



## Panelist Answers to Additional Q&A Questions

### **1) Do you have practices of 3 or 6-month contracts with options to renew - to avoid being into too long of a contract that is simply not working?**

**Frank Abdale** - If the engagement is “simply not working” then I think the problem is not with the contract so much as with the client and I would need to address/explore the issues related to “simply not working”.

**Kalpana Bhandarkar** - If the work would exceed 3-6 months, you could opt for a longer contract and build in check points every 3 months to see if the contract is still working for both sides. I assume you also have a termination clause built into your contract where you can end the contract with a certain amount of days’ notice in writing.

**Another related comment: I have been advised that one way to have a “stop” in the event of scope creep, is a 3-month long contract with option to renew.**

**Frank Abdale** - This is one approach and it depends on the nature of the project. Some projects naturally take more than 3 months. It is easier to stop scope creep if you start out with a clear contract. Then you always refer back to the agreed upon scope of work and demonstrate that this new request is not there. You can then, add an extension, start a new contract, or refer the new non-contracted work to a colleague. My contract - which I share at the Consultants Institute - includes “If the project exceeds the scope of work described herein, additional fees may be negotiated in advance with the expressed written approval by the Client. The means of “Approval” can include emails, text messages, or other electronic means of communications as well as paper documents.”

**Kalpana Bhandarkar** - I agree with Frank – clarity in the initial contract is paramount.

### **2) How long do you spend on an initial proposal and meeting (the time you spend before you get paid)?**

**Frank Abdale** - It depends on the complexity of the project. Also on experience. When I started consulting, every job was a “first time” and took longer because I was learning, tweaking, polishing, (and feeling uncertain). Now, I have templates that make it easier to write a proposal and the experience to know when a prospective client is serious or not. Also, I track all my work-related time - billable and non-billable. I average about 6 hours of non-billable time for every engagement. That said, I have a cut-off of 8 hours before I go on the clock and start charging, or withdraw from consideration. This is one of the reasons I always structure my fee with a certain amount “due upon signing”, so I don’t start to feel resentful that I am working for nothing.

**Kalpana Bhandarkar** - Agree, I think it's worth it to focus on quality and getting all the detail into the proposal so the prospective client has a sense of your work approach, style, experience, passion. I do think we all become more efficient at this, the more we do, and we can use content from past proposals in future ones, as appropriate. It also depends if it's an RFP or invited proposal because the structure and level of info required may be different.

**3) On the topic of scope creep, is there value in the client that keeps extending the scope of the contract? Or is there a point when you need to end the work?**

**Frank Abdale** - It depends! If it is an extension of an existing scope of work such as more data collection in a strategic planning process, a short extension is fine. But, if it is for different, albeit related work e.g., helping to implement a strategic plan (SP) or take on a new role after the SP is adopted, then I advocate for a new contract. If the extension is a delaying tactic on the part of the client - I've been hired as an interim and the client won't do the work of actually hiring a FT replacement, then I might give them a deadline by when I will be ending the contract, because I have other commitments.

**Kalpana Bhandarkar** - Agree that it depends on the client, the nature of the work, and the questions – are you enjoying the work, and is it benefiting you and your practice in some way. I think some clients are disorganized because they are pulled in many directions and once they begin working with you and see your capacities, they may feel they want to add onto the contract. I always advocate for upfront conversations about the nature of the work and reminding them of the key foci and deliverables in the original contract.