

Removing the Barriers for Speed

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As we cruise through our career path, it can be tempting to fall into comfortable patterns and turn autopilot on as we coast from project to project. But as the world changes and projects become more complex, it is imperative to remain in the drivers seat to ensure that we are constantly removing road blocks that make our project teams falter and pause. Follow the below tips to ensure that you and your project team is moving along at *Cheetah Speed*.

Create Limits with Your Space and Time. Have you ever sat at your desk thinking about what you needed to do, but kept putting off the tasks at hand in favor of procrastinating? Sometimes when we are sitting in our work area we trick ourselves into thinking that we are being productive. This is because we are so close to actually being productive in our work space - we have the desk prepared, the computer is powered on, and the pen is readied. But we are fooling ourselves; productivity is not an area, it is an action.

To help rid yourself and your team of this habit, make sure that you set limits on your workspace and time. If you are sitting in your workspace and not working, it means you need to take an actual break, as you are not making yourself more productive by staring at the computer screen. Set a time limit to take a break to do whatever it is that is distracting you from work, whether that is getting lost in the world of Facebook status updates or scrolling through your Pinterest account. Then come back to your workspace with a goal in mind, and don't take any breaks until your goal is completed. Most people find their groove when they are working towards a goal, so don't be surprised if you don't need a break after you have accomplished your task. By creating more boundaries for yourself within your work, you're remove the barrier of distraction and are able to accomplish more.

Healthy Team Dynamics. While team members' hard skills are an important aspect of any project team, it is important for the team to not lose sight of the soft skills that make working together possible. Conflict within a project team can be one of the biggest barriers to speed and can not only be frustrating but a waste of time and resources.

Growing up, we've all learned the Golden Rule: Treat others the way that you want to be treated. But to ensure that your project team is harmonious and successful, make sure that you are all following the Platinum Rule: Treat others how *they* want to be treated. The more you pay attention to how others prefer to communicate and the style of work that they prefer, the better you will be able to work in a way that maximizes their capabilities.

Take a “Funk-buster” Break. It’s three p.m. You are on your third cup of coffee and staring at your computer, but for some reason your brain won’t work, and you still have to finish your quarterly report! This condition is commonly referred to as a “funk” and happens when your body thinks it is sleeping because it hasn’t exerted any energy for a significant period of time. When you find yourself in a funk, instead of trying to push your way through it, take a break. Get up out of your chair and do some jumping jacks. Take a walk around the block. Have a small dance party for one. Stop the funk as soon as you can by getting some motion into your body to remind your brain that it needs to be on alert and ready for action.

Achieve Flow. You now have a productive project team that sets time and space boundaries, has great team dynamics, and is funk-proof. The next thing to do is to ensure that your team has the skills and motivation required to get the tasks done. For your project team to be the most efficient, each member of your team should be able to consistently achieve a state of flow while performing project tasks. Flow is a mental state where an individual is completely immersed and focused on the tasks at hand. Flow happens when there is a balance between ability level and challenge, and when there is a very clear goal.

The three biggest barriers to achieving flow are inadequate skills and/or preparation, confusion as to what the end goal is, and a lack of personal meaning in the task at hand. Make sure that your project team has the skill sets they require for their project deliverables, are able to keep their eye on the prize with clear goals, and has a personal vested interest in what it is they are doing.

Keep these tips in mind when you are safely steering your project team around barriers to speed and towards project success!

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.

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