

# Margin Drift Early Warning Checklist

For UK engineering & fabrication directors delivering fixed-price bespoke projects

Built from delivery control on £100k-£15m live industrial programmes.

Use this when: the team is flat out, the job looks fine, and you don't trust the margin.

## A) Margin visibility (tick anything that's true)

- Your "margin" is still the quote margin – not recalculated from live reality
- Cost-to-complete isn't refreshed weekly (or it's "best guess")
- Labour hours are being moved, buried, or re-coded to protect job optics
- The job looks green because leadership effort is filling gaps
- You can't answer in 60 seconds: "What is this job forecast to make today?"

*If you tick 2+: you don't have margin visibility – you have hope.*

## C) Delivery drift (tick anything that's true)

- Programme slip is being recovered with overtime / extra labour / weekends
- Rework is happening but not being costed as rework
- Drawing revisions are frequent and nobody can tell you why
- "We'll sort it later" has become normal (technical debt accumulating)
- The job is "nearly done" for multiple weeks in a row

*If you tick 2+: the job is drifting – it hasn't "just got busy".*

## B) Scope & change control (tick anything that's true)

- There's no single, clear scope baseline that delivery is aligned to
- Changes arrive as "small favours" (and never become formal variations)
- Site conditions / interfaces / access constraints weren't locked as assumptions
- Design is still moving after manufacture has started
- The client is directing the work informally through conversations on site

*If you tick 2+: you're delivering a moving target at a fixed price.*

## D) The 3 director questions (Yes / No)

- 1) Do we have a current forecast margin based on live cost-to-complete?  
 Yes  No
- 2) Can we list every out-of-scope change since award in one place?  
 Yes  No
- 3) Do we know the single biggest driver of margin risk on this job today?  
 Yes  No

*If any answer is No, you're exposed.*

## What to do next

**If you scored 6+ ticks (or any "No" above):**

You don't need more effort. You need **commercial control**.

**Option 1 – 30-min Control Call (free):** quick triage to confirm whether an intervention is justified. Scan the QR code to book in your call.

**Option 2 – Project Delivery Review (one live job):** prove what it's actually making, where drift is coming from, and what to do next.

**Book the Control Call: [epdengineeringsolutions.com/controlcall](https://epdengineeringsolutions.com/controlcall)**

Scan to book  
(free, 30 mins)



Quick triage on one live job.