

Defining Your Ideal Work Environment

By Michelle LaBrosse, CCPM, PMP®, PMI-ACP, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning, and Megan Alpine, CCPM, Co-Author

With the start of summer, it's easy to find yourself daydreaming about where you would rather be. Do you see yourself on a sunny beach, digging your toes into the sand? Or perhaps hosting a barbeque in the backyard? Most likely, these daydreams have nothing to do with your job, but are rather an escape from it. At Cheetah Learning, we believe in daydreaming - and we believe that you shouldn't limit your happiness to just a few weeks (or days!) of vacation a year.

In this article, we'll encourage you to take a few minutes to daydream about your ideal work environment. Though we may never find that "perfect" job or workplace, it is valuable to know what your ideal *is*. From there, you can better evaluate what matters most to you when weighing new opportunities.

Our [Cheetah Certified Project Manager Program](#) includes several activities in which students explore their ideal professional environment. Drawing from one of these, the idea is to let your imagination roam free. All elements of the "work environment," even those which seem out of your control, can be open to re-interpretation. This is not an interview with a potential employer - give the answer that is best for YOU!

Where in the world do you want to work (and live)? No, I do not mean "what company do you want to work for?" - but, literally, where? In the city, suburbs, or maybe the remote wilderness? Do you want to be sitting in an office building, working inside but staying active, or doing physical labor outdoors? What length of commute would make you happiest - a short walk to work, or a long, peaceful drive?

What hours do you like to work? Think beyond the 9 to 5: when do you *really* want to be working? Are there certain hours of the day in which you are more alert and productive than others? Working hours that work for *you* can impact how well you do your job.

How much responsibility do you want in your job? And, what kinds of responsibility? Do you like working independently, being responsible for only for own work? Or are you comfortable managing others? Take a minute to reflect on your past work experiences: were you happiest when you had a tightly scheduled work day, or when you had more freedom to schedule your own day? Did you prefer it when your supervisors were highly involved in your daily work, or when they were less involved? Try to isolate the elements that made these previous positions positive or negative experiences for you.

What do you want to wear to work? This may seem trivial, but this detail can have a big impact on your daily happiness at work. If you absolutely hate wearing a uniform, you need to take this into account when weighing new job opportunities. You may also find that you're never comfortable in a suit or very formal business-wear; make sure to observe (or ask) if this is the "norm" in potential workplaces.

What are your ideal co-workers like? Again - this element may seem insignificant, but in fact it has a HUGE impact on your daily work environment! Particularly if you work in an office or on a team, you will spend a significant portion of your day communicating and collaborating with your co-workers - so it helps if these are people you find it easy to get along with! Some questions to ask yourself about your ideal co-workers include: What level of education do they have? What do they like to do in their free time? How do they dress? Don't limit yourself here: challenge yourself to imagine the "best co-worker ever" - even if this ideal is totally unrealistic. Defining your ideal provides you an important foundation from which to then realistically assess your options.

To explore these issues in greater depth, consider becoming a [Cheetah Certified Project Manager](#). This program starts with a personality assessment, from which you then determine your unique strengths in learning, doing projects, and negotiating. You will learn how to objectively assess different opportunities to bring you closer to building YOUR ideal career.

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 50,000 people have become "Cheetahs" using Cheetah Learning's innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

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 is 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 websites around the world. Her monthly column, the [Know How Network](#), is carried by over 400 publications.

She is a graduate of the Harvard Business School's Owner/President Management (OPM) program and holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton.