

## Organizational learning in the context of product development management

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the results of research into organizational learning in the new product development (NPD) process, involving three manufacturers. It aims to provide a referential framework to help understand organizational learning in the specific context of NPD, applying this framework to identify practices and methods that promote and facilitate this learning on a regular basis. Based on an exploratory, multiple-case study with a single unit of analysis and qualitative data collected from semi-structured, in-depth interviews, the following methods and practices were found to exert an impact on learning. a) During and post-project learning must focus on the detection and correction of critical NPD events so as to improve process performance; b) Both types of learning depend on the nature of the project (derivative, platform, etc.), which suggests the need for a learning strategy specific to each case; c) The stage-gates system can also be used as a formal method to facilitate learning during a specific project; d) Retention and transference (either within or across projects) of explicit knowledge is better addressed by archival-based mechanisms (documents, reports and FMEAs). On the other hand, experience-based methods (face-to-face contact, meetings, project leader) are ideal when knowledge is tacit; e) Leadership style and organizational culture that reward employee commitment and motivation facilitate learning; and f) QFD and FMEA tools help by anticipating and correcting critical NPD events during a project.

**Keywords:** product development, continuous improvement, organizational learning

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