

Love of Learning Makes a Great Project Manager

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, Chief Cheetah, Cheetah Learning

Becoming a master of your craft as a project manager means continually learning how you can improve your skills. Luckily, every day gives you opportunities to learn with Project Management - even if you aren't actively doing the job of a "project manager."

Stop and think about your life through the lens of Project Management. You'll soon realize that just about everything you do in life is a project in some form or fashion. It's this simple act of reflection that will help you become a better project manager. You can take the events that are going on around you day in and day out, and turn them all into learning experiences.

How do you do this? It can be formal or informal. From the formal perspective, you can ask the people involved in your projects to rate your abilities as a project manager on your last project with a [PM Scorecard](#), and then use the results to create an improvement plan.

On the informal side, it is as simple as a reflective exercise of what you learned during your day, and how you can use it to improve your on-going performance as a project manager. Here are a few questions to ask yourself: what worked well for you? What didn't work well for you? What did you learn? How are you going to do things differently based on what you learned?

Let me give you a recent example of how informal reflection improves your learning. I recently wrapped up a project status meeting with several programmers on one of many projects that I'm managing. The meeting went exceptionally well and the project is also moving along perfectly. It's that ideal scenario that we all work for, and it probably doesn't happen as often as we want it too. So, this stuck out in my mind, and I asked myself why this team was doing so well.

They had just achieved one of their major milestones and everyone was feeling rather euphoric. This coupled with the coming holiday and some much needed time off added to the swell of good feelings. What I realized was that it was very important to give this team time to celebrate their accomplishments; to acknowledge and appreciate what they had accomplished and give them a little breathing room with the holidays coming up.

Will all our project status meetings in the future go this well? I can make sure that I spend the time to set up a success-based schedule so the people doing the work can get it done, and that there is time for me to acknowledge each success, and also time for them to regenerate after hefty milestones.

Taking the time to reflect on what you experienced and how you can use that to improve your Project Management capabilities needs to be both formal and informal. Treat everyday as a learning experience and over time, you'll notice that your Project Management capabilities will grow as you do.

About the Know How Network

The Know How Network is a monthly column written by Michelle LaBrosse, the founder and Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning. Distributed to hundreds of newsletters and media outlets around the world, the Know How Network brings the promise, purpose and passion of Project Management to people everywhere.

About the Author



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is the founder of [Cheetah Learning](#), and author of *Cheetah Negotiation* and *Cheetah Project Management*. The Project Management Institute, www.pmi.org, recently selected Michelle as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the World, and only one of two women selected from the training and education industry. She was featured in the October 2006 issue of PM Network Magazine, and also graduated from the Harvard Business School's Owner President Managers (OPM) program in March 2006.

She created the origins of the Cheetah Project Management methodology as an Air Force Officer in the mid 80's. In 1995, she prototyped the concept of accelerating learning using "virtual classrooms," to accelerate the way people learned and applied core business skills. As a corporate research scientist in systems engineering and adult learning for a large multinational corporation, she later created and tested a one-day approach to teaching Project Management. This approach would later evolve to become Cheetah Project Management, a fast and effective way of launching projects.

Today, she is the leader of the course development team at Cheetah and sets the strategic direction for the company. Using the Cheetah Project Management techniques, LaBrosse has grown the company from three employees in 2000 to more than 100 in 2006. Cheetah is now the global leader in Project Manager Professional Development.

Her articles have appeared in publications such as: *European CEO Magazine*, *Plant Engineering Magazine*, *Industrial Engineer Magazine*, *Control Engineering Magazine*, *Journal of the American Association for Medical Transcription JAAMT*, *NSSEA Essentials Magazine*, *ASTN Network Magazine*, *Radio Sales Today*, *Sprinkler Quarterly & Technology Magazine*, *The Federal Credit Union Magazine Online*, *Business Quarterly Online American Society of Landscape Architects*, *ACRP Wire Association of Clinical Research Professionals*, *American Council of Engineering Companies Association* and more.

With a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering, and an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering, LaBrosse has done extensive postgraduate work with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for Advanced Educational Studies and with the University of Washington Industrial Engineering Program in accelerating adult learning with respect to meeting core business objectives.

She lives in Nevada with her family and likes to rejuvenate in Alaska where you'll often find her kayaking, golfing or hiking.