

PM TIPS & TECHNIQUES – SEPTEMBER 2007

10 Ways Project Management Skills Can Help Your Career

by Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®

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In today's digital world, what employers are looking for may surprise you. They assume you're going to be technologically literate and that you have the skills that are specific to your industry. Once you have the basics, they want to know that you can perform, achieve results and play well with others.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2007 survey, employers rated communication skills, and honesty and integrity equally at the top of their list of what they look for in potential employees. Following closely behind communication, and honesty and integrity were: interpersonal skills, motivation/initiative, strong work ethic and teamwork skills.

What struck me as I read those skills was that all of them are inherent in Project Management, and it emphasized what I've believed for years: Project Management is a career accelerator.

Here's how you can use Project Management to put your career in high gear:

1. **SHOW RESULTS.** Project Management is the art and science of getting things done. When you improve your Project Management skills, you know how to get things done quickly, and even more important, you learn how to document the results. In our careers, we are often as good as our last hit. You can't be a one-hit wonder. Instead, you want to keep charting, year after year, with success after success.
2. **BE EFFICIENT.** When you apply Project Management principles to your work or your home life, you stop reinventing the wheel. Project Management teaches you how to make the most efficient use of resources to generate the best results in the least amount of time. At the end of every project, you capture best practices and lessons learned, creating an invaluable documentation of hits and misses. Sound too good to be true? Good project managers do this on every project, and you can, too.
3. **CREATE AN ONGOING DIALOGUE.** One mistake I see a lot in Project Management and on teams is the assumption that there's one meeting and everyone goes away, and then the communication ends, and somehow everything is still going to magically get done. Your communication skills are not about your vocabulary. They are about how you manage your communication. Are you communicating frequently enough and with clarity? Are you communicating what is relevant? Are you communicating your successes?

4. **PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS.** People hear the word teamwork, and they groan or they say that they are, of course, a team player. That's why I like to bring it back to the kindergarten place in our mind: Back to the sandbox. Do you play well with others? Do other people want to be on your project team? Are you respected? Do you listen actively to what others have to say? Good project managers know when to lead and when to get out of the way. When someone is interviewing you, you know what that person is thinking: Can I work with him? Will my team work well with her?
5. **LET YOUR CONFIDENCE SHINE.** When someone shows confidence, everyone in the room feels it, too. One thing I consistently hear from our students is that the biggest payoff from their Project Management training or PMP® certification is the confidence that they gained. They went back to their job with a solid Project Management foundation that made them feel more competent and able to project more confidence to their team and their boss.
6. **KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS.** Missed deadlines and projects that slip through the cracks are career killers. Project Management skills focus on timelines and results that build your reputation and give team members a reason to trust you. "I know that I can always count on her to get the job done." That quote can – and should – be about you.
7. **GET A GRIP.** Good project managers don't have to freak out. They can remain calm and in control because they have a Project Agreement which has all the critical information about the project in it. They know when all the deadlines are, who is responsible for what and when, and they've also documented changes. Everyone wants to have someone on the team who can stay calm when a project gets rocky and bring stability to chaos.
8. **ADAPT TO CHANGE.** Don't ignore change. Companies change. Deadlines change. People come and go. Good project managers know they often have to adapt their plans and document what has changed and how that impacts the entire project.
9. **KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW.** What are your strengths and weaknesses? What skills do you need to move from the status quo to the next level? Once you have a solid foundation of Project Management skills, keep building on that foundation. Don't stagnate. Continuous learning and a thirst for knowledge are always attractive to employers and team members.
10. **LEAD WITH PURPOSE AND PASSION.** People will follow those who know what they are doing and who can generate results. Project Management is a powerful leadership tool because it not only shows us how to keep our eye on the prize and the purpose, but it's also about the passion to achieve and succeed. Nothing feels better than accomplishment.

Take Flight with Cheetah

Getting and staying certified is one way to get your career on the fast track and watch it soar. But take time to have some fun along the way. Try our [crossword puzzle](#) and see how many of the 10 ways you can remember. Then get started today by downloading our complimentary PMP toolkit at: www.cheetahsmartstart.com. Buckle up and enjoy the flight!

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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.

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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](#).