

What Happens When Success is Your Only Option

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

When you run a small business, as small as even just yourself, does failure ever really occur? I hear often in the media about this or that business being “too big to fail” – but in reality isn’t it more like “Too Small to Fail?” I ask this question of myself, more rhetorically than anything. I’ve been running a small business in one form or another for almost 30 years now. Yes, I’ve stopped offering some services and stopped making some products, and at one point in time, I did take a job with a paycheck – but even then I still had a small business going on the side. I realized after almost a decade of being in business that failure was just a perspective, especially in a world where everything changes.

Most ideas go through thousands if not millions of iterations. If we are to view each tweak to a new product or service idea as a “failure,” then everyone who has ever created anything new is far more of a failure than a success. The whole idea of failure is not relevant to the seasoned small business owner and entrepreneur. The question then becomes not, “how will I succeed?,” but, “how efficient can I become in creating something someone else wants to purchase?”

I’m a lot like most entrepreneurs and small business owners out there. I’ve toyed with the idea of selling one of my businesses or another over the years. I’ve sold off all the assets of other businesses when I got tired of running them. But like everything in life, things change. New businesses emerge on the ashes of ones that were put to rest. And along with the new businesses come new projects, new energy, new excitement. It’s actually doing the “same old same old” or “tried and true” bread and butter work that gets oh-so-mundane.

But what I’ve discovered over the years is that it’s my abilities in Project Management that help me create efficiencies in every situation. Whether it’s dismantling something that is no longer serving us to make room for what’s new, launching that sparkly new initiative, or refining the processes of that old workhorse product everyone still loves after twenty years, all of these require projects. My life as a small business owner became much more enjoyable when I started to see it more like the life of a Project Manager with everything in the perpetual motion of a project.

I started to notice the more disciplined I am with setting up projects using my very simple project planning template, the more smoothly things go. I’m able to more easily delegate work with our small staff who wear many hats. We are all very well-versed now in using a simple the three page project plan to organize our work. This helps us all understand both the big picture and the small details of what we need to do. It eliminates any of us duplicating effort or doing things that are not aligned with our project goal. Plus, by doing a simple project plan organizational effort repeatedly, we all now have better instincts on what is required on projects before they even make it to the final cut of something we actually want to pursue. The portfolio of projects we pursue is better balanced, reducing our costs while improving our revenues from new initiatives. It has just overall made great business sense for me as the boss to become a much better project manager.

What else helps tremendously about being a small business owner and Project Manager is that I’m a certified Project Management Professional (PMP®). I got this designation because, well, first of all, I wrote a book on Project Management (mostly to record my techniques for myself so I’d remember to use them in my businesses). But I also wanted to publish my book, and I knew that in order to publish a book as a Project Manager, I’d need those letters, “PMP,” after my name to be taken seriously. What I did not know at the time was the club I would be entering. Now, there are 600,000 people worldwide who are PMPs and many of them work in large organizations. I am able to sit at the table with them as a small business owner and speak the same language they do about doing projects. I gained almost instant credibility with some very large prospective clients when I earned the right to put those three initials after my name.

Speaking the same language as people in the companies that hire me is no small thing. It's not just a fad that I can call myself a "PMP." I've hired companies to help me upgrade my website, organize an event, or upgrade part of the facility I use for one of my businesses. Every time, I'm dealing with someone they call a "Project Manager." Sometimes we speak the same Project Management language and sometimes we don't. But in the cases where I'm dealing with a Project Manager who has that same PMP designation, our projects get done faster. The main reason is because we are all speaking the same language. We all know what it means when someone says stakeholder, or work breakdown structure, or scope creep.

I've realized after thirty years of being in small business that the question isn't *if* my small business is going to succeed - it's *how* is it going to succeed. And I've found time and time again, it succeeds in the most enjoyable ways when I do the basics of Project Management really well. Master Project Management, become a certified Project Management Professional (PMP®), and make success your only option.

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.