

Six Reasons Why RCFA Initiatives Fail

Design and implement an effective Root Cause Failure Analysis process that avoids these common pitfalls and see your production, quality, yield, safety, and cost performance improve.

1. RCFA is treated as a tool when it is really a process

The RCFA process starts with a trigger event or events and only ends when the corrective actions are implemented and the proposed solution has been measurably verified as being effective. Learn the tools, but implement an RCFA process if you wish to be successful.



2. The one-tool-fits-all-problems approach

There are in excess of 100 discrete, documented RCFA tools available, and they are not equally effective for solving all problems. If you have a “hammer” RCFA tool and a “nail” problem, it is inefficient and often ineffective to use a sledgehammer to drive a carpet tack. Take the time to learn a few tools and when to apply them appropriately.



3. Inadequate failure analysis and inaccurate information – fixing the wrong failure

Avoid the general pitfall of solving the wrong failure mode by learning a few simple methods for performing failure analysis and be aware of the available resources. Develop procedures to obtain, protect and preserve evidence for effective investigation. Again, don't fix the wrong failure mode! Millions of dollars and lives have been put at risk from “solving” the wrong problem.



4. Too many recommendations

Too many, often vague, recommendations are often the equivalent of not admitting “I really don't know why it failed.” If you find and address the true root cause(s) but you bury the critical few corrective actions (the real fix) in a poorly designed wish list, resources are diluted, implementation is delayed, and you just may never get around to implementing the critical few. To avoid this, include a corrective action evaluation step in your RCFA process.



5. Poor execution

No one wants to perform an RCFA for a second failure, only to discover the corrective actions from the RCFA for the first failure have not been implemented. How can a company fail to implement solutions after expending resources to determine the cause? The most prevalent reasons: too many RCFAs, too many recommendations, and no process steps for ensuring follow up.



6. Too many RCFAs

If you apply RCFA as a tool to every problem that comes along, the result will be a lot of RCFAs and corrective actions, requiring more resources than you probably have. Your RCFA process must have a clear process step to trigger when an RCFA will be performed, when it will not, and how many resources you can expend to still make a good return on investment.



Learn more about RCFAs, other reliability engineering topics, and Life Cycle Institute's Reliability Engineering Certification program at www.LCE.com