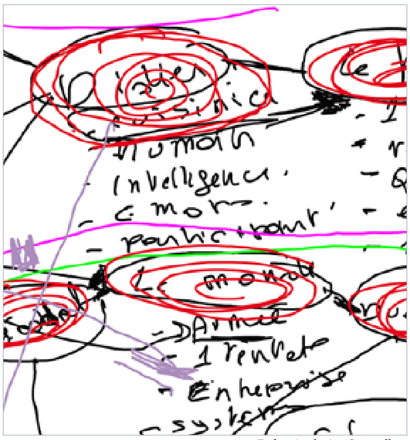
synopsis

manageris

Grow from your **mistakes**

Turn mistakes into learning opportunities



Didier Avril, série Storytelling

Our sources

This synopsis is based on the publications presented below and on the back page.

Will Your Next Mistake Be Fatal?
Robert E. Mittelstaedt,
Wharton School Publishing, 2005.

The value of mistakes is well known—Don't people learn best from their errors? In principle, everyone agrees on this. Mistakes are unavoidable. Not only because to err is human, but also because some degree of risk is necessary to make progress.

Yet, few companies are organized to capitalize fully on the lessons learned from their mistakes. Too often, they prefer to sweep errors under the rug, because they feel that it is best "to get on with it" or that their impact is inconsequential. In closing their eyes, such companies are likely to repeat their mistakes, and may even allow things to deteriorate to the point of triggering a crisis. Even when a problem is not particularly serious, they lose an opportunity to improve their operating practices.

The publications that we have selected on this topic encourage managers to be more proactive in drawing conclusions from the errors inevitably committed in their organization. They recommend taking two types of action:

- **Create a culture that encourages people to recognize the value of mistakes and analyze them.**
- **Apply great discipline in analyzing mistakes, as this will minimize the all-too-frequent risk of drawing erroneous conclusions.**

In this synopsis...

1 An under-exploited learning opportunity

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new," asserted Albert Einstein.

To be successful, a company must expect its executives and employees to make mistakes. Errors are intrinsically associated with taking risks and experimenting, both of which are critical to progress. Even the most reputed executives, and the world's leading companies admit to having committed mistakes, some of which had serious consequences.

Avoiding mistakes is obviously preferable, but it is impossible to avoid them altogether. Indeed, a company that is not willing to make a single error would rapidly be paralyzed by its refusal to take the least risk.

The point is rather to learn from mistakes to avoid repeating them. And if possible, to learn generally applicable lessons from them. For example, the resounding flop experienced by Coca-Cola when it changed its formula in 1985 caused executives to rethink their marketing approach. At this time, they realized that they were too focused on their competition with PepsiCo. Because they were so concentrated on producing a "better" product than their arch-rival, they had neglected to pay sufficient attention to the needs of their own customers. Although blind taste tests did show a clear preference for the new formula, regular consumers of Coca-Cola—a huge segment of the market!—actually did not want the flavor to change. Moreover, consumers of Pepsi may have preferred the taste of New Coke, but they too remained resolutely attached to their brand! As a result of this analysis, Coca-Cola executives launched a diversification strategy to expand past the cola market and segment that market into niches. Today, the bottler sells nearly 400 products designed to please the palates of a broad set of consumers in a wide range of situations in many different regions of the world. In this manner, they were able to capitalize on their major mistake to breathe new life to their innovation strategy.

It is nonetheless quite rare for companies and their executives to take an unadulterated look at their mistakes. Yet, this attitude can easily trigger a series of errors whose consequences can be disastrous. In 1994, for example, a user contacted Intel's consumer department to point out a defect in the Pentium microprocessor, involving a rounding error in the eighth decimal. Intel first responded that the customer must be mistaken, because no one had ever noticed this error before. Indeed, the customer relations department operator could not fathom that such a mistake could possibly exist. Frustrated by this response, the user disseminated the information to all his acquaintances through the Internet. This news shot rapidly around the world. Intel's management then simply played down the error, arguing that it would be a problem only for very large numbers, and thus would concern the average consumer only once every 27,000 years. Only after an ensuing media uproar that is estimated to have cost the company over $450 million did Intel finally undertake to solve the problem. What was originally just a technical defect affecting a very small number of customers turned into a major disaster because Intel initially chose to ignore it.

> Many companies prefer to sweep their mistakes under the rug rather than learn from them.

Of course, all mistakes don't become crises. However, when errors are ignored, they are likely to be repeated, with a cumulative impact that can become serious. For example, many technologies developed by Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) in the seventies were considered to be impossible to exploit and left by the wayside. However, Xerox did not analyze the causes of these successive failures thoroughly and continued to invest heavily in technologies that it was never able to sell… but that others were able to exploit successfully, e.g. Apple for the PC, Hewlett-Packard for the laser printer, Adobe for Postscript or 3Com for the Ethernet protocol!

The publications that we have selected underline two principal reasons for such failures:

A corporate culture that encourages people to ignore or hide mistakes

Since the company culture influences how people react to unexpected situations for which there are no procedures or official rules, it specifically affects the way mistakes are handled. There are several reasons why the culture rarely encourages the constructive analysis of mistakes:

- Many companies tend to be arrogant, as Intel was when it first learned of the microprocessor defect. A history of success, major efforts to minimize the risk of error, and sometimes the personality of executives, can all cause a company to underestimate the probability that it could make a mistake. So, when a minor error does happen, the company often ignores it, hence losing an opportunity to learn from it. When the impact of a mistake is significant, such organizations often take a long time to react, making it easier for the situation to deteriorate.
- Other companies are so focused on results that they more or less explicitly accept "small mistakes" so long as objectives are attained. This attitude is just as destructive, because people become used to these errors and stop seeing them as unusual. Over time, they no longer see the need to do anything about them. This is what happened at Ford. Under pressure to launch its Explorer model rapidly, the company ignored an internal memo from an engineer alerting management to the risk of using Firestone P235 tires. Although these tires managed to pass safety tests, he felt that they might still fail in real-life conditions. The serious accidents that ensued showed that the tires in question were indeed defective.
- Finally, some companies tend to try to find a scapegoat when they are faced with a slip-up. This attitude can encourage people to be more careful for fear of punishment. However, it also prompts them to hide their mistakes with potentially disastrous consequences.

Lack of discipline in analyzing mistakes

Many companies have no system that incites people to explore the reasons for past successes and failures. In Xerox's case, for example, this caused the research center to remain focused on technological advances and develop a large number of projects without exploring why it consistently failed to commercialize these innovations successfully.

Even when mistakes are analyzed, this is rarely done with sufficient rigor. Analysis findings are often erroneous, specifically due to a number of cognitive biases **(Figure A)**. This is how, for example, traditional North American telephony operators delayed in reacting to the looming threat presented by cell phones and the Internet. Although declining sales had encouraged them to review their strategy, they failed to find an appropriate response because they were blinded by their habitual frame of reference, which kept them focused on their long-standing battle against their traditional direct competitors.

To learn and grow from their mistakes, companies must do two things:

- Encourage people to identify and express mistakes;
- Make a serious, disciplined effort to learn from these experiences.

2 A culture that listens to mistakes

To learn from their mistakes, people must first be willing to admit that they exist, accept that they have made them, learn lessons from them, and challenge their habitual way of doing things. This mindset does not occur naturally, so companies can take the following steps to encourage its development:

Recognize mistakes committed at the highest levels of the hierarchy

The example set by the executives of the company is probably the most decisive factor in creating a culture in which mistakes are systematically analyzed. Seeing people at the top who admit and who analyze the mistakes they have made provides strong incentive to the rest of the organization to do likewise. Conversely, if a superior makes an obvious attempt to hide mistakes or refuses to learn from them, his or her subordinates are very likely to take the easy way out and deny their own errors. The executives of Johnson & Johnson, for example, set a particularly striking example during the Tylenol crisis. When they first heard of patient deaths, although nothing yet incriminated the company, they immediately considered that they could somehow be responsible and withdrew the product from store shelves. In the end, the origin of the crisis was proven to be a localized act of sabotage, and not a flaw in the drug manufacturing process. However, the prompt reaction of company executives in taking responsibility for a possible error sent a powerful message to the organization, encouraging J&J employees to be more proactive in analyzing their mistakes.

Promote strong values

Communication on the values that should guide the behavior of the

FIGURE A Some common mistakes... in analyzing mistakes

Most people cannot analyze their mistakes objectively for a number of natural reasons.

Over confidence	When people are convinced that they did the right thing, they have trouble admitting that they may have made a mistake.	E.g. Many executives can't imagine that they could make a thoughtless error and keep trying to find other explanations for inconsistent numbers.
Anchoring	First impressions have a lasting influence on the perception of a situation.	E.g. A customer remark regarding a defect in a new product could prevent someone who heard this from seeking other reasons for low product sales.
Preference for the status quo	Most people prefer the status quo to change, because they tend to perceive the risk of loss more sharply than the opportunity for gain.	E.g. When a merger doesn't work, people tend to think that the decision to merge was a bad one, without considering what would have happened if the merger had never occurred.
The weight of past investments	The more people have invested in a project, the more difficulty they have accepting that the project in question could have been a mistake.	E.g. When analyzing a project in which people have invested themselves significantly, they rarely spontaneously conclude that the project should never have been launched in the first place.
Tendency toward conformity	The desire to conform to the behavior and opinions of others causes people to go along the majority, rather than trust their own judgment.	E.g. If your colleagues tell you that you have made a right decision, you may allow yourself to be swayed by their opinion, even when you are personally convinced you made a mistake.
Confirmation bias	People generally grant more importance to the opinions and information that confirm their assumptions than to facts that contradict them.	E.g. Pride in a new product just launched may cause a marketing director to note only customer praise and ignore complaints.
Subjective memory	People tend to rewrite their memories to take account of what has happened in the meantime.	E.g. When a new recruit fails badly, you may remember that you hesitated to hire that person, even if that isn't really true.

organization must be regular and convincing. Indeed, attachment to values is a powerful incentive for people to identify and correct mistakes—including seemingly trivial ones—which run counter to these values. For instance, many airlines constantly repeat the message of the importance of safety. This is an effective means to encourage people to transmit information on even minor incidents, and enables the regular implementation of corrective measures. Similarly, by insisting on respecting the customer, companies encourage employees to take a more objective look at situations that cause customers to be dissatisfied—situations that could easily go unnoticed in another context. More generally, promoting values like transparency or courage can be effective in facilitating open discussion of mistakes.

> Management must instill a culture of tolerance and continuous learning from mistakes.

Promote participative management

The more employees feel involved in decision making, the more empowered they feel and the more likely they are to share their doubts and what they know about real or potential mistakes. By encouraging collective thinking, participative management tends to discourage people from trying to point the finger at one individual when something goes wrong, and makes it less painful to admit mistakes made by a group. Finally, to share decisions, people must discuss several possible options. This open debate clearly shows people that there is no guarantee that the retained solution was the right one—and that if things go wrong, this does not mean that those who made the final decision were incompetent. Participative management therefore makes it easier for people to consider that mistakes may have been made.

Get people used to considering the possibility of error

Training people to consider that mistakes are a possibility is very useful. The objective is to combat people's natural propensity to avoid being challenged, which leads them to close their eyes, filter the information they receive, etc. Different exercises can help people develop a more objective viewpoint (Figure B). For example, analyzing the failures experienced by other companies generally helps people be more objective and less emotional than when they analyze their own failures. The lessons learned can then be applied within the company.

Be careful with sanctions

When mistakes are serious, repeated or caused by negligence, sanctions must be imposed to send a clear signal that they must not be repeated. Nonetheless, the company must be careful to ensure that people are not incited to hide their mistakes for fear of disproportionate or overzealous punishment. In addition, sanctions must not only be justified, but must also be perceived as such by the rest of the organization. To learn from its mistakes, a company must first be prepared to accept that these errors can happen! The founder of Sony, Akio Morita, clearly stated his philosophy on the subject when he said: "Don't be afraid to make a mistake. Just make sure you don't make the same mistake twice."

3 Discipline in learning from mistakes

The desire to learn from mistakes is not enough. Companies are frequently convinced that they are doing a good job of analyzing their errors, only to

FIGURE B Train people to admit the possibility of error

Considering the possibility of mistakes is not natural, but several techniques can help people acquire this reflex.

Techniques	Advantages
Organize brainstorming sessions on the errors committed by other companies	Observing mistakes made by other companies will help the organization develop the ability to analyze errors in a context where people can be more objective. This in turn makes it easier for them to admit that they might commit the same mistakes.
Imagine what could make the company vulnerable	Trying to imagine what could threaten the survival of the company can help people realize that things will not always go their merry way, and avoid becoming overconfident.
Call on outside experts to analyze the company's problems	Using an expert can provide a more objective, outside perspective. In addition, it gets people used to studying problems from different angles.
Present the strategy in terms of mistakes to be avoided	Concretely articulating mistakes that should be avoided helps point out the potential risks and demonstrates the importance of watching out for errors.
Simulate potential crises	When people can experience risks concretely, they are more sensitive to those risks. Such simulations can also be used to point out some unfamiliar threats.
Imagine what excellence should look like	Portraying what excellence should look like sensitizes people to the fact that some apparently trivial mistakes should nonetheless be identified and resolved.

find that the same mistakes continue to occur!

To avoid this trap, each step in the process must be carefully conducted (Figure C):

- Identify what constitutes a mistake;
- Analyze mistakes with open eyes, but without being overly critical;
- Capitalize on the lessons learned.

▶ Be able to spot mistakes

Mistakes aren't always easy to identify. Many companies feel that in conducting "post mortem" analysis of their failures, they are making a sufficient effort to learn from their errors. However, this view is fairly simplistic:

Don't confuse failure with error

Failure tends to reveal the most easily identifiable errors. That being said, all failures are not automatically caused by mistakes! Indeed, even good decisions can lead to undesirable conclusions. For example, just because a new recruit doesn't work out doesn't necessarily mean that the recruiter was wrong. Other factors can enter into play, e.g. unexpected modification of the company's needs, a change in the recruit's personal situation, etc. or simply the inevitable risk factor inherent to this type of decision. So, when analyzing a failure, it is important not to see mistakes where there may be none!

Analyze successes as well

Conversely, just because a decision turns out well doesn't necessarily mean that the decision was a good one! For instance, a successful product launch can mask erroneous decisions. If sales are not coming from the target segment, for example, the prior analysis was probably defective in some way. It can therefore be a very good idea to analyze successes to see what could have been done better or what could be improved the next time around. The U.S. Marines are exemplary in this regard. They organize systematic debriefing sessions—known as After Action Reviews—of every mission, whether it was successful or not, in order to promote continuous improvement.

Also take note of "non-decisions"

An aspect that is often neglected in the process of analyzing errors is the lack of decision, or the choice to stick with the status quo, although this is actually a decision that may be wrong. Errors are frequently made in this manner, because people naturally tend to prefer to maintain things as they are, which is often—incorrectly—perceived to be safer than a more "proactive" decision. Keeping track of these "non-decisions" is consequently important to facilitate subsequent analysis.

Don't neglect "small mistakes" with no immediate impact

Finally, some mistakes tend to escape the analysis process because they are

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FIGURE C Analyze past decisions

Taking the time to review past decisions is a major learning opportunity. Knowing whether or not the expected result was achieved is not enough, as success or failure depends on many factors in addition to the quality of the decision.

Whether the result is perceived as a success or a failure, important lessons can be learned from analyzing the decision-making process in retrospect:

While events are happening, keep a written record of decisions.
Once the results are known, it becomes difficult to recall the actual chain of events objectively.

Analyze thedecision-making process

- **Objectives.** Did decision-makers focus on one objective to the detriment of other goals that may have been equally important? E.g. Evaluating a sales director exclusively on his ability to manage people and neglecting his own salesmanship.
- **Information.** Did decision-makers neglect certain facts? Did they subconsciously focus on information that tended to confirm their assumptions?
- **Logic.** Did decision-makers place too much trust in their intuition? Or conversely, did they try to be too rational, leading to artificial reasoning?
- **Decision-makers.** Were divergent opinions cast aside in favor of a superficial consensus? Did decision-makers fail to consult some individuals whose expertise could have been valuable?

Analyze the result of the decision

- Even when the result obtained seems satisfactory, reviewing the following points can be useful:
  - Did people try merely to attain the most obvious objective without taking account of the impact of the decision on other issues of a certain importance?
  - Did some problems remain hidden?
  - What could have been done better?
- If the result of the decision is negative, be careful not to draw hasty conclusions:
- given the information available at the time the decision was made, would it have been possible to do any better?
- If people decided to stick with the status quo, were any opportunities missed by choosing not to change anything? Given subsequent changes in the situation, was maintaining the status quo the best decision?

Formally articulate the conclusions of the analysis.
These fi ndings can then serve as the basis for subsequent decisions.

considered to be trivial and without significant impact. However, ignoring these small errors can be dangerous. First, the absence of consequences could simply be the result of pure chance. An example would be the loose bolt that the maintenance crew fails to tighten which "never caused a problem" until the day disaster hits. What is more, tiny mistakes can accumulate until the situation finally becomes serious. Some companies which are insufficiently customer-oriented learn this the hard way. Each incident has only a tiny impact, but the consequences of the proliferation of small incidents can be disastrous to the image of the company.

> A systematic approach is indispensable to learn from mistakes.

Identifying these seemingly trivial incidents is not easy. Organizations that succeed in doing this have generally established a systematic formal process to gather and analyze information on these incidents (Figure D).

Conduct an objective analysis

When studying mistakes in retrospect, it is easy to draw erroneous conclusions despite all the best intentions. This is caused by the many aforementioned cognitive biases that enter into play when conducting this type of analysis (Figure A). The best way to overcome these biases is to be aware of them, and to adopt a few methodological tricks to minimize their influence:

Take account of all available information

One initial reflex to develop is to utilize all available information, including less recent facts, details that seem out of place, and facts that are unpleasant to think about! It can also be a good idea to allow some time to pass between gathering and analyzing this information: this will help to ensure that data collection is not influenced by the first conclusions made during the analysis. Information should also be collected from a variety of sources in order to compensate for the biases of the various parties concerned (Figure E).

Challenge initial assumptions

Companies naturally establish a frame of reference—an understanding of the competitive environment, economic conditions, market playing field, etc.—which serves as a basis for making decisions. However, it is important to be wary of allowing this frame of reference to become frozen. Indeed, many errors are interpreted incorrectly because they are analyzed with an excessively narrow perspective. This occurs particularly when companies are leaders in their market and are blinded by overconfidence. Kodak, for instance, was long fixated on the idea of staying in the lead in the film photography market—without realizing it was rapidly giving way to digital photography.

Realize that memory is subjective

When people are asked to remember their past decisions and motives, they are often observed to distort the facts significantly. Subconsciously, we "rewrite" our memory in order to take account of events that have occurred in the meantime. So, if decisions are analyzed based on memory alone, the conclusions are quite likely to be unreliable. For this reason, it is recommended to keep a written record of decisions, as the basis for later objective analysis. Provided that people are aware of the naturally subjective nature of memory, conducting collective debriefing sessions is also instructive. In this way, the memories of various participants can be compared in order to build a more accurate image of reality.

Review the whole chain of events

Once a mistake is identified, we tend to stop the analysis to focus on finding ways to fix the problem. However, observation shows that major failures are often the result of a chain of successive errors. If the chain of events that led to the mistake in question can be established, the root causes can then be identified, thus preventing the company from adopting moderately effective stopgap solutions. For instance,

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FIGURE D Organize the analysis of incidents

An efficient system to analyze incidents must contain two facets:

Information collection system	Systematic analysis system
Errors or incidents are not always communicated spontaneously within the organization. People must therefore be actively encouraged to express themselves in order to develop a database that is as complete as possible: • Encourage people to **share everything they know**, even when the incidents in question are apparently trivial. • **Don't "shoot the messenger"** who brings bad news. The system must be seen as a tool for improvement rather than for placing blame. • Ensure that the system is **easily accessible**, particularly by limiting the number of layers between the information source and recipient. • Keep people **abreast** on what is being done with communicated information. E.g. Establish a system to acknowledge receipt, be careful about response times, etc.	Incidents are often much more instructive when they are considered as a whole rather than separately. Companies are therefore advised to entrust analysis to a centralized unit with two principal duties: • **Select the most relevant information.** Given the potential volume and variety of information to process, the unit must specifically: – Identify and underline incidents that present a major risk – Spot recurrent errors that could reveal a more fundamental issue – Estimate the overall impact of reported errors • **Disseminate the results of the analysis to the entire organization**

Korean Air had the highest rate of plane crashes in the nineties. Although these disasters were caused by operational deficiencies, attempts to correct these problems case by case were fruitless: their root cause was not the incompetence of concerned employees, but rather a culture characterized by a lack of discipline and rigor in solving problems, as well as a nonchalant attitude toward the safety of passengers and crew.

▶ Capitalize on the lessons learned

There is no point in trying to learn from mistakes unless the company is organized to put that knowledge to good use. Two types of initiatives are required to do this:

Disseminate important lessons learned

The lessons learned from the study of mistakes must be broadly communicated. First, because this will obviously sensitize those who would be likely to commit the same errors. But also because a lack of visible feedback could be discouraging to those who make the effort to identify and analyze incidents.

Communication efforts must not be focused on pointing out the mistakes committed—and even less so on placing blame—so much as explaining why these mistakes happened, and how they can help the company improve. For example, Xerox created an intranet system—Eureka—to gather data on customer equipment breakdowns and problems. This tool enabled people to provide feedback on such issues, but also constituted a very useful database of information on problems encountered, their causes, and the solutions found. Similarly, in the aftermath of a crisis triggered by a rumor that syringes had been put into cans of Pepsi-Cola, Pepsi-Co published an internal brochure entitled, "The Pepsi Hoax: What went right?" Intended for the entire organization, this brochure helped people understand the chain of events, the actions and decisions that precipitated the crisis, and relevant lessons to be drawn for the future.

Seize opportunities to drive change

Analyzing mistakes is often an opportunity to underline the company's weaknesses and potentially put a spotlight on some shaky areas. This can consequently be a good occasion to make people aware of the urgency of change. Louis Gerstner relied on such an analysis to turn IBM around, for example. He showed employees that the growing vulnerability of the company against competitors like Intel and Microsoft was principally the result of a culture characterized by smugness, in-fighting and bureaucracy. In this way, he was able to engage the organization in a profound transformation which ended up putting the customer back at the core and motivating people to benchmark themselves with the outside world.

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Learning from mistakes is a good way to improve. However, this cannot happen without an environment that tolerates error and allows mistakes to be openly discussed. Otherwise, many mistakes will be overlooked or even purposely dissimulated. And simply exposing mistakes is not enough; they must be analyzed seriously in order to avoid falling into common traps likely to bias the conclusions.

FIGURE E Use a wide range of information sources

One of the main traps people fall in when analyzing their mistakes is the difficulty of challenging their assumptions and their tendency to be defensive in order to reassure themselves.
One way to establish a more objective view of the facts is to gather information from a wide range of sources with different perspectives on the problem at hand:

Customers
The company may find it very helpful to make a list of what it believes customers expect, and then ask customers what they think in order to identify any gaps.

Employees
Newcomers can look at things with a fresh eye, line managers are close to the field, experts can help develop understanding in some areas, etc.

Partners
Distributors and suppliers are generally knowledgeable about the context in which the company operates, but observed from their own perspective.

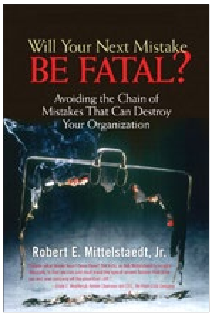
Institutions
Some outside players such as the press, NGOs and consumer advocacy groups can provide the company with a more distant, and therefore more objective point of view.

Our selection

To find the best ideas on this subject, we recommend the following publications:

Will Your Next Mistake Be Fatal?

Robert E. Mittelstaedt, éd. Wharton School Publishing, 2005.



Analysis shows that disasters like Enron, the events of September 11 or airplane crashes are never caused by just one bad decision, but rather a long string of mistakes that went unnoticed, were considered to be trivial or ignored for various reasons.

This book is not designed to address the topic of crisis management, but rather to help individuals and organizations avoid triggering crises in the first place. The author shows that the ability to learn from their mistakes can thus be a major asset for companies.

Although the author does make a distinction between operational and strategic errors which may be perceived as somewhat artificial, he provides an appreciable analysis of a wide variety of examples, ranging from the sinking of the Titanic to the launching of New Coke, not to mention the Firestone tire scandal (chapters 2 to 4). He demonstrates that regardless of the type of business, people tend to make the same kinds of mistakes, e.g. decisions based on mistaken assumptions, critical data that slips through the cracks, lack of individual training, poor communication, etc.

The author underlines the impact of corporate culture on starting and prolonging a series of mistakes. This is why every organization must strive to make continuous learning and the search for excellence pillars of its culture. Otherwise, mediocrity and lack of discipline rapidly leave room for errors (chapters 5 and 6).

To get a quick grasp of the key messages, you can peruse the last chapter. The author offers many suggestions on how individuals and organizations can develop the ability to spot the warning signs that a series of errors is starting. Of particular note are recommendations to establish tracking systems, to listen attentively to customer feedback, to analyze past decisions systematically, etc.

And also...

We also relied on the following publications:

- ***Sometimes Success Begins at Failure***, Harvard Working Knowledge, 2003. (Article available at http://hbswk.hbs.edu)
  Bounce back from failure by redirecting a project in a better direction.
- ***How to Fail... and Win***, Harvard Management Update, 2004. (Article on sale at www.hbsp.harvard.edu)
  Capitalize on your mistakes so that they become an essential learning and performance improvement tool.
- ***The Hard Work of Failure Analysis***, Harvard Working Knowledge, 2005. (Article available at http://hbswk.hbs.edu)
  Advice on developing the organization's ability to analyze failure.
- ***Hidden Flaws in Strategy***, The McKinsey Quarterly, 2003. (Article available at www.manageris-executive.com)
  Understand psychological biases likely to cause erroneous thinking.
- ***Distortions and Deceptions in Strategic Decisions***, The McKinsey Quarterly, 2006. (Article available at www.manageris-executive.com)
  Become more aware of perception biases to improve the quality of strategic decisions.
- ***Learning to Let Go: Making Better Exit Decisions***, The McKinsey Quarterly, 2006 (Article available at www.manageris-executive.com)
  Identify the factors that obstruct objective analysis, particularly when it comes time to decide whether to end a project or a business.
- ***The quest for resilience***, Harvard Business Review, 2003. (Article on sale at www.hbsp.harvard.edu)
  Bounce back following a strategic failure.

Further readings

To explore this topic further:

- ***Failure, a critical part of leadership development***
  (Manageris synopsis 139b)
  Learn how to capitalize on your mistakes and bounce back after failure.
- ***Prepare for crises before it's too late!***
  (Manageris synopsis 147b)
  Identify the mistakes that can trigger a crisis and take the measures required to avoid it.
- ***Why Decisions Fail***
  Paul C. Nutt,
  Berrett-Koehler, 2002. (Book and Manageris synopsis 114b)
  Classic decision-making errors.

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