

PM TIPS & TECHNIQUES – DECEMBER 2007

10 Ways to Inspire Your Team

by Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®

Inspire. Just the word itself causes us to pause and think. We may remember our own personal heroes like Martin Luther King or Mother Theresa or a teacher or mentor who brought out the best in us and showed us the power of one person.

It's easy in business to get cynical when we're surrounded by what I like to call "faux inspiration." I'm talking about the corporate posters with motivational sayings that are easy to spoof when the actions of management don't reflect the glossy images and quotations.

In my experience, inspiration comes from example. As Albert Einstein said: "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing." So, that means we all have the power to inspire others by our actions. As project managers, you're in a prime position to inspire your team. Here are 10 ways to get you started.

- 1. Have a clear goal with a reasonable approach to achieve it.**
Shooting for stars may work for you when you're developing your personal goals, but when you're inspiring a team, people need to be able to clearly see how they are going to get from point A to point B and believe that it's possible.
- 2. Be enthusiastic about each person's contributions.**
Remember how good it felt when a teacher recognized your contribution? You glowed all day and nearly flew home. It costs nothing to tell people how they're doing. Recognizing what they're doing well, and also giving ideas on how they can work even better, goes a long way.
- 3. Wear your blue hat and leave the black hat at home.**
You may have played the game where you wear different hats to assume different roles. The black hat starts with the negatives and tells you everything that's going wrong. This is the person who can kill idea generation in any meeting. When you're inspiring a team, wear the blue hat. See the possibility and opportunity in every challenge. Begin with what is working and then build on it.

4. Focus on the strengths of each person.

One of the biggest myths in business is to focus on weaknesses instead of building strengths. It's a backward way to approach problem solving – like fitting the proverbial square peg into the round hole. It's faster and more effective to focus on the strengths of your team members and develop them. Not only will you see results faster, you'll also have a happier team because people are doing what they're good at and contributing at their highest level.

5. Clear hurdles like a Super Hero.

How do you get your team to feel like rock stars? Think like Superman and clear any hurdles that are in their way. When you remove obstacles, you show your team that you've got their back.

6. Get the slackers off the team.

Nothing brings down a team like slackers. When people aren't pulling their weight, it lowers the standards of everyone and makes it seem like quality doesn't matter. When you remove people who aren't performing, it improves morale because it shows your team that you're serious about the best results.

7. Roll up your sleeves.

When you work with the team in the areas where you can contribute, you send a strong message because you are showing that you are part of the team with your actions.

8. Acknowledge people's contributions every week.

Many managers make the mistake of recognizing people once a year. Recognition isn't a holiday. It should be a regular part of your team dynamic. Take the time every week to tell people how they've contributed to the team.

9. Be the model of accountability you want to drive through your team.

If you're telling people to be accountable while not meeting your own deadlines, it doesn't take too long for the eyes to roll. Keep your team inspired by keeping your commitments to them and meeting every milestone.

10. Show and communicate your progress.

Don't make the mistake of doing project updates only at milestones. Communicate the progress of the project every week to make sure you're on track.

And inside every one of these steps, add one key ingredient: Fun! Whether it's a quick team-building exercise during a milestone meeting or an inside joke that has come to define your team, give people every reason to laugh out loud and let the sound of laughter inspire your team to be the best they can be.

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.



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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. 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. 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. 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](#).