

Don't Believe Everything You Think

Our past experiences skew the ways in which we make judgments and decisions. However, our experiences are the result of how we interpreted an event or circumstance. Further complicating the decision process is that our analysis is distorted by our biases and the result may or may not have had anything to do with the reality of the situation. Here are the **Top Ten Ways to Learn From Mistakes**.

1. Publishers are outcome oriented – a book was a success or it wasn't – and we laud our successes and ignore the failures. A better technique is to analyze the process leading to the result. A good outcome can lead us to stick with a questionable strategy that worked this time, and a bad outcome can cause us to change or discard a strategy that may actually be better, except for this time.
2. If we don't learn from our mistakes we may be fooled into thinking we have more control over our success than we actually do.
3. Honest feedback is essential for making better decisions in the future. But if our intuition is distorted by our interpretation of our past (good or bad) we may sabotage how we evaluate evidence.
4. Predictions based on experience make the assumption that the future will resemble the past.
5. Just because something is obvious after the fact doesn't mean it could have been predicted.
6. Recognizing a potential problem requires a different approach than solving an actual problem.
7. The goal of learning should dominate the natural tendency to assign blame – on yourself or others.
8. "Creative conflict" enhances decision-making. It is better to learn about problems from colleagues when there is still time to fix them than from the market when it is too late.
9. Perform a premortem (vs. postmortem) by imaging yourself in the future and experiencing some problem. Use "hindsight" to think about how to avoid it.
10. Focus, but not too much. If you over-evaluate a situation too much or long you may lose out on an unexpected opportunity.