

Analyze Phase: Identifying Root Causes



KEY LEARNINGS: ANALYZE PHASE: IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

1. Importance of the Analyze Phase

- The Analyze Phase follows Define and Measure and focuses on finding the real cause of problems.
- Like peeling an onion, every layer reveals more hidden issues beneath the surface.
- Without identifying the true cause, organizations risk treating symptoms instead of fixing problems.

2. Why Root Cause Analysis Matters

- Prevents band-aid solutions that only temporarily fix problems.
 - Examples: A factory keeps experiencing machine breakdowns → Management assumes the machines are old and replaces parts → The issue persists.
 - Real cause? Maintenance logs reveal that breakdowns always occur after a specific repair using poor-quality parts.
 - A corporate team keeps missing deadlines → Management assumes it's due to lack of effort → However, analyzing task assignments shows one person is overloaded while others have light workloads.
 - Real cause? Poor workload distribution.
- Without root cause analysis, problems resurface.

3. Components of the Analyze Phase

The Analyze Phase consists of three key steps:

Step 1: Identify Potential Causes

- Brainstorm possible reasons behind the issue.
 - Examples: Factory breakdowns
Lack of maintenance.
 - Operator errors.
 - Environmental conditions (humidity, temperature, dust).
 - Missed deadlines in a corporate team
Unclear expectations.
 - Resource shortages.
 - Poor communication.

Analyze Phase: Identifying Root Causes



KEY LEARNINGS: ANALYZE PHASE: IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

Step 2: Verify the Causes

- Use data to confirm or eliminate possible causes.
 - Examples: Factory example: Analyze performance logs to check if breakdowns are linked to a specific machine, shift, or repair.
 - Corporate team example: Review project timelines and emails to identify where delays originate.
- Think like a detective (Sherlock Holmes)—gather evidence before jumping to conclusions.

Step 3: Determine the Impact

- Not all root causes are equally important—some cause widespread damage, while others are minor inefficiencies.
 - Examples: If poor-quality parts are the root cause in manufacturing:
 - Leads to defective products, customer complaints, and costly returns.
 - If unclear expectations cause missed deadlines in a corporate setting:
 - Leads to stressed employees, project failures, and dissatisfied clients.
- Prioritization ensures teams focus on the biggest problem first.

4. Key Takeaways

- The Analyze Phase separates symptoms from real causes.
- Data-driven verification prevents incorrect assumptions.
- Prioritizing impactful causes helps teams focus on the right problems.
- Without proper analysis, solutions may be ineffective or short-lived.