

Why Does This Happen? Use Root Cause Analysis to Get to the Source of Problems

Written by Terrence O'Hanlon, ReliabilityWeb.com
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Have you ever jumped to a conclusion about a problem only to find out later that you had misinterpreted information or, worse, acted without enough data, making the wrong decision in the process?

If you really want to solve problems, you have to understand the causes. It also helps to create solutions in the context of your specific goals. Root cause analysis (RCA) is used extensively by maintenance and reliability professionals to eliminate recurring problems. According to Mark Galley of Think Reliability, "to improve reliability we must identify and control the causes of unreliability."

Root cause analysis is a disciplined methodology for discovering causes by using available information without prejudice. Lucky for us there is a plethora of free RCA information accessible on the Internet to guide our efforts and to teach us more about this valuable concept.

A great site to begin with is www.rootcauselive.com. There is an active RCA threaded discussion forum where people can post questions, share experiences and stories, and learn about real applications of RCA. Past discussions are archived for easy access.

[Apollo RCA](#) offers a free download of RealityCharting software for problem definition, cause and effect charting, and solutions. It also offers a free chapter from Dean Gano's book, "Apollo Root Cause Analysis" for download in a pdf format.

From the "your tax dollars at work department," the U.S. Department of Energy has published a comprehensive and free 69-page "Root Cause Analysis Guidance Document" (DOE-NE-STD-1004-92).

The [HPRCT](#) (the Organization for Human Performance, Root Cause and Trending) site offers PowerPoint and pdf downloads from past RCA conferences. Follow the links to the Root Cause area, then click the links for past conferences.

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ThinkReliability.com offers an on-demand web-based training course for cause mapping and uses the Titanic incident as an example. Owner Mark Galley also offers to e-mail an Excel spreadsheet template that steps you through the cause mapping process. E-mail info@thinkreliability.com to request a copy of the template.

MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY's web site offers several excellent articles in its archive area. Justifying Root Cause Analysis (Make the Business Case with a Significant Calculated Return on Investment) by Robert Latino is available.

Fighting Failure (Steps to Change a Plant's Culture to the Mindset Where Failure is No Longer Accepted or Tolerated) by Ken Latino is also available.

The Reliability Center offers one of the deepest resource sites for RCA, offering an extensive selection of RCA articles, online training tutorials, and software downloads. It also offers a comprehensive page of links to other related web sites.

It would have been nice to find a web site that allowed us to run an actual RCA on the Internet using some of the available software; however, no vendors have set up such a system yet.

Please visit these useful RCA web sites and let us know what you think about them and the information they offer. You are also invited to e-mail us about any useful sites that you would to share with other MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY readers. **MT**