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Project Management: Your Key to Self-Sufficiency

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Remember the children's rhyme:

Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells

I'd like to add another line:

And Project Management from row to row

Summer is the time for gardening, and this summer, gardening has had a resurgence. Call it eco-awareness or getting back to our roots (pun intended), gardening is more than a hobby; it's the most basic form of self-sufficiency. It also allows me to combine two passions: Project Management and being in the great outdoors.

That's why I started the Square Foot Garden Project in Alaska with my friends and family. The concept behind the Square Foot Garden is that anyone, anywhere can enjoy one. You don't have to have a green thumb to grow your own food; you just need a project plan and the ability to roll up your sleeves.

As I was working on the garden, I got to thinking about self-sufficiency, and I realized that Project Management has helped me to be self-sufficient throughout my life – no matter what projects I tackled.

Think about it when you have to meet a tough challenge. What always works? Taking the time to plan. Thinking. Gathering your thoughts. Setting goals and objectives. Assessing the risks. Building the right team. These are just a few of the things that you do as a good project manager.

So, ask yourself, what is keeping you from the level of self-sufficiency that you would like? Is it debt? Is it energy costs? Healthcare? Whatever it is, you can write a project plan that will help you make a change. And don't think that small changes don't matter. They do.

Here are just a few ideas to get you started. Choose a project that you have passion for, write your project plan and go!

- 1) **Plant your own Square Foot Garden.** My friend recommended a great book to me called *All New Square Foot Gardening*. This book really inspired me to write my project plan and get moving.
- 2) **Get a bike and ride it whenever possible to run errands.** Remember the thrill of riding your bike as a kid. Now, bikes are no longer kid stuff. If you live in an area where you can ride your bike into town, what better way to lessen your own dependence on your car and oil?
- 3) **Make your own gifts and cards from recycled materials.** I have a friend who did this for an entire year. She bought no gifts, wrapping paper or cards and made gifts with only recycled materials in her house. She got very creative with it, and we all looked forward to seeing what her gift would be at a birthday party or holiday gathering.
- 4) **Choose a “Do It Yourself” area to learn about:** plumbing, basic car maintenance, handy man or woman basics. A basic visit from the plumber can easily set you back a hundred dollars or more. If you’ve ever wanted to be handier, this could be a great area of focus for you.
- 5) **Entertain the old fashioned way.** Are your kids dependent on their Wii’s or PlayStations for entertainment? Do you default to DVD on a rainy day? How about bringing out some old-fashioned entertainment plans: charades, Scrabble, cards, board games? Make your family or friends part of the planning team and take turns on whose night it is to choose some low-tech entertainment. No electricity or Internet connection required.

Get started now, and let this be the summer that you became just a little more self-sufficient, and tune up your Project Management skills while accomplishing something worthwhile. Get it done!

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 of [Cheetah Learning](#), the [author](#) of the [Cheetah Success Series](#), and a prolific [blogger](#) whose mission is to bring Project Management to the masses. Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. Recently honored by the Project Management Institute (PMI®), Cheetah Learning was named Professional Development Provider of the Year at the 2008 PMI® Global Congress. A dynamic keynote speaker and industry thought leader, Michelle was previously recognized by PMI as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the world. Michelle's articles have appeared in over 100 publications and web sites around the world. She is a graduate of the Harvard Business School's Owner President Manager's (OPM) program and also holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton. She lives in Nevada with her family and likes to rejuvenate in Alaska where you'll often find her kayaking, hiking, and riding her motorcycle. To contact Michelle, visit www.cheetahlearning.com.

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