

Problem solving as a tool to improve quality and team work within an organisation.



Background

The client is a major supplier in the automotive industry. They develop and produce mechatronics systems for vehicle doors and seats as well as electric motors. Within an organisation of over 50 locations across the globe, the UK division has seen phenomenal growth in recent years. With this growth set to continue, the client has recognised the need to drive key skills across the organisation. They have embarked on a major training programme, creating a brand new training school and training over 400 members of staff to date. A critical tool for both daily management and process improvement is problem solving. The client approached Industry Forum to provide practical problem solving training based around the 8D principles, as part of a larger 'core tools' quality systems training package .

The Objectives

As well as upskilling the employees in problem solving techniques and the use of their problem solving documentation, one of the key course objectives was to begin to break down some cultural barriers. The training would need to demonstrate why a structured, team based approach should be adopted when carrying out problem solving activities and also highlight the reasons why constantly operating in 'firefighting mode' is not sustainable in the long term.

The Industry Forum Solution

Industry Forum ran three one day workshops for delegates who were trained in the 8D approach to problem solving. To help bring the training to life, Industry Forum used a simple but technical simulation to demonstrate the different stages of effectively solving a problem. In this simulation, delegates are presented with a pot of 'faulty' pens which they need to analyse and investigate using the problem solving techniques to get to the root cause. During the course, the teams have the opportunity to define the problem by creating pie charts, pareto charts and process maps, brainstorm solutions using Ishikawa (fishbone) diagrams, use 5 why analysis get to the root cause, and evaluate potential permanent actions.

As the client had already developed their own standard 8D templates, Industry Forum worked with them to integrate the documentation into the training. This early alignment enables the delegates to apply their learning to future problems in a standardised way. Delegates are able to use the documentation developed during the training simulation activity to provide a route-map when they commence activities on live problems.

The Results

Thirty six people were given a levelling understanding of 8D problem solving. To ensure the training was then applied in the workplace, teams were set real business problems to solve. They were given a timeframe to use the 8D techniques learned to identify and eliminate the root cause of the problem.

The Problem Solving course was part of the Core Tools Training, a quality focussed system, for which upon passing a written exam, delegates receive Certification from the SMMT, the IATF approved oversight office in the UK.

The Customer's View

"I will be able to take a far more active role in problem solving and managing an 8D process"

Production Supervisor

"The course was well planned and structured. Team work was encouraged and well executed throughout the course"

Industrial Engineer

"I am glad it was a cross functional session, not just the quality department."

Quality Engineer

"This course will allow me to follow the correct process and broaden my solutions to problems rather than focus on just one."

Quality Engineer

"The course exceeded my expectations. It was well paced and enjoyable and will help me to resolve problems in my area."

Supervisor

