

AMCI REGIONAL MEETING | BREAKOUT SESSION

Scope Creep Survival Guide

Spot It. Stop It. Prevent It.

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Meet Your Presenters



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Learning Objectives

- 1 Identify the early warning signs and common patterns of scope creep
- 2 Apply communication techniques to address scope creep in real time — and respond to common objections
- 3 Design outcome-focused contracts that clearly define deliverables, frequency, and boundaries
- 4 Implement ongoing scope management practices
- 5 Experience AI tools in action

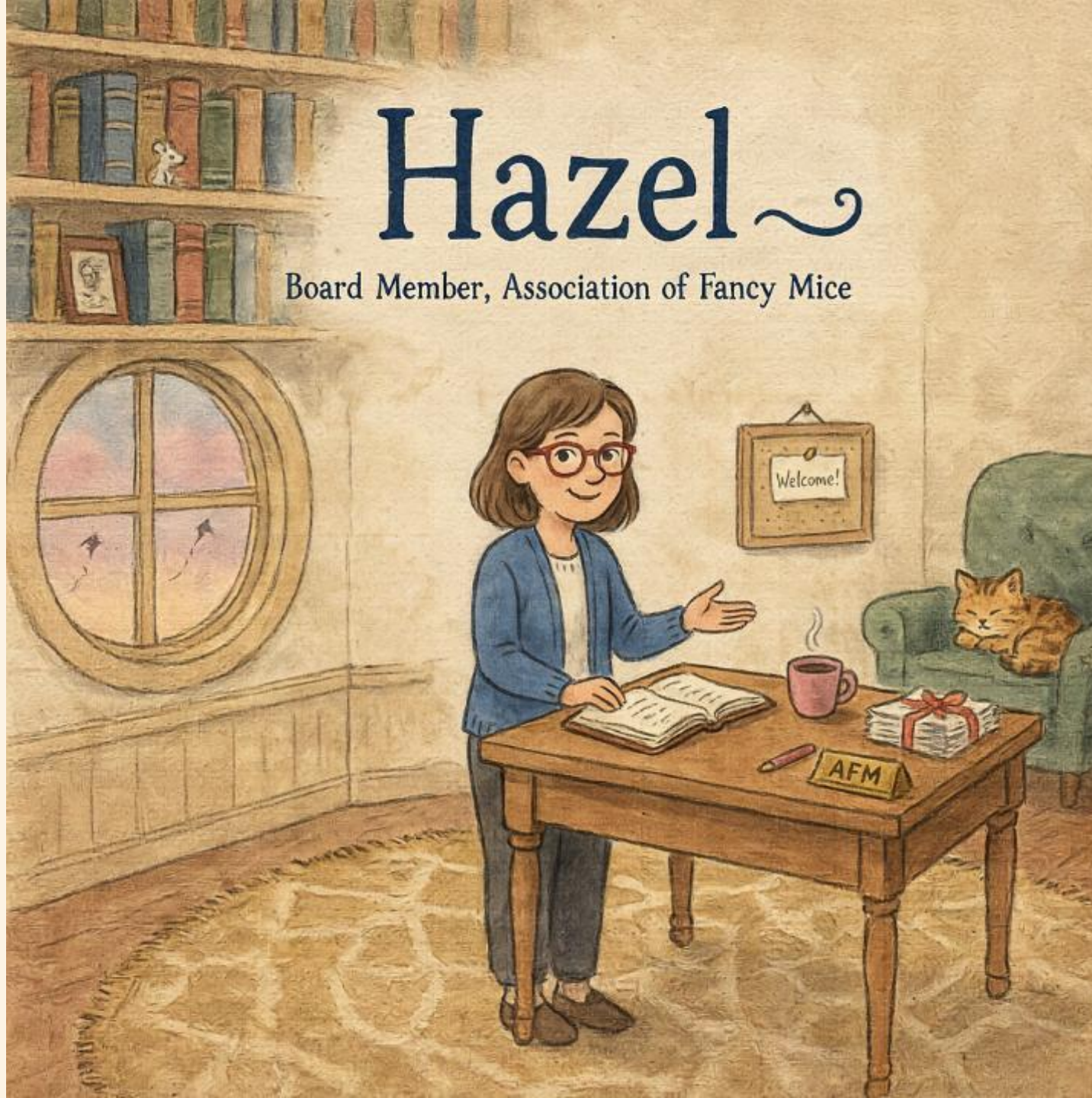
If You Give a Volunteer a New Report



A humorous parody of "If You Give A Mouse A Cookie"

Hazel~

Board Member, Association of Fancy Mice



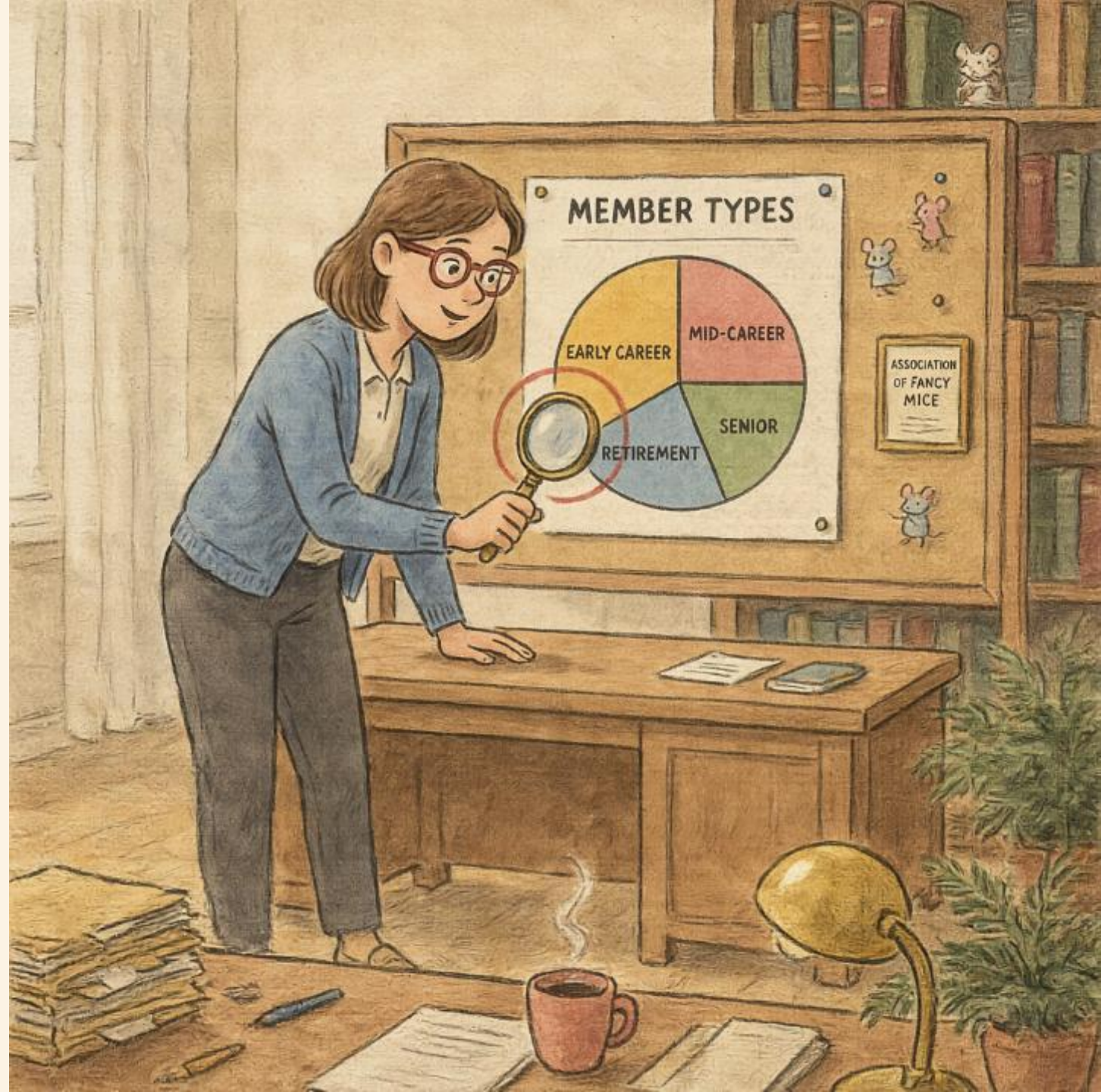


If you give a volunteer a new report four weeks before the annual meeting, she's going to want it sent twice a week.

When you send it twice a week, she'll notice the registration numbers are climbing.

When she notices the numbers are climbing, she'll want to see them segmented by member type.

When you segment them by member type, she'll spot a pattern in the early-career registrations.





When she spots the pattern,
she'll remember the survey evaluations from last year's conference.

When she remembers the surveys,
she'll ask you to pull them out and break them down by member type too.

When you break down the surveys by member type, she'll discover that early-career members gave the networking sessions the highest ratings.

When she discovers this insight, she'll get very excited about programming.





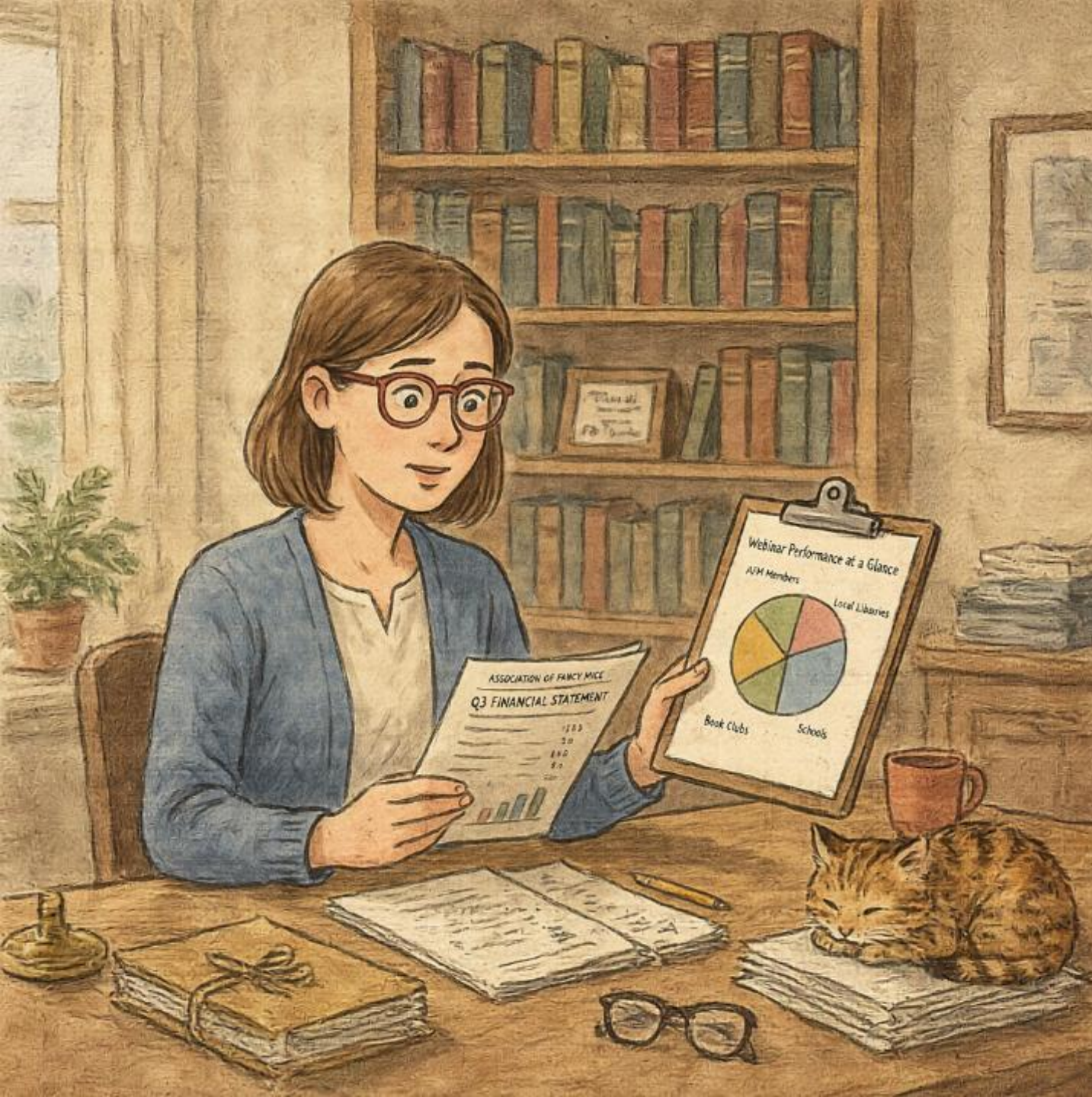
When she gets excited about programming, she'll propose a "Best of Annual Meeting" webinar series to repurpose conference content over the next six months.

When she proposes the series, she'll need a project plan, a content calendar, and a budget.

When you draft the budget,
she'll want to track the
webinar series revenue
separately from everything
else.

When she wants to track it
separately,
she'll ask you to create a
new class in the chart of
accounts.





When you create the new class,
she'll want to see financial statements that show webinar performance at a glance.

When she sees the financial statements,
She is curious how many attendees came from partnering organizations.

When she needs that data,
she'll ask you for a new report.

When you create the new report,
she'll want it segmented by member type.





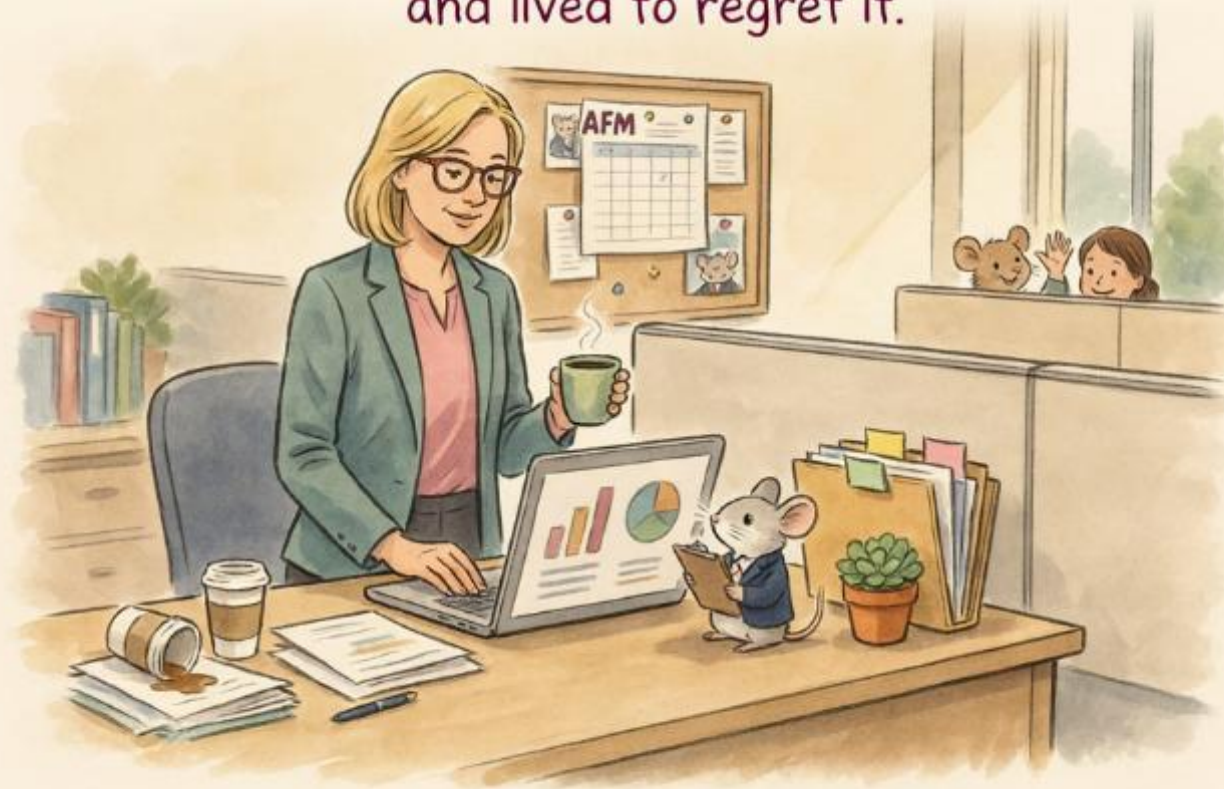
And when you segment it by member type, she'll probably ask you to send it twice a week.

The End

(Or is it?)



Dedicated to association professionals everywhere
who've ever said "sure, I can pull that report"
and lived to regret it.



You are seen. You are valid. And
yes, you can say no to the
webinar series.

Bonus Takeaway: AI Tools



ChatGPT

Chat GPT – create the story based on “human” developed concept



ideogram

Ideogram – create the illustrations to match the content



Prompt Cowboy – create clear, thorough prompts

Sound Familiar?

”

“Just one more report.”

”

“This will only take a minute.”

”

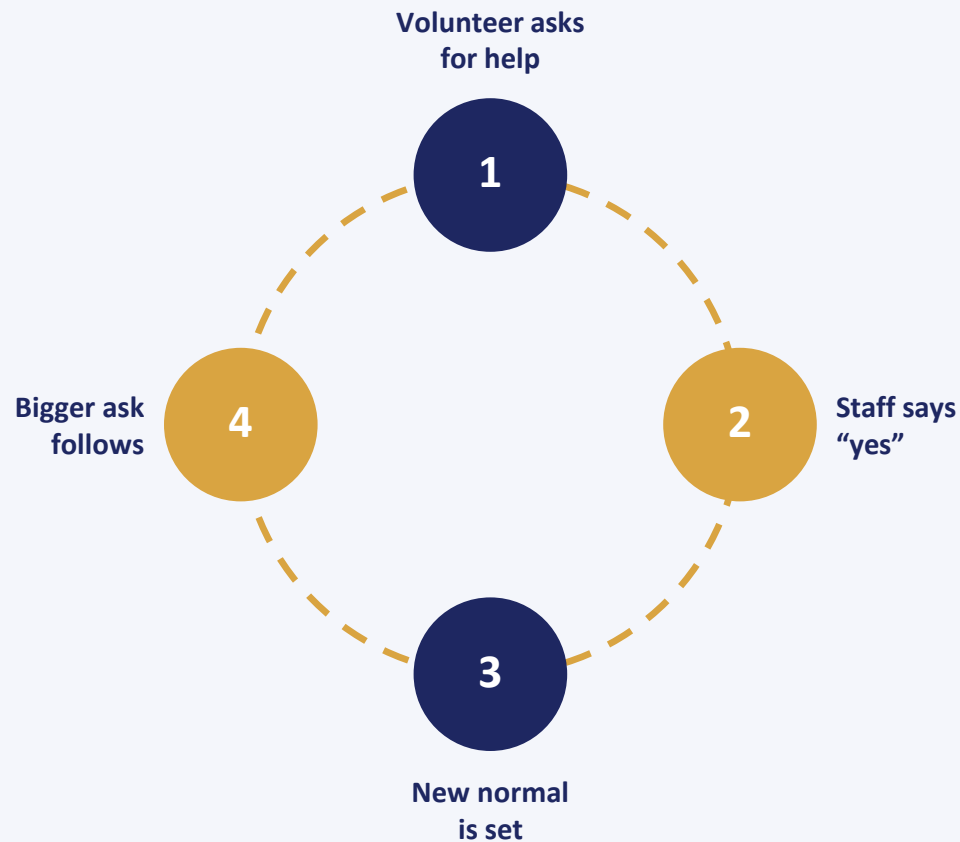
“You make it look so easy!”

Volunteers see the output. Staff manages everything required to make that output trustworthy

Scope creep doesn't announce itself. It accumulates through small requests that compound over time — straining your team and eroding profitability.



Scope Creep Is a Circle, Not a Line



Every helpful “yes” plants the seed for the next request.

- Volunteers see possibilities; staff see timelines. Both perspectives are valuable — without boundaries, the circle never stops spinning.
- It usually happens because we do good work — that makes it easy to ask staff for more.
- AMC professionals are innate “helpers.” It's in our nature to support volunteers and clients. We can sometimes be the problem!

HOW TO SPOT IT

Inherited Scope Creep



When a staff transition happens, the outgoing team member may have been “overservicing” — quietly exceeding contract scope as efficiencies were found over the years. That leaves the new team member holding an inflated baseline and the difficult job of resetting client expectations.

CATCHING IT EARLY



Regular Contract Reviews

Client teams routinely review contract terms and hours against actual work delivered.



Continual Scope Education

Keep scope visible and top-of-mind for staff and clients alike, not just at kickoff.



Board Orientations

Review the scope of services directly with the board and volunteer leaders.

Coach the Team to Say “Yes, And...”

We don't need to say “no.” Five things to say when scope creep is happening:

1

“Yes, and...” we can support a project addendum for that.

2

“Yes, but...” what should we take off the plate to make room?

3

“Yes, how...” can we prioritize this over something else?

4

“Yes, let me...” get the manager involved before we commit.

5

“Yes, and...” here's what that will mean for scope and cost.



Unchecked Scope Creep Costs You

Burnout

Faster employee burnout and frustration
on overextended accounts

Margins

Reduced profitability as unbilled hours
quietly pile up

Capacity

Less room for staff to focus on other
clients and projects

Scope creep isn't just a client-management problem — it hurts your employees and your AMC's bottom line.

Responding to Common Objections



“You make this look easy — I think we can do it ourselves.”

Show the complexity behind the outcome, not just the deliverable itself.



“I know a guy — I’ll outsource this to my guy.”

Reinforce the institutional knowledge and continuity you already provide.



“But you’re using AI tools — doesn’t that mean we should have more time?”

Reframe efficiency gains as reinvested quality, not free capacity to give away.



TABLE DISCUSSION • 5 MINUTES

At your table, discuss:

*“How are you responding to scope creep?
What is working for you and your team?”*

Be ready to share one takeaway with the room.



Sometimes, “Yes” Is the Right Call



Innovation Opportunity

The AMC may benefit from trying something new that a client requested — an approach that could later apply across other client accounts.



Client at Risk

The client relationship is in jeopardy, and giving a little more now protects the long-term partnership.

Write Contracts That Hold the Line

Set clear project scopes up front. Vague language invites expansion — specificity prevents it.

VAGUE	SPECIFIC
X “Manage social media”	✓ Content generation: 2–3 posts/week across 3 platforms
X “10–12 board meetings”	✓ 10 board meetings: 8 one-hour virtual, 2 in-person (2 days each) in [named] cities
X “Manage committees”	✓ Support listed committees: attend 1 monthly meeting, draft agenda, capture minutes, distribute action items

Sell Outcomes. Prove Them With Data.



Sell Outcomes, Not Time

- Price and pitch the result you deliver — not the hours behind it.
- Keep scope tied to deliverables, frequency, and defined boundaries.
- Make it easy for clients to see the value — not just the ease — of your work.



KPI Dashboard Reporting

- Tie every reported activity to a measurable outcome.
- Identify which KPIs actually matter to this client's goals.
- Make visible the significant effort behind work that “looks easy.”

Scope Creep Already Happened — Now What?

1

Reset Expectations Mid-Contract

Name the current state directly and reintroduce the agreed scope as the shared baseline going forward.



2

Salvage the Relationship

Lead with the partnership, not the paperwork — protect trust while you renegotiate boundaries.



3

Reclaim Your Boundaries

Put the new agreement in writing so the reset holds beyond this one conversation.

The Scope Reset Conversation

Prioritization is the enemy of scope creep – Ask “If we had to choose only three activities to continue because they create the most value, which would you choose?”

Destructive

X “We can’t do that anymore”

X “This isn’t in your contract/scope of work”

X “I know you got this before, but my predecessor wasn’t supposed to do that”

Cooperative

✓ Let’s realign expectations so we can continue delivering excellent service in the areas that matter most

✓ Over time, several additional services have been added to our support model, and we would like to review priorities to ensure we are allocating the right resources

✓ That support was provided previously, and we’d like to revisit how responsibilities are allocated moving forward to ensure this remains sustainable.

TABLE DISCUSSION • 15 MINUTES

At your table, review the Scope Creep scenario:

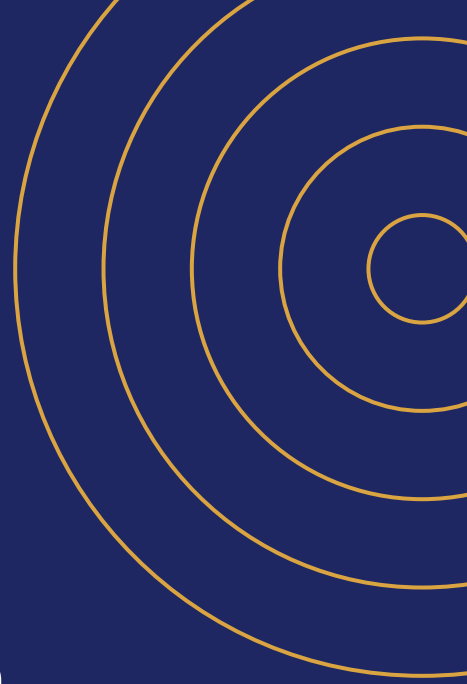
- *Identity what is out of scope*
- *Determine how you will address it*
- *Create an action plan to prevent it from happening again*

Be ready to share the action plan with the room.



FINAL THOUGHT

Our goal isn't to do less. Our goal is to ensure we're investing our resources in the areas that create the greatest value for our client.



THANK YOU

Keep the Circle from Spinning.

Questions & discussion

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