How to Select the "RIGHT" Root Cause Analysis (RCA) Vendor
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Abstract: *With RCA being a buzzword of the weeks, companies are faced with a slew of new vendors with numerous RCA methods and practices to help provide you attain quantum results. How do you decide who is going to help you get the most ROI from your RCA?*

Programmatic analysis, barrier analysis, change analysis, logic tree, fault tree analysis, problem solving, statistical analysis, MORT analysis, human performance evaluation, fishbone, cause-effect analysis, etc.; with all the fancy labels how do you choose which one applies under which circumstances and who should teach you the proper methodologies. With dollars becoming tighter, workforces becoming leaner and more work accumulating, making the right decisions on how to efficiently reduce failure rates is critical.

Every vendor of RCA services has their favorite tools in their toolbox and tout them as the greatest thing since sliced bread. As one of those vendors, we are no different! After all, to tout these methods and practices they must have proven successful for these company's clients in the past, in order to continue selling their wares. Make no mistake, all of these methods have been proven in very specific circumstances in the past. Does that mean they will work for you?

Companies must realize that for any new learning to provide your facility with bottom-line results, two things MUST happen, 1) a successful knowledge transfer must occur to the user and, 2) the users environment must expect and encourage the new learning to be implemented properly. Many companies feel that because you have trained someone in a new skill that it will automatically provide results. If I learn a new skill, especially a proactive one, and I return to my facility to find that same old reactive environment, my new skill does not have a chance of being implemented. Many of us see that. In these cases, no matter what training you decide to go with, it will likely not work because there is a lack of management support systems in place.

What should be the criteria for selecting the appropriate RCA method for your needs?

1. Determine YOUR Internal RCA Needs
   A. Are you looking to set up an RCA effort or to investigate a single incident only?
   B. Will your RCA effort focus on "incidents" only, chronic failures only, near misses/high risks or a combination of all? What are the triggers for an RCA to be conducted?
   C. Will management support be solicited?
   D. Will management systems be developed and implemented?
   E. Will teams be identified and dedicated to completion of RCA's?
   F. Will hourly personnel participate on teams?
   G. Will additional technical resources be required for evidence validation?
   H. Will additional technical equipment be required for evidence validation?

2. Determine Appropriate RCA Method to Use for YOUR Environment

A. Evaluate simplicity of methodology
B. Evaluate analysis flexibility
C. Evaluate quality of materials and job aids
D. Evaluate training flexibility
E. Evaluate methodology comprehensiveness
F. Evaluate system to track for bottom-line results
G. Evaluate overall value of the methodology (cost-benefit analysis)

3. Determine How to Implement: In-House or Outsource
    A. Does the facility posses the instructional technology skills and resources to develop in-house courses on evaluated and proven RCA methodology?
    B. Is it more economical and timely to develop courses in-house (cost-benefit)?
    C. Would utilizing past vendor training be appropriate for in-house instructors?
    D. Is there any copyright infringement concerns utilizing past vendor training in-house?
    E. Are qualified RCA instructors with field experience available in-house?
    F. Would in-house instructors be dedicated to supporting and mentoring their students?
    G. Would management be willing to fund the RCA method development in-house?
    H. Would management be willing to wait for completion of the skill development and then implementation?

4. Choose the Appropriate RCA Vendor to Meet YOUR Identified Needs
    A. Does the vendor provide the chosen RCA methodology by the facility?
    B. Does the vendor have training in RCA for field personnel, engineers and management?
    C. Does the vendor possess various methodologies that complement each other and provide specifically designed training for the appropriate level of audience?
    D. Does the vendor's instructor(s) have field experience in implementing RCA in your industry? How much experience?
    E. Does the vendor's instructor(s) have experience in instructional technology for adults and applied learning to increase presentation retention rates?
    F. Can the vendor provide references of successful client field applications? In your industry?
    G. Does the vendor have products/services to support RCA method (management system support models, software, on-site facilitation services, follow-up capabilities, mechanical and electrical expertise, human error/performance expertise, etc.)?
    H. Is the vendor willing to customize instruction and materials to accommodate you?
    I. Is the vendor willing to work on specific, on-going in-house failures during training?
    J. Does the vendor possess the skills on staff to deal with managerial culture transformations (reaction to proaction)?
    K. Does the vendor possess the staff capacity to handle your requirements? Domestically? Internationally?
    L. Can the vendor grow with your effort, maturing novices to veterans via serving as mentors?

Obviously, this is not as comprehensive as it possibly could be, however it is a good starting point. As I stated earlier, the key to starting is clearing defining what YOU want and obtaining internal support for the vision. Then the task will be to solicit the qualified vendors to help execute your vision.

Speaking as a principal in a company that provides such RCA services, the best advertising we can get is from the people who utilize our services. This is true of any vendor of any products and/or services. Therefore, people soliciting such services should contact at least three (3) references of the proposed vendors and discuss results, as well as how the vendor interacted with the references. If companies are legitimate, they will pride themselves on their client's quantum. When it gets down to brass tacks, it's the bottom-line performance that counts, **the ROI on RCA!**

For a simple, unbiased and FREE Vendor Evaluation Tool visit www.reliability.com/vet.

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