

Top Five Ways to Keep Project Passion Alive

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP[®], Chief Cheetah, Cheetah Learning

We've all been there: stuck on the project that won't end, wishing for a rain dance that could conjure up a quick, action-packed Hollywood ending.

I don't have a rain dance for you, but I do have some ideas that have worked for me when my team is in the tight grip of project fatigue.

Five Ways to Keep Project Passion Alive

1. Acknowledge the elephant in the room. What's worse than empty corporate platitudes when everyone knows the project team is in the doldrums? This is when humor is very effective. Say what everyone is thinking. Turn the groans into laughter with the simple truth. "I know this project stinks right now, so the question is: How can we make it rock?"

Truth is always exciting. Speak it, then; life is dull without it. --

Pearl S. Buck

2. Why do we care? When a project has gone on forever, it's easy for the most seasoned project manager to lose sight of why you began in the first place. Bring your team back to the project's raison d'être. Paint the big picture and then connect that big picture back to the team. It's easy to get engaged again, once you are reminded why you need to care. Answer the "what's in it for me" (WIIFM) for every one on the team. If there is not a compelling "WIIFM," create one. Build in some incentives – whether they are vacation days or Bose headphones – bring some sizzle into the end game.

The two most beautiful words in the English language are "check enclosed." -- Dorothy Parker

3. Revisit expectations and goals. During a long project, people and plans may change significantly. That's why your Project Agreement needs to be a living document. Recharge your team by revisiting the expectations, adjusting the goals and making sure everyone is clear about roles and responsibilities. This simple step can uncover roadblocks and frustrations that may be unvoiced but need to be heard.

Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often.

□-- Mark Twain

4. Inspire. Ask yourself how can you inspire your team? Is it as simple as a creative and inspirational speaker who could come in for a brief session or a monthly book club run by the team, allowing them to stretch their brains in a different way? If you have no budget, take a break from a weekly meeting and do a few quick team-building exercises or even plan a mini-field trip in your hometown to give your team a different perspective and build some fresh thinking into the old project.

If your actions inspire others to dream more,□ learn more, do more and become more, □you are a leader. □

--John Quincy Adams

5. Visualize the end. Lead a visualization exercise with your team where you all spend 10 minutes visualizing the end of the project. What will that look like? How does the success feel? What did you accomplish? How did you get there? How do you know you're there? When an entire team feels stuck, it often gets hard to see the happy ending. As the leader, you can help them paint it and give new hope that the end will come!

The man who has no imagination has no wings. □-- Muhammad Ali

So, when you know the energy on your team is lacking, don't run to the cafeteria and hide. Instead, experiment with these five energizers and see what works in your business culture. And, don't be afraid to ask for ideas from your own team. You'll be amazed at how a small idea can make a big difference.

About the Know How Network and Cheetah Learning

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. Visit www.cheetahlearning.com to learn more about Cheetah PM, the fastest way to learn about Project Management and get your PMP. You can also get your career in gear with CheetahWare, free Project Management tools from Cheetah Learning.

About the Author



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is the founder of Cheetah Learning, and author of Cheetah Negotiations 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 is a graduate of the Harvard Business School's Owner President Managers (OPM) program and also holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton. Cheetah Learning is a virtual company and has 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide.

Her articles have appeared in over 100 publications from around the world. Her monthly column, the Know How Network is carried by 400 publications, and her monthly newsletter subscription list includes more than 50,000 people. To date, more than 30,000 people have become "Cheetahs" using Cheetah Learning's innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Michelle has been running her company virtually for the past 20 years. She has grown the company 100 fold in the past 20 years, and she credits her success to using the Cheetah Project Management method to better manage both people

and technology. Michelle's mission is to help people achieve great results, FAST, by making it fast, easy and fun to learn and do Project Management.

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