



ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

THE ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS PROCESS (RCA) HAS FIVE IDENTIFIABLE STEPS.

Step One: Define the Problem

- What do you see happening?
- What are the specific symptoms?

Step Two: Collect Data

- What proof do you have that the problem exists?
- How long has the problem existed?
- What is the impact of the problem?

You need to analyze a situation fully before you can move on to look at factors that contributed to the problem. To maximize the effectiveness of your RCA, get together everyone (from experts to front line staff) who understands the situation. People who are most familiar with the problem can help lead you to a better understanding of the issues.

A helpful tool at this stage is CATWOE. With this process, you look at the same situation from different perspectives: the Customers, the people (Actors) who implement the solutions, the Transformation process that's affected, the World view, the process Owner, and Environmental constraints.

Step Three: Identify Possible Causal Factors

- What sequence of events leads to the problem?
- What conditions allow the problem to occur?
- What other problems surround the occurrence of the central problem?

During this stage, identify as many causal factors as possible. Too often, people identify one or two factors and then stop. That's not sufficient. With RCA, you don't want to simply treat the most obvious causes, you want to dig deeper.

Use these tools to help identify causal factors:

- **Appreciation:** Use the facts and ask "So what?" to determine all the possible consequences of a fact.
- **5 Whys:** Ask "Why?" until you get to the root of the problem.
- **Drill Down:** Break down a problem into small, detailed parts to better understand the big picture.
- **Cause and Effect Diagrams:** Create a chart of all possible causal factors, to find out where the trouble may have begun.



ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

Step Four: Identify the Root Causes

- Why does the causal factor exist?
- What is the real reason the problem occurred?

Use the same tools you used to identify the causal factors to look at the roots of each factor. These tools are designed to encourage you to dig deeper at each level of cause and effect.

Step Five: Recommend and Implement Solutions

- What can you do to prevent the problem from happening again?
- How will the solution be implemented?
- Who will be responsible for it?
- What are the risks of implementing the solution?

Analyze your cause-and-effect process, and identify the changes needed for various systems. It's also important that you plan ahead to predict the effects of your solution. This way, you can spot potential failures before they happen.

One way of doing this is to use Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA). This tool builds on the idea of risk analysis to identify points where a solution could fail. FMEA is also a great system to implement across your organization. The more systems and processes that use FMEA at the start, the less likely you are to have problems that need RCA in the future.

Impact Analysis is another useful tool. This helps you explore possible positive and negative consequences of a change on different parts of a system or organization.

Another great strategy to adopt is Kaizen or continuous improvement. This is the idea that continual small changes create better systems overall. Kaizen also emphasizes that the people closest to a process should identify places for improvement. Again, with Kaizen alive and well in your company, the root causes of problems can be identified and resolved quickly and effectively.

Facilitator Note:

Key Points to Highlight

Root Cause Analysis is a useful process for understanding and solving a problem. Figure out what negative events are occurring. Then, look at the complex systems around those problems, and identify key points of failure. Finally, determine solutions to address those key points or root causes.



DYAD: WHAT DO WE CARRY?

Managing Your Emotions at Work: Controlling Your Feelings Before They Control You

adapted from Mindtools

“Everything can be taken from a man but the last of human freedoms – the ability to choose one’s attitude in a given set of circumstances, to choose one’s way.” – Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

We’ve all been in bad work situation before. Your favorite project is canceled after weeks of hard work, a customer snaps at you unfairly, your best friend (and co-worker) is laid off, or your boss assigns you more work than you can handle.

In your personal life, your reaction to stressful situations like these might be to shout or hide in a corner and feel sorry for yourself for a while. But at work, these types of behavior could seriously harm your professional reputation, as well as your productivity.

It may become harder and harder to manage your emotions in a stressful work environment, but it’s even more important for you to do so. After all, management may choose to keep those who can handle their emotions and work well under pressure. As the quote above shows, no matter what the situation is, you’re always free to choose how you react to it.

Common Negative Emotions at Work

In 1997, Bond University professor of management Cynthia Fisher conducted a study called “Emotions at Work: What Do People Feel, and How Should We Measure It?”

According to Fisher’s research, the most common negative emotions experienced in the workplace are as follows:

- Frustration/Irritation
- Worry/Nervousness
- Anger/Aggravation
- Dislike
- Disappointment/Unhappiness

Following are strategies you can use to help you deal with each of these negative emotions.

Frustration/Irritation

Frustration usually occurs when you feel stuck or trapped, or unable to move forward in some way. It could be caused by a colleague blocking your favorite project, a boss who is too disorganized to get to your meeting on time, or simply being on hold on the phone for a long time. Whatever the reason, it’s important to deal with feelings of frustration quickly, because they can easily lead to more negative emotions, such as anger.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with frustration:

1. Stop and evaluate – One of the best things you can do is mentally stop yourself, and look at the situation. Ask yourself why you feel frustrated. Write it down, and be specific. Then think of one positive thing about



DYAD: WHAT DO WE CARRY?

your current situation. For instance, if your boss is late for your meeting, then you have more time to prepare. Or, you could use this time to relax a little.

2. Find something positive about the situation – Thinking about a positive aspect of your situation often makes you look at things in a different way. This small change in your thinking can improve your mood. When it's people who are causing your frustration, they're probably not doing it deliberately to annoy you. And if it's a thing that's bothering you – well, it's certainly not personal! Don't get mad, just move on.

3. Remember the last time you felt frustrated – The last time you were frustrated about something, the situation probably worked out just fine after a while, right? Your feelings of frustration or irritation probably didn't do much to solve the problem then, which means they're not doing anything for you right now.

Worry/Nervousness

With all the fear and anxiety that comes with increasing numbers of layoffs, it's no wonder that many people worry about their jobs. But this worry can easily get out of control, if you allow it, and this can impact not only your mental health, but also your productivity, and your willingness to take risks at work.

Try these tips to deal with worrying

1. Don't surround yourself with worry and anxiety – For example, if co-workers gather in the break room to gossip and talk about job cuts, then don't go there and worry with everyone else.

2. Worrying tends to lead to more worrying, and that isn't good for anyone.

3. Try deep-breathing exercises – This helps slow your breathing and your heart rate. Breathe in slowly for five seconds, then breathe out slowly for five seconds. Focus on your breathing, and nothing else. Do this at least five times.

Physical Relaxation Techniques

1. Focus on how to improve the situation – If you fear being laid off, and you sit there and worry, that probably won't help you keep your job. Instead, why not brainstorm ways to bring in more business, and show how valuable you are to the company?

2. Write down your worries in a worry log – If you find that worries are churning around inside your mind, write them down in a notebook or "worry log," and then schedule a time to deal with them. Before that time, you can forget about these worries, knowing that you'll deal with them. When it comes to the time you've scheduled, conduct a proper risk analysis around these things, and take whatever actions are necessary to mitigate any risks.

When you're worried and nervous about something, it can dent your self-confidence. Don't let your worries get in the way of being appropriately assertive.

Anger/Aggravation

Out-of-control anger is perhaps the most destructive emotion that people experience in the workplace. It's also the emotion that most of us don't handle very well. If you have trouble managing your temper at work, then learning to control it is one of the best things you can do if you want to keep your job.



DYAD: WHAT DO WE CARRY?

Try these suggestions to control your anger

- **Watch for early signs of anger** – Only you know the danger signs when anger is building, so learn to recognize them when they begin. Stopping your anger early is key. Remember, you can choose how you react in a situation. Just because your first instinct is to become angry doesn't mean it's the correct response.
- **If you start to get angry, stop what you're doing** – Close your eyes, and practice the deep-breathing exercise we described earlier. This interrupts your angry thoughts, and it helps put you back on a more positive path.
- **Picture yourself when you're angry** – If you imagine how you look and behave while you're angry, it gives you some perspective on the situation. For instance, if you're about to shout at your co-worker, imagine how you would look. Is your face red? Are you waving your arms around? Would you want to work with someone like that? Probably not.

Dislike

We've probably all had to work with someone we don't like. But it's important to be professional, no matter what.

Here are some ideas for working with people you dislike

Be respectful – If you have to work with someone you don't get along with, then it's time to set aside your pride and ego. Treat the person with courtesy and respect, as you would treat anyone else. Just because this person behaves in an unprofessional manner, that doesn't mean you should as well.

Be assertive – If the other person is rude and unprofessional, then firmly explain that you refuse to be treated that way, and calmly leave the situation. Remember, set the example.

Disappointment/Unhappiness

Dealing with disappointment or unhappiness at work can be difficult. Of all the emotions you might feel at work, these are the most likely to impact your productivity. If you've just suffered a major disappointment, your energy will probably be low, you might be afraid to take another risk, and all of that may hold you back from achieving.

Here are some proactive steps you can take to cope with disappointment and unhappiness:

- **Look at your mindset** – Take a moment to realize that things won't always go your way. If they did, life would be a straight road instead of one with hills and valleys, ups and downs, right? And it's the hills and valleys that often make life so interesting.
- **Adjust your goal** – If you're disappointed that you didn't reach a goal, that doesn't mean the goal is no longer reachable. Keep the goal, but make a small change – for example, delay the deadline. Our Back On Track article provides practical steps for recovering from a major career setback.
- **Record your thoughts** – Write down exactly what is making you unhappy. Is it a co-worker? Is it your job? Do you have too much to do? Once you identify the problem, start brainstorming ways to solve it or work around it. Remember, you always have the power to change your situation.
- **Smile!** – Strange as it may sound, forcing a smile – or even a grimace – onto your face can often make you feel happy. (This is one of the strange ways in which we humans are wired.) Try it – you may be surprised!



DYAD: WHAT DO WE CARRY?

Key Points

We all have to deal with negative emotions at work sometimes, and learning how to cope with these feelings is now more important than ever. After all, negative emotions can spread, and no one wants to be around a person who adds negativity to a group.

Know what causes your negative emotions, and which types of feelings you face most often. When those emotions begin to appear, immediately start your strategy to interrupt the cycle. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to pull yourself away from negative thinking.

from “Emotions at Work: What Do People Feel and How Should We Measure It?” by Cynthia D. Fisher. School of Business Discussion Paper; No. 63, February 1997. © Copyright Cynthia D. Fisher and the School of Business, Bond University.



CONFLICT RESOLUTION SIMULATION

THE SCENARIO

Today the Resources Repair Company received a new service truck to add to the existing group of six other small service trucks owned by the company. As has been done in the past, the new truck is exchanged for an old truck. The company must decide which of the drivers should get the new truck.

THE TASK

- Decide to whom the new truck is given.
- Be able to discuss how you arrived at your team's decision.
- At your facilitator's discretion, you have from 30-60 minutes to make the decision.
- Each person in the group assumes one role. If you have fewer than seven people in your group, leave out some employees. Do not leave out the observer or the foreperson.

THE ROLES

1. Ben Taylor, foreperson, has a two-year old truck. As the foreperson, you have the problem of deciding which crew member should get the new truck. Often there are hard feelings because each member of the crew seems to feel he/she is entitled to the new truck, so you have a tough time being fair. It usually turns out that whatever you decide, most of the crew considers it wrong. You now have to face the same issue again because a new truck has just been allocated to you for distribution. In order to handle this problem, you have decided to put the decision to the entire crew. You will tell them about the new truck and will put the problem in terms of what would be the fairest way to determine who will receive the new truck.

2. George is an employee who has been with the company 17 years. You feel you deserve the truck because you have been with the company longer than any of the other workers. Your truck is in excellent shape but you want to receive the new truck anyway. Seniority is the only way to determine who gets the new truck in your opinion.

3. Leslie has been with the company 11 years and has a five-year old truck. You feel you deserve a new truck and it certainly is your turn. Your present truck is old and because the more senior member of the crew has a fairly new truck, you should get the next one. You have taken excellent care of your present truck, and have kept it looking like new. A person deserves to be rewarded if he/she treats a company truck like his/her own.

4. John is an employee who has been with the company for 10 years and has a four-year-old truck. You do more driving than most of the other members of the crew because you work in the suburbs. You have a fairly old truck and you feel you should have the new one because you do so much driving. Besides, Ben's wife is your cousin.