent

planning. During this time, we also do some testing and piloting. Free work you might suggest. But, it serves us well as we have all the answers when those creative scope change requests hit us on a Monday morning.

The Project Leaders' Studio™

This week's Project e-Tip was proposed by Mike O'Callaghan of Engen Petroleum, Ltd.

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