

# Captured Lessons or Lessons Learned?

## Lessons Learned

Some organizations have a common practice in project management, which they call **lessons learned**. They use this term to refer to events or conditions on a project that were not typically planned or anticipated. It is also likely that the project teams missed them from the risk identification exercise if they had done one. Therefore, Lessons Learned would be “things” that the project team captures on a project, good, bad, or ugly.

We call these **Captured Lessons** in the Uruk Platform without the “learned.” Why, it will be clear later.

## Did we really learn these lessons?

It is clear that we learned them or identified them on the project where they occurred. However, we often hear that we **do not learn our lessons**.

Sure, we identified them, maybe documented them, and we likely have a database to archive them. However, as an organization, did we really learn them?

Since we started to work on the Uruk Way via the Uruk Platform, we have always endeavored to include things based on our decades of experience<sup>1</sup>, especially in areas where the current practice might have gaps and pitfalls. In one organization we worked with, management set a mandate to capture at least six lessons on every project. Yet, we kept repeating our errors, which means, as an organization, we are not learning. The mandate was to **capture them, not use them**. However, is it not the term **Learn**’s intent that we now know how to use in future projects?

## Captured Lessons

As a result, we consider this topic from two aspects. The first aspect is about capturing the lessons. Therefore, we use **Captured Lessons** to identify, capture, and document those lessons. This term emphasizes that we would have only acknowledged and captured the lessons. In the

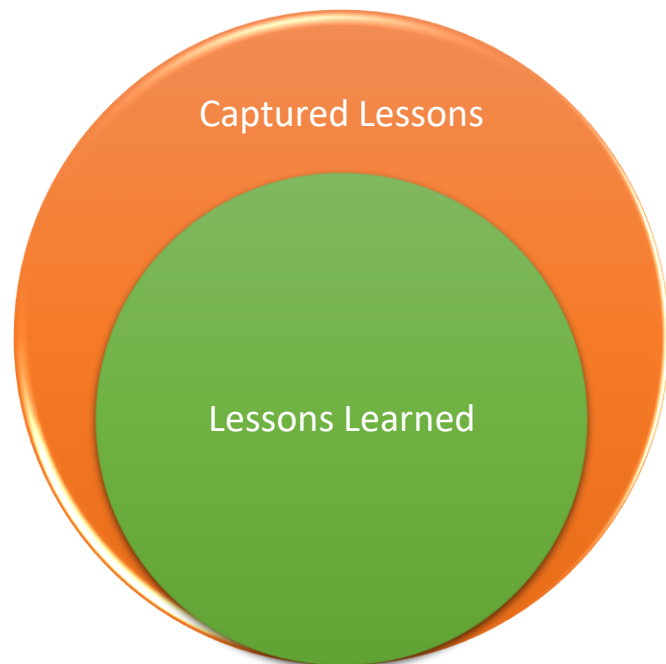


Figure 1: Captured Lessons Learned

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<sup>1</sup> These subtle things might be considered insignificant; however, all of these “little things” would help us trigger a change in the project management organizational culture.



Uruk Platform, those lessons will go into the database.

However, we have not learned those lessons from an organizational perspective; the learning was temporary.

So, how do we learn from them?

## Lessons Learned

Once again, in the Uruk Way, “lessons learned” is the term we use on projects, where we can validate that we indeed learned those lessons.

How do we do that?

At the start of every stage, a project manager and her team would be encouraged<sup>2</sup> to check the Captured Lessons database while planning the stage work. By properly tagging and categorizing the captured lessons, the PM would narrow the search and view of what is relevant to her project (also considering the given stage or function). The Uruk Platform functionality is to:

- Extract the relevant Captured Lessons,
- Agree on what applies to the new project and what the team can use,
- Develop a rough estimate of the benefits of such action. In other words, assess the potential cost and time savings due to preventive measures.
- Document their reviews and incorporate them into the stage plan.

We use this approach to ensure (or encourage) organizations and project teams to truly learn the lessons. **This is how we learn from history.**

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*This clarification is part of the Uruk PM Educational Series.*

*The educational series includes numerous clarifications about project management terminology and our philosophy. The series also includes the essential thought process that we are using in the Uruk Platform.*

*It is vital to understand the approach we use in developing the Uruk Platform as we work together to create a culture of project management excellence!*

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<sup>2</sup> Prompted or required, depending on organizational preferences and policies.