

Cheetah Your PMO!

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

You are in the kitchen, surrounded by ingredients, and are asked to prepare a meal. As you look around, you notice that you have the usual: flour, sugar, eggs, milk, butter, meat, veggies, and fruit. You think, “No problem, I can whip something up in no time.” Then you take a second look around and see that there is no stove. There are no pots, pans, or utensils. No cookbook can be found

It takes more than ingredients to create a meal, and it takes more than resources to manage a project. You need to have standards (cooking temperature), documentation (recipes), guidance (cooking shows), economies of repetition (making meals every day), and metrics (your taste testers). Your kitchen is the Project Management Office (PMO) of your meals, ensuring that ingredients are put together in a way that consistently and efficiently produces edible (if not delicious) results.

Now that I’ve gotten you hungry, let’s think about how this applies to a matter near and dear to your heart—managing successful projects! History shows us that companies that have PMOs perform consistently better than those without PMOs. A study done by CIO and the Project Management Institute (PMI) revealed that the longer a company has a PMO in place, the better its project success rates become. In the study, CIO and PMI discovered that 37 percent of companies with a PMO for less than one year reported increases in project success rate, while companies with a PMO for four or more years had a 65 percent increase in project success. Like a good piece of steak, the longer your PMO marinates the better your projects turn out.

So what are the first steps that you need to take when you decide to establish a PMO?

Pick your flavor. PMOs can come in all shapes and forms. Whether you are revamping your current PMO or starting from scratch, it is important that you set up a PMO that reflects the need of your organization. Whether you need a place that Project Managers (PMs) can go to for training, best practices, and guidance, or you require a central unit of PMs who are loaned out to business units to work on projects, ask yourself and your coworkers these questions before organizing your PMO.

Don’t forget to measure! In order to quantify your project management success rates with a PMO, you need to know where you are now. This is also true if you already have a PMO and wish to revise it for greater project success. What percent of projects in your organization are completed on time and within budget? What percent are not, and how much are they over budget or behind schedule? Keep careful records of your project success rates, as this gives you a transparent view into how changes in your PMO can affect your organization’s project success rates.

Develop a recipe book and share it. We all have that friend that can make the most delicious (insert mouth watering and delectable item here) in the world, but he refuses to share the recipe claiming it's a "family secret." While this might fly in the food world, it cannot lead to project success in Project Management. In the PM world, if someone has a secret recipe for success, it's your job to get that recipe. Make your PMO the central hub for best practices (templates, procedures, project plans, lessons learned, etc.) so that your company can save time on its projects.

Taste test and improve as you go. It's important to check on your PMO throughout its creation, as well as when it is done, in order to ensure that it's the kind of PMO that your organization can effectively utilize. If you find that your PMO is implementing too much red tape and slowing projects down, revisit the processes you put in place and adapt to your organization's tastes and preferences.

Dig in! Once your PMO is set up—use it! Pretty cakes aren't baked to look at, and PMOs aren't constructed for show. Make sure your PMO is not just a symbol of organization in the company, but a functioning part of everyday business and a true enhancement to the way that projects are done. The best PMOs are the ones that are actionable, and not just administrative.

Don't forget to check out our 60 PDU [Cheetah PMO](http://www.cheetahpm.com) (www.cheetahpm.com) course. This course will help you establish a new PMO that best suits your organization, or will help you get your current PMO up to Cheetah Speed. Sign up for it by the end of this month and get \$500 when you use promotion code **YumPMO2011**.

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](http://www.cheetahlearning.com), 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 more than 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.

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