

What's in Your Backpack?

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP[®], Chief Cheetah and Founder, Cheetah Learning

A couple of years ago, I was featured on CNN pouring out the contents of my backpack. The story was about how I ran my business virtually from wherever I was with the trusty items carried on my back.

As you might imagine, there were all the usual suspects: my laptop, iPhone, digital camera, and chargers. And, then, there were also some creature comforts: my MP3 player, a book, a sweater, healthy snacks, water and noise cancelling headphones.

After the story aired on CNN, I received a lot of e-mails from people telling me their own road-warrior tales and what they couldn't live without when they traveled. And it got me to thinking about what was in my backpack that was intangible. What were all the things that really helped me build my business that could not be physically seen?

So, here's my list of what's in my backpack that matters most, but isn't necessarily detected by the TSA at a security check.

1) **Passion.** Yes, it's true I'm a Project Management junkie. I'm passionate about the power of Project Management, and I get excited every time I use my Project Management skills to solve a problem or bring a project to completion. It doesn't matter what you're passionate about, but what does matter is that you carry the magic of your own passion with you wherever you go. Bring it on!

2) **Think like an engineer.** You may have heard about the lazy engineer? In engineering, we don't look at the word "lazy" like every one else. To us, it means finding a smarter and faster way to do something that may not take as much energy or resources. In this context, lazy is a good thing. Think of the person in your office who spends all of his or her time looking very busy but accomplishing little. When you think like an engineer, you are always looking for better and more efficient ways to do things.

3) **Mastery.** In Malcolm Gladwell's book, "Outliers," he proposes that it takes 10,000 hours to truly master anything. Wow. When I read that, it really resonated with me because I've spent my entire career focusing on the mastery of Project Management. So, I realized that a huge part of my success has been the 10,000+ hours of experience I carry with me in my backpack. I also think that number is inspiring because it says that if you invest the time and passion in anything, you can become a master at it. Don't let anything hold you back from attaining a higher level of mastery in Project Management. Whether it is your PMP[®] or ongoing development of your PM skills, make sure you use your talent to the fullest.

4) **Focus.** With all the information coming at us from all directions, the idea of focus is simple, but not always easy to do. Whenever you are feeling overwhelmed by a project or a goal, make sure you take the time to break it down and focus on what you have to do to get the job done. This is where project plans are invaluable. I've always seen them as calm within the chaos. If a project feels like it's getting out of control, the project plan is the perfect way to get every one and every thing centered and back on track.

5) **Persistence.** There are millions of ideas buzzing around, but how many of them ever see the light of day? The ones that do evolve from idea to reality are driven by people who follow through with persistence and aren't happy until they see the successful completion of a goal. I had a vision for my company, and I've hit many obstacles along the way, but it has always been my persistence that has kept me going.

6) **Humble humor.** Humility and humor are both powerful friends to have along with you on any journey, and when you put them together, they can't be beat. I'm very good at laughing at myself and knowing when I've made a mistake. It's very powerful for your team to see the boss make a mistake, admit it, laugh about it and move on. The air is thinner at the top of the mountain, that's why we all need to tumble down now and again to gain some perspective.

7) **Service.** Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Every one can be great, because every one can serve." Service to others has been a cornerstone of my own personal and professional success. When you serve others, you learn so much about yourself. You receive more than you give. Where else does that kind of math work? Another bonus: service and passion go nicely together. Tie your passion into a way to serve others, and you have a home run.

Okay, so are you thinking: 'Nice backpack – you got there, but where do I begin?' Start here. Think about the successes you've had so far in your life (small and large). What do you attribute them to? Now, ask yourself how can you build on them? What can you do to take yourself to the next level? How can you move your Project Management skills to a level of mastery?

At Cheetah Learning, we're rooting for you. Nothing makes us happier than hearing success stories about how Project Management impacts people's lives in a positive way. If you're carrying a Project Management story or two in your backpack, let us know. We'd love to hear about it at marketing@cheetahlearning.com.

Chief Cheetah Podcast Is Yours for the Downloading

Want to hear what Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, and Chief Cheetah has to say about what's in her backpack? Download our podcast at <http://podcast.cheetahlearning.com/podcastgen/> and hear the words straight from

the Cheetah's mouth.

About Cheetah Learning and the Know How Network

The Know How Network is a monthly column written by Michelle LaBrosse, the founder and Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning. Distributed to hundreds of newsletters and media outlets around the world, the Know How Network brings the promise, purpose and passion of Project Management to people everywhere. Visit www.cheetahlearning.com to learn more about Cheetah PM, the fastest way to learn about Project Management and get your PMP. You can also get your career in gear with [CheetahWare](#), free Project Management tools.

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.

She lives in Nevada with her family and likes to rejuvenate in Alaska where you'll often find her kayaking, hiking, and riding her motorcycle.

PMP is a registered trademark of the Project Management Institute.