

QUALITY/SAFETY

Something Has to Change

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When you have the thought, “Something has to change”, what do you do? Often, the decision to change is prompted by a problematic or undesired outcome, or a process that is frankly broken. What change is required in order to solve the problem?

In quality improvement, we use the cause-and-effect, fishbone, or Ishikawa diagram to identify an issue and its contributing factors. The first step in using this tool is to state the problem. Next, based upon the ideas of your team and

yourself you identify causes of this problem. As you do so, you will identify categories into which you organize these causes. Alternatively, there are a number of standard category sets: a common scheme is Policies, Procedures, Plant, People and Environment. By using the cause-and-effect tool, you build understanding of the problem and avoid premature or incomplete identification of the solution(s) needed. You will often identify a number of potential solutions, but how will you decide which to pursue?

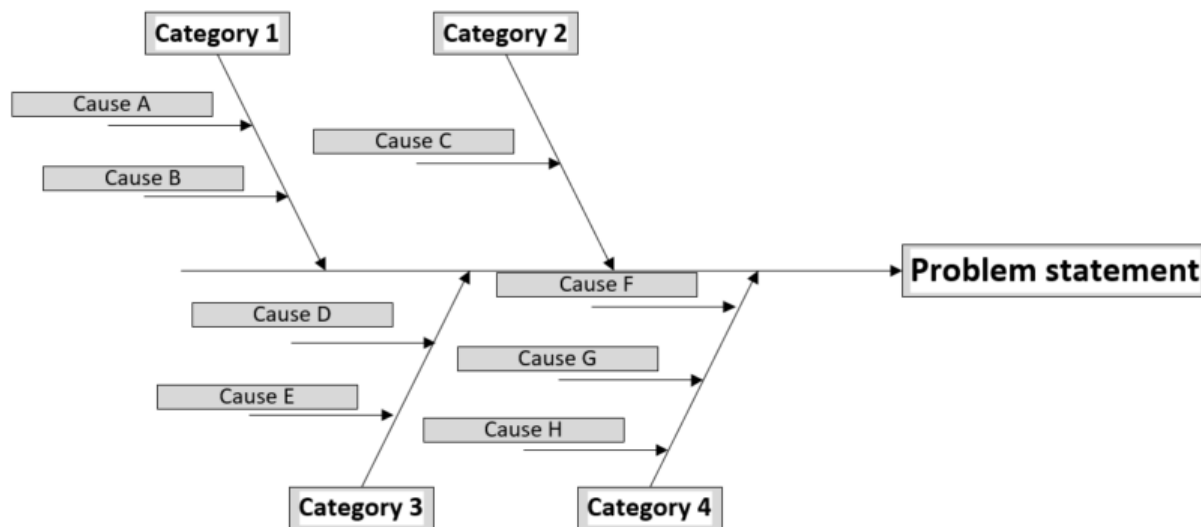


Figure 1. Ishikawa diagram.

YIELD	High	Do these!	May be worth the effort, if important enough
	Low	May be worthwhile, since low effort	Avoid these!
		Low	High
		EFFORT	

Figure 2. Effort-yield table.

Another tool of quality improvement is the effort-yield or a 2 x 2 table. Some solutions are easy and some are hard. Solutions will also vary in impact on the problem or concern. Assessing effort and yield of each intervention will help you and your team decide which changes are most valuable.

Change is notoriously difficult, but there are some proven strategies for changing behavior. First, imagine yourself in the position of the person who will be implementing the change. They will need clear guidance about what to do differently. Change can be easier if there is a successful example to follow so research what’s working for others. Don’t try to reinvent the wheel! Explain the change in terms of specific behaviors that are clear and easy to remember. It helps if you can articulate how the change will result in the accomplishment of a common goal and the reasons why that goal is important.

Knowledge alone is not always sufficient to motivate behavioral changes. Feelings, both positive and negative, are powerful motivators so use them to make the case for change. Fear can be a barrier to change so consider breaking big changes down into smaller steps that are not so

frightening. Empower individuals to see changes as opportunities for personal growth and try to create a culture of change within your organization.

Finally, tweak the environment in ways that make it easier to do the desired new behavior and harder to continue with the status quo. Create reminders to trigger the desired change so that new habits are formed. And remember that behavior can be contagious so make sure that changes are recognized and rewarded.

For more information about cause and effect diagrams, watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNDlg1h-za0>

For more information and ideas on how to make lasting changes, read “Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard” by Chip and Dan Heath.

Notes

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References

1. Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2011). *Switch: How to change things when change is hard*. Waterville, Me: Thorndike Press.