

Root Cause Analysis Process

5 Steps

1

Gather Initial Information & Define the Problem

- Answer who, what, when, where, and how.
- What are you trying to modify or correct? (Reach a consensus to define the problem.)
- Keep it simple!

2

Fill in the Gaps

- What are all the sources you can use to gather data regarding the problem (e.g., interviews, documentation, observation, etc.)?
- What sequence of events led to the problem?

3

Analyze/Identify the Root Cause(s)

- What conditions allowed the problem to occur?
- Determine whether you can impact the contributing factor(s).
- Identify the underlying reasons why each contributing factor exists.
- Can you impact the contributing factor?

4

Develop an Action Plan

- Address system-level causal factors instead of people.
- Design a plan that will likely keep the problem from happening again.

5

Recommend & Implement Solutions

- How will the plan be implemented?
- Who will be responsible for it?
- Follow up to determine whether the solution was effective.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) seeks to identify the primary cause(s) of a problem, so that you can

1. Determine what happened,
2. Determine why it happened, and
3. Determine how to reduce the likelihood that it will happen again.

Use the 5-Whys

Continue asking “why” until you’ve identified the true source of the problem; this must be understood before you can take action. Remember, there can be more than one root cause.

Use SMARTS

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time frame
Supported

Use the PDSA Cycle

- Plan:** Create a specific action plan based on your established goals.
- Do:** Carry out your action plan.
- Study:** Describe how the measured results compared with the predictions.
- Act:** Determine the next steps: modify the idea and retest (Adapt), spread the idea (Adopt), or test a new idea (Abandon the idea).