

Want to Improve Your Ability to Complete Complex Projects? Take a PMP Exam Prep Course

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

In past issues of the Know How Network, we've written on the value of Project Management Professional (PMP)® certification for helping you advance in your career and earn a higher salary. (Yep, it's still true that Project Managers who hold the PMP certification earn, on average, 17 percent a year than PMs who do not.)¹ We've also talked about the value of PMP exam preparation courses. While the overall, first-try pass rate for the PMP exam is estimated to be around 60 percent², 98 percent of students who go through Cheetah Learning's Cheetah Exam Prep® for PMP® Exam program pass the test. It turns out, however, that some PMP exam prep programs do more than just help students pass the test on their first try.

A recent study looked at the effect of taking a PMP exam prep program on people's self-perception of their abilities to accomplish a task or goal - what the researcher terms "self-efficacy." The study measured the self-efficacy of 111 Project Managers before and after taking a PMP exam prep course (95 percent of survey participants took Cheetah Exam Prep® for PMP® Exam) to see how this course affected students' perceptions of their own abilities. After analyzing the data, the study found strong evidence of a statistically significant causal relationship between PMP exam prep training and task management self-efficacy. In other words, people felt a stronger sense of self-efficacy after taking the course.

So, you might be asking, why should we care about self-efficacy? Does how we *perceive* our own abilities to reach our goals and get things done translate to *actually* reaching our goals and getting things done? The answer to this latter question is simply: yes. Research has demonstrated the connection between self-efficacy and performance in both professional and academic settings. That is, people who see themselves as capable of improving, improve.

The self-efficacy study further found that task management self-efficacy was a particularly important trait for Project Managers. As the field of Project Management has evolved, PMs are required to confront ever-more complex projects that must be carried out under shifting circumstances. Project schedules change mid-course, the scope is more often than not vaguely defined, and PM's must navigate the needs of a wide, diverse range of stakeholders. . Project Managers with a strong sense of task management self-efficacy are best prepared to perform at a high level under these challenging conditions.

Here at Cheetah, these findings came as no surprise to us because our exam prep courses have *always* been about more than helping students pass the PMP exam. Cheetah's approaches are transformative for our students, enabling them to recognize and build on their ability to achieve what it is they set out to achieve. Sure, passing the exam is an important step. But what good is getting your PMP if you cannot take your career to that next step?

If you're considering taking a PMP exam prep course for the next step in your career, take a step back from pass rates, study guides, and vocabulary flash cards. Ask yourself: what is it that I really want out of my career? What do I love about Project Management, and how can I make sure this is a significant part of my career? Identifying your passions will light the spark that inspires you to earn a credential that is meaningful for YOU. Rather than feeling external pressure to earn your PMP (from your supervisors, co-workers, or anyone else), you will develop intrinsic motivation to pursue a learning experience that aligns with the goals that *you* define for yourself.

¹ <http://www.pmi.org/certification/project-management-professional-pmp.aspx>

² <http://edward-designer.com/web/faqs/what-is-the-first-time-try-pass-rate-for-pmp-exam/>

Cheetah Learning offers both in-person and online exam prep programs to meet the needs of busy professionals. To learn more about the company researchers pick to study effective Project Management courses, visit www.cheetahlearning.com.

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 50,000 people have become “Cheetahs” using Cheetah Learning’s innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Michelle also developed the [Cheetah Certified Project Manager \(CCPM\)](#) program based on Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality profiling to help students master how to use their unique strengths for learning, doing projects, and negotiating. CCPM graduates are able to choose the right projects and complete those projects “cheetah fast” based on their personality. They also learn how to leverage others’ strengths which significantly improves overall project team performance. When an employer has a cadre of CCPMs on staff, they achieve whatever they set out to achieve in record time. This is why over 90% of Cheetah’s clients experience an increase in both profitability and revenue within the first year of retaining Cheetah Learning for their Project Management training needs.

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.