

A DIAGNOSTIC FOR AGENCY LEADERS

# Scope Creep Is a *Scoping* Problem

Most agencies treat scope creep as a client behavior issue. It isn't — it's a pre-signature failure. The strongest agencies build scopes that protect margin without damaging the relationship, and back them up with governance: monthly invoicing and time-tracking check-ins, quarterly leadership alignment on servicing, and disciplined change-order processes. Use the 12-item self-assessment below to pressure-test where your agency stands today. Score each statement 1–4 in the box on the right, then tally your total.

<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Agree	<b>4</b> Strongly Agree
-------------------------------	----------------------	-------------------	----------------------------

**CONTRACT DEFINITION**

- 01** Our statements of work clearly define which deliverables, channels, and services are included in the annual retainer fee.
- 02** When a client asks us to add a new channel or platform (e.g., TikTok, Retail Media, CTV, Amazon DSP) mid-contract, we consistently repaper the SOW and adjust fees before starting work.
- 03** In the past 12 months, our account teams have not taken on client requests that fall outside contracted scope, without a corresponding change order or scope adjustment.
- 04** Clients have added or requested new tools, integrations, or reporting platforms in the past year that were factored into an amended tech fee.

**CONTRACT GOVERNANCE**

- 05** A majority of our clients pay on time.
- 06** We have a formalized process for identifying and pricing out-of-scope requests before the work begins, and it's consistently used.
- 07** There is someone formally assigned to monitor the profitability on all accounts.
- 08** Contract renewal conversations include an explicit review of scope-as-sold versus work-actually-delivered in the prior term.

**CULTURE, OWNERSHIP & FINANCIAL VISIBILITY**

- 09** We track actual hours worked per account against the hours assumed in our pricing model.
- 10** We have clear visibility into margin by account, updated at least quarterly.
- 11** Recurring client meetings, calls, or reporting requirements have not increased in frequency or number of attendees (agency attendees) since the contract began, without a fee conversation.
- 12** Account and client-services leads feel empowered to push back on or say no to client requests that exceed contracted scope.

**YOUR TOTAL SCORE**

## YOUR RESULTS

## Answer Key: *What Your Score Says*

Add up your responses across all 12 questions for a total between 12 and 48. Note: statements 3, 4, and 11 are worded so a high score reflects healthy behavior. Find your total in the band below.

**38 – 48****Healthy Scoping Discipline — With Blind Spots**

You are approaching habits that will cause scope creep. Be mindful of your team's operations and time tracking. Reinforce the governance rituals that keep margin protected: monthly invoicing reviews, active hours-vs.-pricing check-ins, and a quick quarterly leadership huddle on servicing load.

**24 – 37****Meaningful Scope Creep Is Happening**

You are allowing a fair amount of scope creep. It's time to reset expectations with your department heads and clients. Reintroduce a formal change-order process, revisit SOW language for the top five accounts, and align account leads on when — and how — to say no.

**12 – 23****You Are Over-Serving and Losing Margin**

You are significantly over-serving via scope creep and losing thousands in profitability. Take action now. Audit the last 12 months of out-of-scope work by account, pause the largest leaks with a scoped renewal conversation, and stand up governance (monthly financial check-ins, quarterly servicing alignment) before the next contract cycle.

## THE JHM GROWTH 360 POINT OF VIEW

**Scope creep is a *scoping* problem.**

The fix is upstream. Build scopes that protect margin without damaging the relationship, and back them up with governance you actually run: monthly invoicing and time-tracking check-ins, quarterly leadership alignment on servicing, and renewal conversations that reconcile scope-as-sold with work-actually-delivered. That is where the profitability lives.

## READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

**Ready to translate this score into a plan?**

JHM growth 360 partners with agency leaders as a fractional strategic marketing & operations consultancy — built by a leader who has sat at every seat of the table. Start the conversation at [jhmgrowth360.com](http://jhmgrowth360.com).