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Parma and Project Management

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Cost management in Parma

As a part of my project close-out celebration of the “get the kids into college” project, I decided to celebrate by going back to school myself. So, here I am in Parma, Italy, at the [Academia Barilla](#) cooking school through [Sur La Table](#) -- two organizations that really understand the community around cooking and the foodies like me who want to experience culture through cooking.

During this cooking program, many Italians have professed to me they are not good at “Project Management.” As I kept hearing this, I realized their perception is based on the stereotype of Project Management: that it’s only about getting there on time and not about the quality or the end result. When you look at Project Management in totality – time, cost and quality – then you find the people of Parma are exceptionally good at Project Management. Let’s explore what I experienced as the five key ways Parma and Project Management are a perfect marriage.

Five Keys that Connect Parma and Project Management

1. **Scope Management** – The people of Parma are true to their mission of living life dedicated to the production of exceptional food products – from their world-renowned Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese to their Prosciutto di Parma hams. Even though it may cost more money and take more time to create their savory, hand-crafted food products, they stick to their standards and consistently

create the foods that have defined their culture for centuries. Here, the scope of the project includes values and passion.

2. **Time Management** – It amazes me how much people can get done here in Parma, while still maintaining a daily two-hour break for lunch, completely closing up shop on Thursday afternoons, and never working on the weekends. While this is hard to fathom for the stressed out, workaholics among us, think about the power of that rhythm. Their agricultural traditions keep them more in tune with the natural cycles of nature – by choice and necessity. For example, the truffles, a delicacy that is a prominent flavor in many traditional recipes, can only be harvested from September through February. The truffles will not wait for you. You and your dog have to be aligned with their calendar, ready to sniff out the ripe truffles, and get them to market.
3. **Cost Management** – As we studied how they made Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, it was continually emphasized how every element of the milk was used and nothing was discarded or wasted. The same ethic pervades the culture as you walk by ancient buildings that are cherished, people riding bicycles everywhere, and the strict eye that Italians keep on their electricity costs. I learned they must decide up front how much electricity they will use per month to determine their base rate. That means that unlike other consumers around the world, they actually have a sense of how many kilowatts they use and what the cost is. It's just another example of how an efficient use of resources is a necessary part of their culture.
4. **Quality Management** – Quality is a core value of the Parma brand. Known as a culinary capital of Italy and beloved for their cheese and ham, Parma is a protected designation of origin (D.O.P.) for a number of cheese and ham artisan food products. Throughout the world, there are copycats of their Parmigiano cheeses and Prosciutto di Parma ham. However, only those that carry the D.O.P. designation are the authentic products of Parma. This reminded me of the PMP designation and how that is the quality stamp for project managers.
5. **Risk Management** – Creating Prosciutto di Parma was originally done for risk management – the risk of spoiling meat. Preserving meat with salt and cold for three months and letting it rest for the remaining nine months of the year became a standard risk-management practice to prevent illness from spoiled meat. With modern refrigeration, they can create the three months of cold for the meat to salt cure throughout the year. Prior to refrigeration, they could only do the cold-salt curing from November to February. Even with modern technology, they still do

not risk the quality. The salt is still rubbed by hand onto the ham legs to cure them and give them their distinctive sweetness.

So, the next time you have the pleasure of tasting some of the fruits of Parma, remember that along with the culinary passion comes Project Management excellence that has stood the test of time. The people of Parma get my vote for a global Project Management award of excellence. These folks know how to live well, enjoy life and still get things done. Viva Italia!

Editor's note: This article was distributed through Cheetah's The Know How Network, 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.

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Michelle LaBrosse, PMP is the founder and Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning. An international expert on accelerated learning and Project Management, she has grown Cheetah Learning into the market leader for Project Management training and professional development. Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. To date, more than 30,000 people have become “Cheetahs” using Cheetah Learning’s innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques. In 2006, 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. Michelle is a graduate of the Harvard Business School’s Owner & President Management program for entrepreneurs, and is the author of *Cheetah Project Management* and *Cheetah Negotiations*. To contact Michelle, visit www.cheetahlearning.com.