

## **Do You Have Good “PM Hygiene?” Four Questions That Will Help You Improve Your PM Routines** *By Michelle LaBrosse, CCPM, PMP®, PMI-ACP, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning*

When Project Managers establish effective routines for both their own daily work and for managing their teams, they also develop healthy Project Management “hygiene.” This “hygiene” metaphor relates to having consistent processes in place and it is what Project Management is all about. The better you can develop consistent routines as a PM, the better you will be able to consistently deliver value on your projects.

Of course, if you’re a Project Manager who follows Agile principles and practices, you might be thinking: “But what about ‘responding to change over following a plan?’ And ‘individuals and interactions over processes and tools?’”<sup>1</sup> The good news is that neither of these principles is incompatible with having consistent daily routines. In fact, here at Cheetah, we’ve found that consistent routines like the daily stand-up meeting improve our Agile approach.

To determine if you have what we like to call good “PM hygiene” routines, ask yourself these questions:

*How do you make your to-do lists?* Are they a chaotic sprawl of Post-It notes wallpapering your cubicle wall, or are they a neat list in your Google Calendar color-coded by priority? While the latter method might be a bit extreme, prioritizing your daily tasks in some way is a crucial PM routine. Take a few minutes at the beginning of each work day to write out your tasks for that day and note how important they are. Then (you guessed it) tackle the most important tasks first. This will keep you from procrastinating on more complex projects and ensures that your most important work gets DONE.

*What kinds of tasks do you write in your to-do lists?* If you find that you have items like “prepare for project launch” on your list, take a minute to break these down into small, specific, and more concrete tasks. What, specifically, do you need to do to prepare for your project launch? Give each of these items its own to-do. If you can’t think of everything that will need to be done, that’s okay; you’ll make to-do for those to-be-determined items after you’ve completed the existing tasks. The value of creating small, manageable tasks for your to-do lists is that it prevents procrastination: it’s much easier to do a task on your list when you know how to do it and you can clearly define when it is done.

*Do you hold regular check-in meetings with your project teams?* The key word here is REGULAR. This might mean a half-hour meeting to review the project schedule every Monday at 9 a.m., or, if you’re doing an Agile sprint, a 15-minute stand-up meeting every morning for the duration of the sprint. When your meetings are consistent (and as short as possible!) your project team members know what to expect and are less likely to resentfully think of them as a “waste of time.” Additionally, they speak to your competence and consistency as a PM.

*How do you supervise your project team members’ work?* As a Project Manager, you know how difficult it can be to find the line between being an overbearing micro-manager and being too hands-off, finding out significant problems in the project work much later than you need to. One way to monitor your teams work more effectively is simply to change your mode of communication. If you’re co-located with your project teams, take a few minutes in the afternoon to walk around the office and check in with team members face-to-face; if your teams collaborate virtually, call your team members on the phone or via video conference rather than sending off an email. An email is easy to ignore, but more personal face-to-face

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<sup>1</sup> From <http://www.agilemanifesto.org/>

(or “ear-to-ear”) interactions are not. And as a PM, you’re more likely to pick up on subtle cues in a person’s voice about how their work is *really* going than you are in an email.

Incorporating these good Project Management hygiene routines into your daily work doesn’t need to take up a lot of your time. As these practices become habit, you’ll find that they actually save you time by allowing you to use your time more productively and efficiently. This is crucial for both helping you advance in your own career and for delivering more value to your organization.

To develop more PM practices that are aligned with your innate strengths, check out Cheetah’s new program, *Personality-Based Project Management*. This will afford you the luxury of working in ways that can help you consistently put your best foot forward and deliver exceptional value with your projects.

#### **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.

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.