Actionable Cause Form

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Once a Challenge Statement is developed, the next step is to draft an Actionable Cause.

An Actionable Cause is an answer to the "why?" of the Challenge Statement. It is a cause that can be acted on to provide long-term relief from the symptoms without causing more problems. See the Systems Thinking website (http://www.systems-thinking.org/rca/rootca.htm) for more information on root cause analysis. An Actionable Cause can be influenced and controlled and, if corrected, there is a realistic hope the issue will be prevented in the future.

If the issue would have occurred even if the identified cause wasn't present, or if correcting the cause will not prevent the problem or causes similar problems, then it is NOT an Actionable Cause.

The Actionable Cause will be used to drive the strategic selection of activities that will have an impact on the issue(s) defined in the Challenge Statement.

Follow the steps below to arrive at an actionable cause.

Step 1: Review the Challenge Statement

Copy the Challenge Statement here.

Step 2: "5 Whys" Activity

Ask "why does the challenge statement occur?" and then ask why did "it" occur? Continue to ask "why?" three to five times until something fundamental which can be controlled is identified. If it cannot be controlled, back up a step and try again. Note: The team may have several answers to "why does the challenge statement occur?" Repeat the following process for each of these.

1. Given the Challenge Statement, what are some possible Actionable Causes?

2. Why does Why #1 occur?

3. Why does Why #2 occur?

4. Why does Why #3 occur?

5. Why does Why #4 occur?

Step 3: Use the Checklist to Select an Actionable Cause

Select one or two Actionable Causes by using the following checklist. If the answer is "yes" to each of the checklist questions about the possible Actionable Causes brainstormed in Step 2, they are eligible for selection. Multiple Actionable Causes may emerge meeting the criteria, but select one or two to focus on.

- Is this Actionable Cause informed by the Challenge Statement?

- Is this something the team can influence or control?

- Is this something the entire team agrees on?

- Does it provide a rationale for selecting strategic activities?

- Will correcting it prevent the challenge from occurring?

- Do the data support the selected Actionable Cause?

Step 4: Document the Agreed-Upon Actionable Cause(s)

Input the selected Actionable Cause(s) here.

Notes/Additional Information

Include any relevant notes or additional information.