



Root Cause Analysis (RCA) for Processes

Root cause analysis (RCA) is a problem-solving methodology focused on identifying and resolving the underlying cause of a problem or event. When applied to business processes, it helps uncover the fundamental reasons why a process is not performing optimally.

Performing root cause analysis on processes involves three main steps:

1. Map the existing process and gather data

- Visualize the process by creating a flowchart. This captures the sequence of activities and roles.
- Gather quantitative data on the process through metrics like cost, cycle time, volume, defects, etc.
- Gather qualitative data by interviewing process owners and end users on pain points.

2. Identify the root causes

- Brainstorm the potential root causes of performance issues within the process.
- Use tools like the 5 Whys, fishbone diagrams and Pareto analysis to drill down to the vital few causes.
- Look beyond the process boundaries to understand upstream causes. Resist narrow solutions.

3. Address the root causes

- Develop solutions to address the vital few root causes identified.
- Consider changes to process activities, inputs, people/roles, or supporting tools/technologies.
- Implement solutions in a pilot, measure effectiveness, and expand based on results.
- Update process documentation to reflect changes and institutionalize improvements.

Effective root cause analysis leads to sustainable process improvements by targeting the core issues. It prevents "symptom treatment" where only superficial problems are addressed. Key mindsets include objectivity, persistence and a willingness to challenge assumptions. The steps are easy to grasp but require discipline to perform effectively, particularly when addressing difficult chronic problems. Consistently performing RCA ultimately creates a culture of accountability, efficiency and excellence across business processes.