

Getting New Projects Off the Ground - Fast - With Kanban Boards

By Michelle LaBrosse, CCPM, PMP, PMI-ACP, RYT

During my Christmas break, I took a hobby into the business realm and started the Alaska Spice Shop. Getting this new business up and running used every tool in Cheetah Learning Project Management toolbox - the most important of which was our Kanban Board.

What is a Kanban Board? A Kanban Board is a fancy name for a relatively simple tool: a physical or digital “board” that allows to visualize all of your project tasks in one space. At its simplest, Kanban boards organize your tasks by their current stage of completeness. Our board, for example, has columns for “work to be completed”, “work in progress”, and “work completed”. From there, boards can become more elaborate - specifying who is responsible for what task, for example, and differently prioritizing tasks based on their delivery date.

By showing all of your project tasks in one place, Kanban Boards give you a sense of how much work there is left to complete, how many more tasks you can realistically take on, and increase the efficiency of communication among team members working on the project.

Why a Kanban Board? Kanban boards are adaptable to just about any project because they have only two rules: all tasks for the project must be on the board, and “work in progress” is limited to what fits on the board. If there are too many items in “work in progress,” the team needs to pick up the pace to complete these before new items from “work to be completed” can be started.

Sticking to the limits on how many tasks can be “work in progress” was key to launching the Alaska Spice Shop. For our Kanban Board, we kept it simple. We used sticky notes to build our board - a quick, easy solution that clearly shows when the “work in progress” column is full.

To develop your own Kanban Board, start by asking yourself: can I clearly define the scope of my project? Can I specify the smaller tasks that make up this project? Can I name the team members who will be helping with this project, and assign them specific tasks? Then, decide what kind of board would be best suited to your project. Do all your team members share an office? Or are you spread across multiple locations, making a digital board a better choice for this project? Do you need a board that also allows for comments and conversations on project tasks, to facilitate collaborations among team members? Your board can become as complex as your project needs it to be.

Starting from a simple board, the Alaska Spice Shop has taken off - fast. We already, in our first month went to our first trade show, secured ten retail clients, and won a blind taste test for a large tourist resort. The only way we could have pulled this all off was with the techniques we teach in Cheetah Learning. Learn more about Cheetah Learning’s online and in-person courses in Project Management at 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](#), 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.