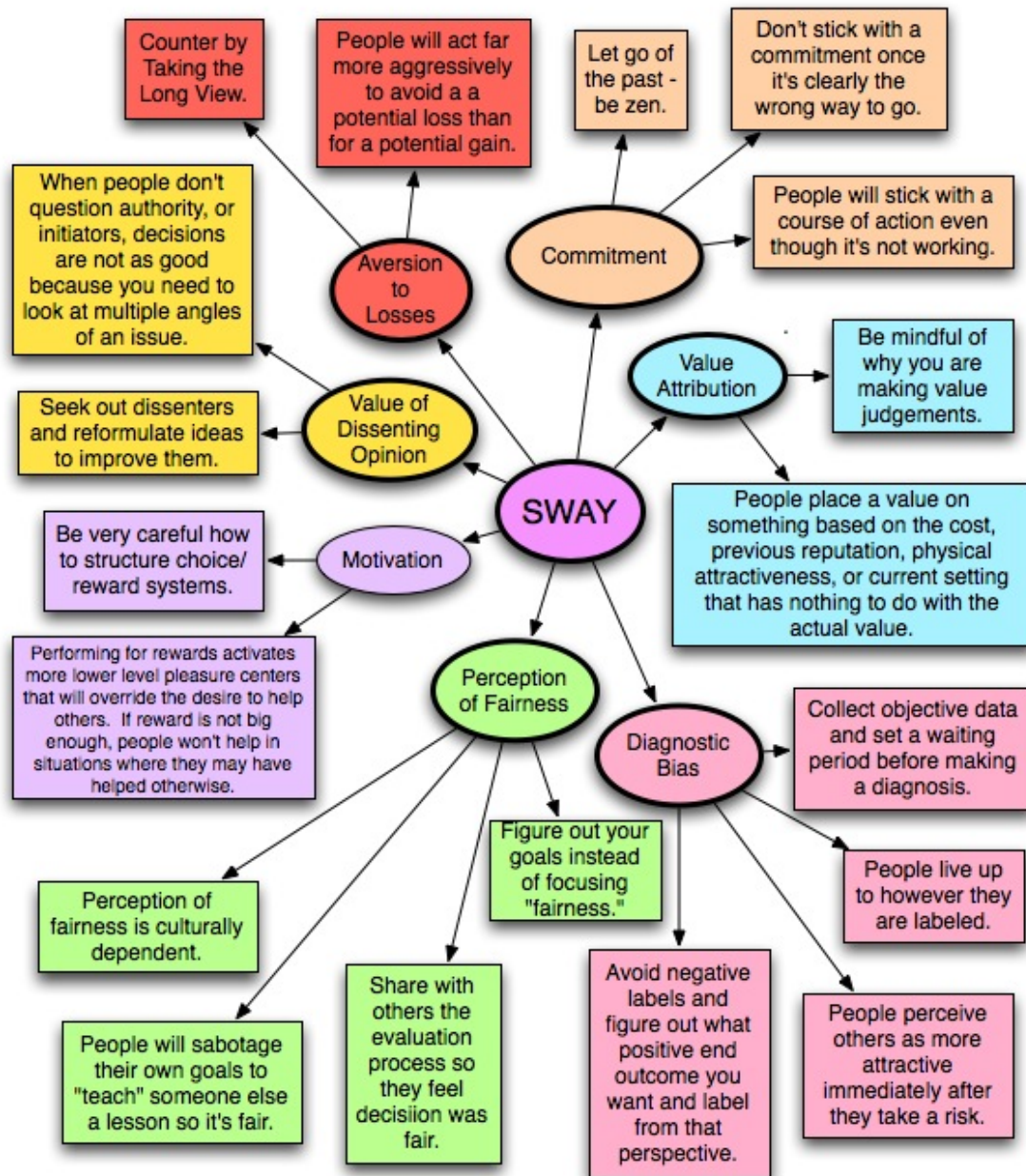


## Know How Network

### Using Irrational Behavior to Your Advantage

It's the start of a new year and once again, I set goals for the year. These are different than "resolutions" as I fully intend on meeting them. Some of these goals are the same from year to year: get in better shape, spend more time with my family, work smarter (not necessarily harder), decrease expenses, increase revenue, be the change I want to see in the world, end world hunger, get a super power... and this year I added a new goal to the list. I will walk 1,000 miles in 2011. Instead of approaching this goal rationally, like I'm prone to do for any project, I wanted to apply the ideas in the book [Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior](#), by Ori and Rom Brafum. If I behave irrationally naturally, as the authors point out, I may as well behave irrationally in a way that helps achieve my objectives.

Several years ago, when I first read the Brafum's book, I created this summary mind map to better harness my own irrational behavior.



Here is how I will use the information from Sway to help me walk 1,000 miles this year:

**Commitment:** The Brafum's state that people will stick with a course of action even if it is clearly not the way to go. Doing the math, walking 1,000 miles in a year will require me to walk at least 85 miles every month. If I am only able to walk 80% of the time (setback by the thousands of excuses I can generate), I will need to walk 3.2 miles every day I manage to get off my computer. If I publicize these figures (oops, just did!), I am likely to feel a greater sense of commitment and accountability. I will publicize my progress from now and then on my blog ([www.michellelabrosseblogs.com](http://www.michellelabrosseblogs.com)), which will hold me accountable through the miles. The progress notes will be filed under the category "Thousand-Mile Walk."

**Value Attribution:** High-tech shoes, pedometer apps on my iPhone, Nordic walking sticks, that posh walking clinic to learn how to do Chi walking ([see blog post](#)) – these all increase my desire to walk MORE. Admittedly, I am a gadget-gizmo-techno head and I am inspired by indulging this personality characteristic.

**Diagnostic Bias:** People live up to how others label them. Proactively, I label myself—I am a Chi Walker. [Chi Walking](#) is a fascinating technique that involves focus on postural alignment, which results in a great workout while reducing the potential for overuse injuries. I am a chi walker on a 1,000-mile journey. Watch me walk!

**Perception of Fairness:** When I was a new, young bride, my husband, who was almost a foot taller than me, would walk at a leisurely pace and I had to jog just to keep up with him. It felt so unfair and demoralizing. What I learned in Chi walking is you walk based on the pace and gait that is right for you. It doesn't matter if the pace is right for anyone else. I am short, and therefore my gait is short. Chi walking uses a core rotational technique that helps me move faster while maintaining my shorter gait. I can keep pace comfortably when walking with my taller (actually, average height) friends. It now feels "fair."

**Motivation:** Different pleasure centers are activated in your brain based on your source of motivation. Materialistic rewards for achieving goals don't cut it for me as much as the intrinsic feeling of accomplishment I get for reaching that goal. According to Brafum's book, most people operate this way. Pushing myself past my 3.2 mile per walk goal gets me excited. Having somewhere fun to walk to with my family or friends gets me motivated to go out and walk.

**Value of Dissenting Opinions:** My parents raised me to challenge current authority, a trait I have passed down to my children. They all feel free to openly challenge the way I walk, where I'm walking, when I'm walking, how fast I'm walking, who else is walking with us, why we're walking, the current weather conditions, our shoes, the brand of moleskin for blisters, pedometers, how much water to bring, and who will be our support vehicle if something goes awry. This creates a tremendous amount of focus and energy around the act of going for a daily walks.

**Aversion to Losses:** A couple years ago, my mom and I were taking a water aerobics class from this character we nicknamed "Boot Camp Bob." In his flag baseball cap over his shaved head, he barked exercise instructions at us while John Phillip Sousa music blared from pool's sound system. He used to shout, "Get moving, you pansies, so you don't end up in the nursing home!" This has now inspired my walking mantra: Get moving, stay young. After all, the scientist in me knows Newton's First Law of Motion—basically, a body in motion stays in motion.

I'm now inspired to act irrationally and achieve my 1,000-mile walking goal. How can **you** harness the power of irrational forces to achieve your goals?

- A. What commitments drive your current behavior? How can you change your commitments?
- B. What value do you place on achieving your goals? How can you increase the value for yourself?
- C. What labels can you give yourself that will help you achieve your goal?
- D. How can you make it a "fair" game to achieve your goal?

- E. What intrinsic motivators get you fired up to go for your goal?
- F. Who challenges you? How can you get them to do it more so you get that fire in your belly to go for it?
- G. What will you lose if you fail to reach your goal? How can you avoid experiencing that loss?

Be irrational. It might just help you go for it!

#### **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 (OPM) program and also holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton.

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