

Making Change Stick

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning

Are you tired of hearing people say the only constant is change? I think we all need to keep saying it to remind ourselves we have to always be ready to keep changing. Here's the rub: how do we make change stick? How can you, as a project manager, use your skills to create business processes that have staying power?

Let's face it: sustainability today is really about adapting to change and being able to be effective in the face of change. I've now weathered several business cycles as an entrepreneur, and I have found my Project Management skills to be invaluable as I've tackled change and made positive changes in my own business.

Here are my top 7 tips for making change stick:

- 1. Make Change Relevant to the People Who Need to Participate in It.** Part of your job as a project manager is to make sure people not only know where you're going, but that they also understand why they are going there. What's in it for them? Why does this change matter? Why does it lead to something positive? Think of yourself as the Chief Change Officer on your team. Don't just say: "We have to change this process." Explain why, and make it compelling.
- 2. Paint a Picture of Success.** Make sure people can see what success looks like. If your change initiative is successful, what will the outcome be? Show your team what the result will look like. Think before and after pictures. We are all suckers for those!
- 3. Plan for Fatigue.** "Change fatigue" is a normal part of any process change, so be ready for it. When you start to see people slacking on their goals and rolling their eyes in meetings, you are there. Shake up assignments. Assign new team leaders to different tasks. Do a team-building exercise that gets the creative juice flowing again. Celebrate the successes you've already accomplished. Use the old red thermometer technique to show the progress you've made and how far you need to go.
- 4. Keep Senior Leadership Engaged.** If your team sees that leadership no longer cares about this initiative or it is off their radar screen, they will lose interest. It's your job as a project manager to keep your leadership team up to speed and excited about what you are doing.
- 5. Keep Budget Levels Consistent.** Nothing stalls change more than large fluctuations in budget. Keep your budget levels consistent so your team can manage its resources accordingly.

6. **Clarify Accountability.** When business process-change lasts for over a year, you need to continue to clarify accountability. If resources change or people's responsibilities change, then revisit the project plan and focus on the accountability for activities and goals.
7. **Spend Time Focusing on How to Institutionalize the Change.** Once you've reached your milestones, look at how you are going to make this change permanent. What are the ongoing resources required? What can be automated? How will you measure the ongoing ROI and impact? What are the pulse points you will regularly look at to make sure your business process is thriving?

Change is only as intimidating as we make it. Use your Project Management skills to not only manage it but to make it stick, and give your organization the impact you desire.

Get the Tools to Make it Stick

With the right tools, you are ready for change no matter when it comes. As you're getting everyone ready for back to school, check out our PM Toolbox 40-PDU course, and make sure you have all the PM "school supplies" you need for the upcoming year. [Register today.](#)

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About Cheetah Learning and 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. 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.

About the Author



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, is an entrepreneurial powerhouse with a penchant for making success easy, fun and fast. She 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's expertise in project management is highly regarded in the industry. 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.

Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. To date, more than 30,000 people have become "Cheetahs" using Cheetah Learning's innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Michelle's articles have appeared in over 100 publications and web sites around the world. Her monthly column, the [Know How Network](#) is carried by over 400 publications, and her monthly newsletter goes out to more than 50,000 people. Her radio program, [Your World Your Way](#), is a weekly broadcast that is an inspiring and practical look at how Project Management fuels success.

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.

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