

After Your Root Cause Analysis



SITUATION: A root cause analysis (RCA) is a systematic approach to understanding the causes when an adverse event occurs, and it is imperative to identify system flaws that can be corrected to prevent the event from recurring. However, concrete action plans and structured follow-up are essential for sustained improvement.



BACKGROUND: According to Sidney Dekker and Safety Science Innovation, human error is not the cause of failure, but the symptom of a failure. It is important to consider human factors, support systems thinking, and promote a shared learning environment.



ASSESSMENT: Root cause analysis is generally directed by risk professionals or another designated team, though it includes key team members from other areas. The output of this group involves specific actions and measurements to demonstrate that improvements are occurring. Confirming during the analysis that these actions are both practical and possible, and that the directions are properly disseminated to the necessary team members, is essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Once it is determined that a root cause analysis will be conducted, consider the following:

- Immediate mitigation actions upon identification of the event
- Develop an RCA plan in collaboration with the RCA executive sponsor
 - Review charter and assign an RCA team
- Involve stakeholders
 - Send charter to the RCA team so each member is aware of their role and next steps
- Conduct RCA per your organization's adopted process; don't forget to:
 - Meet regularly with the executive sponsor and operational leader to assist with removing barriers and address immediate concerns
 - Include frontline staff who can speak to workflow, barriers, and challenges
 - Conduct literature review, evidence-based practice, and best practices for discussion at the meeting(s)
- Ensure consensus
 - Remember that consensus is finding a solution acceptable enough that all team members can support it
- Consensus is not...
 - a *unanimous* vote – consensus may not represent everyone's first priorities
 - a *majority* vote – in a majority vote, only the majority gets something they are happy with; people in the minority get something they don't want at all
- Assign action items and quantify the "strength" of each action item
 - Determine measurable action items and ensure action item owner is aware
 - Consult IHI's [Action Hierarchy](#)
- Hold an RCA loop closure meeting to follow up on action items
 - Schedule the meeting no more than 60 days after final RCA meeting
 - Review data and other measures of success
 - Design new corrective actions if necessary
 - Close out the corrective action plan
 - Escalate concerns about incomplete action items to address any barriers
 - Review recurrent events
 - Audit or evaluate action plans to confirm 12-18 months of sustained adherence