

# 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

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime frame  
**S**upported

### 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).