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Taking Stock with Lessons Learned

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Last year, there was a whole lot of learning going on! So, as we focus on the New Year, let's also pull a few golden nuggets from 2008 as we look at what our survey respondents had to say in our Lessons Learned survey, and also ask ourselves some questions to point us forward.

When we asked who learned the biggest lesson of the year on the world stage, the number one answer was the CEOs of the Big Three automakers, followed closely by Henry Paulson, the U.S. Treasury Secretary.

Now, let's bring that question home to you. What did you accomplish in 2008? If that question seems tough to answer, break it down month by month and see what comes to the surface.

In our survey, two answers tied for the biggest personal lessons learned: 1) have a back-up plan ready for the unexpected and 2) keep a sense of humor and stay focused on the future.

In Project Management, capturing lessons learned is part of the power of the discipline. It allows us to analyze the good, the bad and the ugly. In our survey, 63% of respondents said they do capture lessons learned most of the time.

Now, think about your own life. Do you regularly think about what went well and what did not? Think about last year. What was your biggest disappointment, and how can you move forward from it or build on it in a positive way?

When you don't capture lessons learned, what holds you back? The #1 answer in our survey was that people got busy on other projects. If you think about improving your life and learning, what project is more important than that?

Here are seven other questions to ask yourself as you take what last year gave you and turn it into insight to create a better year for you this year.

1. How did I grow last year or improve myself in any way?
2. How did I limit myself from succeeding and achieving the things I wanted to achieve?

3. What parts of my life worked well?
4. What parts of my life did I want to be working better than they were?
5. When was I the happiest last year, and what was I doing?
6. If I could put one issue behind me, forever, what would it be?
7. What are the top three ideas, beliefs, or actions that I can adopt to make this year a good year for me based on what I learned last year?

In my blog, I've talked a lot about what I've learned as an entrepreneur, and how often what seems like a crisis or a failure is what ultimately leads us to the next idea or to our ultimate success.

In an address that John F. Kennedy made in 1959, he reminded us that when written in Chinese the word "crisis" is composed of two characters - one represents danger and the other represents opportunity. So, whatever happened in 2008, look for the opportunity within it. That is not only the best gift you can give yourself, but it also will benefit everyone around you.

Here's to opportunity from adversity in 2009!

### **Chief Cheetah Podcast Is Yours for the Downloading**

Want to hear what Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, and Chief Cheetah has to say about Lessons Learned? Download our podcast at <http://podcast.cheetahlearning.com/podcastgen/> and hear the words straight from the Cheetah's mouth.

*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](http://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](http://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](http://www.cheetahlearning.com).