

July Know How Network

Managing Team Fireworks

by Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, Chief Cheetah, [Cheetah Learning](#)

Watching fireworks light up a summer sky awakens the wonder in us all. When fireworks light up a conference room and team members are ready to explode, it can be the true test of your Project Management and leadership skills.

Healthy vs. Destructive Conflict

The first thing to identify is whether the conflict is healthy or destructive. When team conflict is enthusiastic, challenging and results in a better outcome, it's healthy and a sign of a team that trusts each other enough to engage in debate and discourse. When the conflict is mean-spirited, personal and results in communication shutting down or barriers to success, it's destructive, and the team needs to get to the true root of the conflict and solve it.

Getting to the Root of the Conflict

If conflict is destructive and slowing your team down, here are some areas to focus on:

Expectations. Is the conflict or disagreement because team members had different expectations? This is where a Project Agreement is like the Holy Grail. When a Project Agreement is developed and when the entire team buys into it, everyone has a document that outlines expectations, roles and responsibilities, and deadlines.

Communication. How is the team communicating? Is there a regular time when they meet, have a conference call or go over the project status? Many times, conflict is caused by a lack of communication or silo communication where communication isn't making its way to all members of the team. If there's a silo, break it down and create a communication chain that connects all team members.

Understanding personality types. If your team has never worked with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, it can be an illuminating exercise and can give team members insight and understanding about each other. As a team leader, it can give you ideas about managing your team and communicating with them.

Here is a simplified personality assessment based on the four key personality dimensions.

E or I – Are You an Extrovert (E) or an Introvert (I)

How are you energized? Do you get excited or animated around others (E) or do you prefer to be on your own? (I)

N or S – Are You Intuitive (N) or Sensory (S)?

What do you focus on in your environment? Do you look at what could be (N)? Or do you see “what is” (S)? People who fit the N classification are “Idea” people, and the people who fit the “S” classification are driven by “real” facts and data.

T or F – Are You a Thinker (T) or a Feeler (F)?

How do you make decisions? Do you make them impersonally with comments such as “I think...” (T)? Or do you make decisions based on your own values, prefacing comments with “I feel...” (F)?

J or P – Are You Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)?

How do you choose to live? Do you keep your desk neat and tidy (J)? Or do you prefer to keep it more spontaneously organized and flexible (P)? People who fit the J classification prefer an orderly life and are happiest when matters are settled. People who fit the P classification prefer to be spontaneous and are happiest when their lives are more flexible.

Tips for Reading People’s Personality Types

- 1. Notice their behavior around others.** Do they get excited and draw energy from others (E), or do they prefer to be on their own (I)?
- 2. Where do they place their focus?** Do they look at what could be (N) or at what is (S)?
- 3. How do they make decisions?** Do they preface their opinions with “I think” (T) or “I feel”? (F)
- 4. Do the desk test.** Is their desk neat, tidy and structured (J)? Or is it more spontaneously organized and flexible (P)?

Communication Approaches

After you identify a personality type, then you need to know how to communicate with that person. Here are a few examples:

INTJ: Be brief and to the point. Acknowledge their work and thank them – especially in front of others.

ISTJ: They like details, so make sure you give them enough information to be comfortable. Be logical and clear, letting them know you understand their current challenges, and can help them find solutions.

ENTP: Let them share ideas and participate in the process. Be clear about the deliverable and what you need.

ESTJ: Engage them in discussion. Let them talk about personal matters. Ask them how they can help you with your problem.

Ground rules. If you see a pattern that keeps rearing its ugly head, such as a team member who is always negative about an idea versus building on it, break the pattern by establishing ground rules that make it unacceptable.

Both sides now. When you walk a mile in another person's shoes, you often get a different perspective. When team members who are opposed argue the opposite side, they are forced to see the other person's perspective, and it also may generate ideas that no one had thought of before.

Humor. When was the last time your team had a good laugh together? A real belly buster? Humor is one of the world's best tension breakers; if your team is too serious, it may be time to prescribe some laughter. A quick team-building exercise that can bring some laughs into the room is the "nickname" roundtable. Everyone goes around the room or takes a turn on a conference call and discloses their funniest nickname. It's a good way to bring some laughter into the room before you tackle a tough subject.

Serving up Success

Here's to a great Fourth of July for our readers in the United States, and to everyone around the world, may your projects explode only with success!

Learn More: To learn more about personality types and negotiation techniques, read [Cheetah Negotiations](#).

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, 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. A student of life, in 2006, Michelle graduated from the Harvard Business School's Owner President Managers (OPM) program.

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.