

## **CASE Tool 5-6: Lessons Learned**

### **ABSTRACT**

Design work, like most things, benefits from constant learning. Structural design of buildings is different from product design, where multiple trials lead to a prototype, which is then subject to tests, which reveal deficiencies, which are then corrected until the product is refined enough to be mass produced. After that, performance of the product and of its production processes are continuously improved as deficiencies become apparent. The expense of the refinements that happen in a product development situation is amortized over the mass production which maximizes the value of the up-front investment on quality by spreading the cost over the number of units produced.

In contrast, most design projects are unique, which prevents cycles of testing and improvement. Furthermore, structural design projects usually run under time constraints that do not allow for much in the way of pauses for changes and improvements. Furthermore, the project-by-project fee-for-service arrangement of the profession does not allow for spreading development costs among multiple projects.

This tool discusses the value of learning from project experience and outlines some ways that firms can implement lessons learned processes.