Root Cause Analysis Workshop
Skill Building Exercise

Objective

Provide an exercise to start building skill in conducting *root cause analysis* as an integral part of a toxic use reduction project.

Problem

You are late getting to work for one of the following reasons (to be assigned for each team): Alarm didn't alert you; Delayed by traffic jam; Discovered that your pet was missing; Child has a fever.

Instructions

1. Reconvene with your team at the table to which you have been assigned.
2. The assigned "recorder" will retrieve a flip chart and bring it to the table.
3. The team members will brainstorm a list of items that help cause the problem and make sure that they are recorded in the proper category on the flip chart:
    a. Materials – all resources used and lost
    b. Machines – all technology
    c. Methods – whether in writing or not
    d. People – positions of people that have a role in the problem
4. Please leave a space between each item.
5. Once the listing is complete, the team will go back to each item and answer the question: "What is it about _____ that causes the "problem" described above?"
6. Please do NOT think about solutions to the problem at this point. Focus instead on the causes.
7. Count the number of "causes." Have the team circle 20% of the total number of causes that have the greatest impact on the problem. Can the team eliminate one of the circled causes that is less important than the others? Can the team eliminate another cause for the same reason? If you can get to a single cause, this is the root cause!
8. The teams will share their findings with each other at the end of the exercise.
9. Knowing the root cause of the problem helps a team select a solution to the problem that removes the cause and eliminates the problem in the future.