Root Cause Analysis Checklist

This checklist can be used for effective Root Cause Analysis meetings.

Before the meeting

- Are problem cases selected (Problem Reports, Cases, etc)? Are they clear?
- Which project/department goals have been endangered? What has been the loss?
- Are persons invited who know the problem in detail? Can they presente the problem?
- Are persons invited who has the authority to decide which actions need to be done?
- Will there be time/money/people available who can take action after the meeting?
- Is sufficient time planned for analysis of the problem (at least 15 min. per problem)?
- Is a room arranged with enough space?
- Are facilities reserved (flip-over, electronic whiteboard, laptop/tablets)?

In the meeting

- Explain the rules of the meeting:
  - First understand problem, then look for solutions.
  - No storytelling, nagging, blaming.
  - Only 1 person speaking at the time, others will listen.
  - “In god we trust, all others bring facts”.
- State the problem to be investigated, and the scope of the investigation.
- State department/project goals have been endangered, and check the loss with the people.
- Get the problem clear: What happened, when, where, why?
- Repeatedly ask: What was the reason? 4-7 levels deep, 2-5 causes per effect.
- Ask:
  - How can it be prevented from happening again in the future?
  - How can we identify it earlier, and effects be limited when it happens again?
- Determine the expected cost of the actions, and the benefits for a next project.
- Look for things that went well and shouldn’t be forgotten, learned, still puzzling us?
- Stop story telling, instead look for as many causes as possible.
- Challenge the solution killers and “nay sayers”; try to have them contributing also!

After the meeting

- Thank everybody for his or her contribution!
- Finalize the report, have it reviewed, and plan for action (see communication checklist).
- Communicate and publish the results of the RCA.

Ben Linders is Senior Consultant on quality-, process- and organizational improvement for more then 20 years, implementing high maturity practices, to improve performance and deliver business benefits. He bridges gaps between process deployment, quality assurance and management of R&D, by addressing business needs and the development of professionals.

Email: info@benlinders.com
Twitter: @BenLinders
Website: http://www.benlinders.com/