

# 6 Learning from Mistakes

A young manager was hired as a project manager in a multi-national company.

On their first assignment, keen to do well, and justify the faith (and salary) given to him, the manager took several decisions that proved to be ill-considered and costly, losing the firm a significant amount of money – some £500,000.



**“The worst mistake is the one no-one learns from.”**

The young manager was summoned to the Chief Executive's Office, and entered the Chief's office with trepidation. For the next hour he was given a grilling: what decisions had he made? why? what would a better decision have been in retrospect? why?

At the end of the hour the young manager was worn out, and a nervous wreck. The Chief Executive ended his questions, and told him the meeting was over. The young man, sure he had

been fired, asked if the Chief Executive wanted him to clear his desk and leave straight away.

“Why on earth would I want you to do that?”

“It's just cost the company £500,000 to train you.”

The moral of the story is clear: people often learn by the mistakes they make.

No-one wants to make a mistake, and some can be really costly. But what is the point of moving someone on from that area as a result? Surely the best option is to ensure that whoever made the mistake has learned from it – because it is unlikely that person will make that mistake again.

Hiring someone new might cause the same situation to repeat – or the company might increase its level of supervision and control to ensure it doesn't happen again. Both these options are more risky and costly than giving the individual the chance to learn, and show they have learned.

The worst mistake is the one no-one learns from.

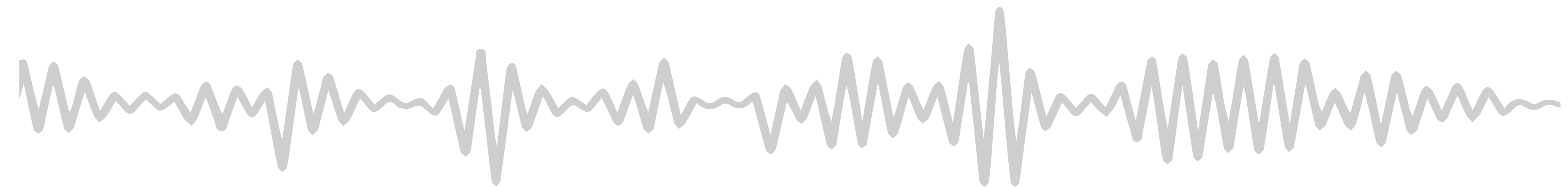
“If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten” (R. Kipling)

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