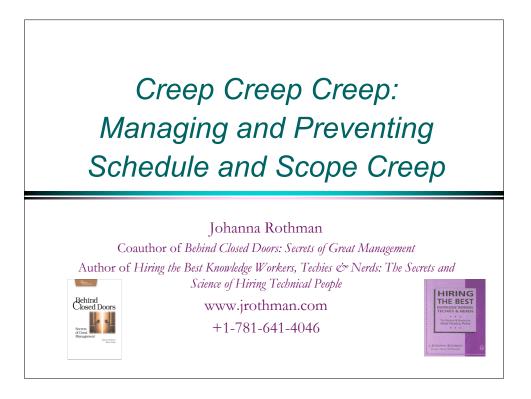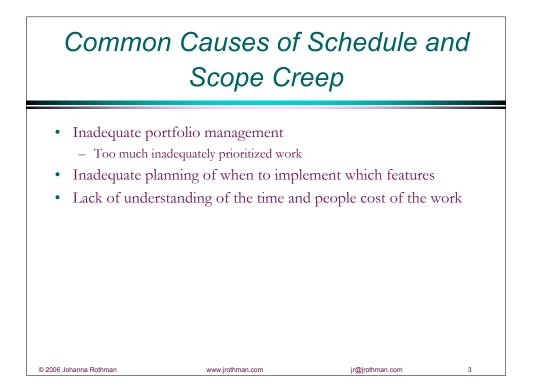# Creep Creep Creep: Managing and Preventing Schedule and Scope Creep

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Our Context

- Your project is short of time
  - At least the testing part of the project is short of time
- Your management wants more features in the release
- Your management wants the release completed faster

- What do you do?

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Common Causes of Schedule and Scope Creep

- Inadequate portfolio management
  - Too much inadequately prioritized work
- Inadequate planning of when to implement which features
- Lack of understanding of the time and people cost of the work

Complications

- You can't say "No"
  - It's politically incorrect
  - You fear for your job
  - You'll be ridiculed as not a "team player"
- Is there anyone here who can say "No"?

Yes/No Experiments

- We're going to try some things and debrief at the end

- How have you said "no" before?

Some Ways to Say No

- "Not right now" and offer a new date
- "This is what I can do"
- "Here's what I'm doing—what should I stop doing?"
- Prioritize the work (with a portfolio)
- "When do you need this?"
- Describe effects (contract staff required)
- "I can do that and …" describe the effects
- Explain why request makes no sense (be careful)
- "No. Here are some alternatives."
- "Here are the risks"
- Draw a picture of when the requestor can expect what you're currently doing

Preventing Creepiness

- Develop a project portfolio
  - How much of the work is project, periodic, crisis management?
  - Work with your managers to define the strategically important work
  - Use product management to manage which features to implement when
- Use a quarterly list with a cross-functional team to define which features will be implemented when
- Quick starts, quick ends
- Track your staff's productivity
  - How much "stuff" can they produce in what time and how good is it?
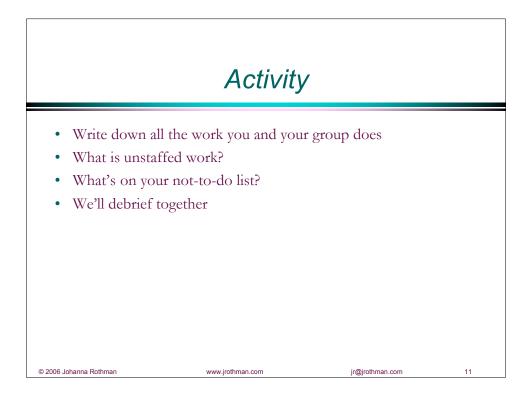
Develop Your Groups' Project Portfolio

- Portfolio is all the work you and your group perform
  - Project work
  - Ad hoc work
  - Periodic work
  - Ongoing work
  - Management work
- I'm careful to avoid work that's on my not-to-do list

Project Portfolio in the Small

	Week1	Week2	Week3	Week4
Tina	Project1 Feature 1	Project1 Feature 1	Project1 Feature 4	Project1 Feature 4
Terri	Project1 Feature 1	Project1 Feature 1	Project1 Feature 4	Project1 Feature 4
Tristan	Project1 Feature 2	Project1 Feature 2	Project1 Feature 5	Project 2 Feature 1
Isabel	Project1 Feature 2	Project1 Feature 2	Project1 Feature 5	Project 2 Feature 1
Irene	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 2 Feature 1
Inge	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 1 Feature 7
Stuart	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 3 Feature 17	Project 1 Feature 7
Steve	Project 1 Feature 3	Project 1 Feature 3	Project1 Feature 6	Project 1 Feature 7
Sandy	Project 1 Feature 3	Project 1 Feature 3	Project1 Feature 6	Project 1 Feature 7
Betty	Project 1 Feature 3	Project 1 Feature 3	Project1 Feature 6	Project 1 Feature 7
Brian	Project 1 Feature 3	Project 1 Feature 3	Project1 Feature 6	Project 1 Feature 7
Mary Man	Management	Management	Management	Management
Unstaffed work				
	Project 3, Feature 18	Project 3, Feature 18	Project 3, Feature 18	Project 2, Features 2, 3, 4
				Project 3, Feature 18

Project Portfolio in the Large

January	February	March	April	May
Project1	Project1	Project1		
	Project2	Project2	Project2	Project2
Project3	Project3			
			Project4	Project4
				Project5

Activity

- Write down all the work you and your group does
- What is unstaffed work?
- What's on your not-to-do list?
- We'll debrief together

Quarterly List of Features

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Component 1, parts a, b, c Signature encryption Access performance 10% better than previous release ---The LINE----------- *(everything above the line is in this release, everything below is a wish for this release.)*	Component 1, parts d, e, f Enabling technology for major release next year API definition for major release … … … …	Natural language query Error message re-architecture … … … …	In-house report generator Web client … … … …

Quick Starts and Quick Ends

- Some project absorb so much change, they never end. Instead of absorbing changes, consider making very small projects that end quickly
  - Timebox work
  - Release trains
  - Staged-delivery lifecycle
  - Agile lifecycle, such as Scrum

- This is very different from iterative lifecycles, such as spiral

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Track Staff's Productivity

- I wish I had "the answer" here
- Testing is about providing information. How do you provide information now?
- Productivity is about how much good stuff is complete
  - Partially done work doesn't count

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Cost, Time, Value of People's Work

- How many of you feel you have to ask people to multi-project multi-task?
  - Multi-tasking is a huge time-waster
- How flexible are your testers?
  - Can people only test in one way?

Discussion

- In groups of 3
  - What do you do now?
  - What's working? What's not working?
- Debrief

Creepiness

- Starts when people (senior management, project manager, test manager) don't say no to more work
  - Implementing (and testing) by feature in timeboxes works
  - Consider the No alternatives
  - Maintain a project portfolio so people can see the effect of their requests
- May be partly due to too-long releases
  - Frequent "releases" (possibly not to all customers)
  - Rank requirements
  - Keep quarterly requirements list
- Consider building capability and capacity in your staff
  - Capability with training
  - Capacity by not using 100% capacity

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Additional Resources

- I write about these issues on the Managing Product Development blog: www.jrothman.com/weblog/blogger.html

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