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Top Five Ways to Keep Project Passion Alive

by Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®

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.

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. 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.