

Accelerated Learning – What Does it Mean to You?

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning, and Kristen LaBrosse, CAPM®, Co-Author

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words, “Accelerated Learning”? Perhaps you imagine a person zipping through a book at a rapid pace, soaking up every fact and concept at lightning speed. Or perhaps you think of a child genius that graduated from college at the ripe age of 12.

The fact is, the techniques of Accelerated Learning are not only for the rare few that are gifted with a special genius at birth. Accelerated Learning techniques are concepts that anyone can learn with some practice and dedication. The basic idea of Accelerated Learning is to gain the ability to make it faster, easier, and perhaps most importantly, more FUN, to learn and master new skills. There are four basic components to Accelerated Learning.

1. Awareness – Before you are aware that you don’t know something, you are unconsciously incompetent. When you gain awareness of this incompetence, you move up on the learning scale to conscious incompetence. Awareness is the first, and perhaps the most important step, to learning, because when awareness combines with purpose, the drive to learn is then established in your mind.

2. Knowledge – This is where people accumulate facts about a specific topic. Knowledge of a subject is exhibited by the ability to recall facts and to synthesize the information in the area well enough to answer test questions on the subject, and to communicate about the subject.

3. Skill – This is where people can use what they know to accomplish a specific task.

4. Mastery – This is where people can achieve consistent results with their skills. For example, think about the mastery you have achieved in driving a car. You most likely consistently produce successful results (getting to your destination) each time you drive. In his book, Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell describes the “10,000-Hour Rule” which states that the key to success and mastery in any field is to practice for approximately 10,000 hours.

While many people know that learning requires time and attention to the subject matter at hand, many people tend to forget that it is not just about how hard you study and how many terms you memorize. The key principle to Accelerated Learning is that it is a whole-mind, whole-body, and whole PERSON experience. Below are some important tips to remember to be a successful Accelerated Learner.

Feed Your Mind. It’s not always intuitive that what you put in your mouth will eventually affect your brain, but if you keep in mind the “whole-body” approach to learning, you will soon see how it is absurd to think that these two things wouldn’t be related.

The good guys in this whole body story are proteins and complex carbohydrates. Complex carbohydrates supply the brain with a steady flow of glucose, the energy that your brain needs to function optimally. Proteins digest more slowly than carbohydrates, and improve the entry of important amino acids into the brain, which are used to synthesize neurotransmitters that are critical for clear thinking.

Refined sugar and caffeine, on the other hand, are the antagonists in the whole-body story. Your brain needs an even supply of glucose to function optimally. Both of these items make your blood sugar balance go haywire, which can affect your ability to concentrate, and can ultimately affect your mood.

Stay Curious! While you're feeding your mind, don't forget to feed your curiosity! One of the worst things we can do as Project Managers is to call ourselves experts. As soon as we grant ourselves "expert" status, we immediately lose the spark that keeps us learning and keeps us looking for new ways to succeed. Make an effort to look at the world with beginner's eyes.

Move to Groove. Numerous studies are showing that even mild depression can accelerate mental decline, while excessive stress over time can lead to depression. When you exercise at least 30 minutes everyday you can keep the blues at bay. If you find yourself getting down, get up and move. The more you move, the more you'll be in your groove.

Take a Purple Break. Just as your muscles need time to recuperate after a strenuous workout, your brain also needs rest periodically to function optimally. I learned a technique called "purple breaks" from a woman whose dad started an accelerated reading company almost 50 years ago. A purple break is a 10 to 20 minute break that you take lying down with an eye mask covering your eyes. When your eyes are in total darkness, the optic nerve has a chance to relax, which in turn relaxes the whole body. During a purple break your main job is to let go of all of the worries and stress of the day and relax.

Now when you see the words, "Accelerated Learning" what comes to mind? Hopefully the image of a healthy diet, exercise, periods of pure relaxation, all interwoven within moments of intense focus on the learning objectives of the skill that you are working to master.

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 more than 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.

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.

Check out Cheetah PHAST - a great new quarterly magazine

http://www.cheetahphast.com/?page_id=17

