

From Limbo to Liberation

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

We all have one hiding over there in the groan zone. It's the unfinished project that lives in a strange sort of limbo. As Nassim Nicholas Taleb reminds us in *The Black Swan*, the longer a project goes unfinished, there is an exponential increase in the time to finish the project. Sound familiar?

So, you see them lurking there getting dusty and forlorn, what should you do about them? How can you move these projects from limbo to liberation (aka completion)?

Here's my Project Liberation Check List:

1. **Look at all your unfinished projects.** Which ones are still relevant? What's important, and what no longer matters?
2. **What can be recycled?** Those projects that have expired or no longer matter can still be useful. Look at them, and see if any of the project assets can be reused somewhere else. For example, were there any lessons learned that you can reapply? Why did these projects stall, and what put them on the back burner, and could you have prevented it? Also, go through your documentation, and pull out any golden nuggets such as charts or research or any data you can build on.
3. **Choose the projects you're going to finish.** Once you've chosen the projects you are going to finish, then you're going to reboot them – just like your overworked computer. However, this reboot is different from all the others, because you are going to finish this project in three months. Three is a magic number here. Why? Because in three months so much changes.
4. During your **Project Reboot**, here are things you need to look at and probably change:
 - Your goals
 - Your project plan
 - The project schedule and cost baseline
 - The project team

Key questions to ask:

Has any of the technology that's important to this project changed? Are you sure? Talk to your best friends in IT, and consult with them to make sure.

Has the strategic direction of the organization changed? Is there new management, a merger or acquisition, or any new threats or opportunities? While this project was in limbo, did any key things in the environment change? This is important because if you lob the project back out there without considering the changes, it will flounder again.

5. **Rally the troops around this liberation.** It's important to get your team excited and let them know you're clearing the decks of the old projects so your team can focus on the projects that are most important.

Why do we care about those projects in limbo? Because a bunch of unfinished projects suck the lifeblood out of organizations and keep us from moving forward. For the Project Manager, unfinished projects are our nemesis. We need to tackle them, evaluate them, recycle their assets or finish them.

And just like life, when you look back, what is the difference between success and failure? It's often crossing the finish line. See you there. I'll be the one cheering loudly.

Chief Cheetah Podcast Is Yours for the Downloading

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

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 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.

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. 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 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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