



Defects vs Incidents vs Problems

In service delivery and quality management, it's important to understand the distinctions between defects, incidents, and problems:

Defect - A defect refers to a product or service not meeting its specifications or requirements. Defects indicate an error in quality. Examples include incorrect data entry, software bugs, facility damage, etc. Defects originate within the process.

Incident - An incident is an unplanned interruption to regular operations. Incidents reduce productivity or quality of services. Examples include system outages, cyber attacks, supply chain disruptions, accidents, etc. Incidents originate from external events.

Problem - A problem refers to an unknown underlying cause of one or more incidents. Problems require investigation to diagnose. Examples include a server misconfiguration causing repeated crashes, a faulty machine part causing defects, etc.

Key differences:

- Defects indicate quality issues in a product/service, incidents relate to external interruptions, and problems point to the root cause behind defects and incidents.
- Defects are contained within the process, incidents come from outside, and problems underpin both defects and incidents.
- Defects are linked to internal process quality, incidents relate to external disruptions, and problems signify underlying issues that enable defects and incidents to manifest.
- Defect prevention improves quality control, incident management restores services, and problem management investigates root causes.

Understanding these core concepts helps quality professionals categorize issues accurately. A defect may disrupt operations, causing an incident. Finding the underlying problem can eliminate the defect-incident chain. Clarifying relationships between defects, incidents, and problems leads to systemic improvements.