

Solve the pricing problem with SCOPE Better

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Tracey Shirtcliff, founder and CEO of SCOPE Better about building a pricing platform for professional services, pivots, pricing and profit.

Temps de lecture : minute

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I'd been working in the software industry for 10 years, and throughout that time it became clear that there were no straightforward pricing tools for professional services. It didn't matter what corner of the sector I was working with, scopes of work and fee proposals were based in Excel spreadsheets and managed manually. It was tedious, time-consuming, and a problem for everyone.

It was clear to me that there was a need in professional services businesses for a tool like SCOPE Better and so after exiting from my existing software company, I set out to build one.

We've pivoted over time, broadening our original focus, and looking at ways to support more complex pricing in a continuously evolving technological environment – AI, ML, and automation are all having an impact right now – but that was where things started.

Tell us about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you

reach customers and so on?

SCOPE Better is a pricing platform developed to support professional services businesses.

Pricing, fee proposals, and scopes of work have always been complex. More often than not, in professional services, these things are built upon time/effort-based pricing, which lacks all transparency and meaning from a customer point of view, and with AI looming large, it's beginning to lack all relevance.

One of the ways we address this problem is by facilitating deliverable-based pricing. Deliverable-based pricing – also known as asset-based or output-based pricing – enables businesses to retain the value of the services they offer while deploying contemporary tools, such as AI, to expedite project completion and enhance accuracy.

SCOPE Better's Pricing Platform provides a range of tools to enable businesses to productise their services. So, I guess you could say that we're professionalising professional services pricing.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

When we founded SCOPE Better in 2017, we combined machine learning tools with a quote builder to enable users to analyse their quotes against industry benchmarks and offered change recommendations. That was the basis of the business, but it proved too limiting and led to standardisation – which is not what we wanted to do.

Our goal was to elevate pricing, to help businesses achieve the income they deserve, so we switched focus and started building out tools in the platform that would help businesses productise their offering.

When we first started, we were also quite limited in our targeting. SCOPE Better was originally intended as a tool for creative agencies. We've since broadened that out to cover a range of verticals, including clinical research organisations, IT, and management consultancies, among many others.

Tell us about the working culture at SCOPE

I think we can say that the company is dev and product-focused. So, the largest team within the business by far is development and engineering. Consequently, we have a culture of continuous learning, development, and improvement, and that stands true for the product, the business as a whole, and at both the team and individual levels.

How are you funded?

SCOPE Better was – is – bootstrapped. We gained investment from Fuel Ventures 18 months ago, and that was designed to help us scale. But before that, we used our own funding and sought support from others who had faith in the business.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

I'd say our biggest challenge will be the same for a diverse range of businesses – COVID. While working from home and finding new ways of getting things done ultimately drove innovation for the business, it also meant that the people we needed weren't available. Remote working wasn't exactly new, but there wasn't the range of tools available that we all pretty much rely on now, so that threw up myriad different challenges for us to work our way around.

How does SCOPE answer an unmet need?

Pricing directly determines profit, so if you don't get it right, it can impact the entire success and profitability of a business. SCOPE Better helps businesses to accurately and profitably price their services. By professionalising professional services pricing, we're helping businesses to package and sell their services, deliver greater pricing transparency, and, when it comes down to it, to better sell their services.

What's in store for the future?

Right now, we're in a high-growth phase, so expanding into new verticals and territories is the priority. We recently signed our first clients in Africa, which is amazing, and we're aiming to move into several other new territories in the coming year. But product development remains hugely important, and we're looking at products based on subscription pricing, amongst other things. I can't go into everything here, but we've got a full calendar of new feature rollouts planned for the next 18 months.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

I probably have a bit too much advice for other founders! But if I'm going to limit it, I think I have to stick to the famous words of Winston Churchill: 'never give up'. I mean, we have good days, bad days, wins, losses, but there will always be a lot of sludge you have to crawl through. Never give up when you're faced with that. You might need to pivot, to find a new direction, but keep going. It's only when you stop that you run out of hope.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Healthy body, healthy mind is probably my most important personal rule. I have teenagers, so sticking to a routine isn't always possible, but I do prioritise personal health. I practice biohacking – doing whatever it is that your body needs to help you achieve each day's goals, so that usually means just adding more of the good stuff – more water, more exercise, more whatever you need.

Tracey Shirtcliff is the founder and CEO of SCOPE Better.



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