Corrective Action and Preventive Action (CAPA)

Every organization meets problems: a wrong delivery, a broken machine, an unhappy customer. Many teams fix them quickly and move on, until the same problem comes back. CAPA, which stands for Corrective Action and Preventive Action, is a simple way to stop this cycle. It comes from quality management, where standards such as ISO 9001 expect it, and makers of medicines and medical devices must use it. Its main idea is to remove the cause of a problem, not only its symptoms.

1. Correct or Prevent

A corrective action removes the cause of a problem that has already happened, so that it does not happen again. A preventive action removes the cause of a problem that could happen, before it happens. Both are different from a quick fix, which only deals with the result. CAPA uses both: we learn from real problems, and we look ahead for possible ones.

Example: wiping up water under a leaking roof is a quick fix, repairing the roof is corrective action, and checking it before the rains is preventive action.

At work: Nadia is a quality coordinator at a company that ships orders. Several customers received the wrong product, so she opens a CAPA.

2. Find the Real Cause

The first step is to describe the problem clearly: what happened, where, when and how often. Facts are more useful than opinions or blame. The second step is to find the root cause, the deepest cause that we can act on. A simple tool is the 5 Whys: we ask why the problem happened, then why again, often about five times. If we stop at the first answer, we often blame a person, not the process.

Example: if a plant keeps dying, buying a new one does not help; asking why may show that it gets too little light.

At work: Nadia finds that most errors involve two products with similar labels. By asking why, the team finds the root cause: the products are stored side by side, and nothing checks the order before packing.

3. Plan and Implement

Next, the team plans an action that removes the root cause. A good plan says what will be done, who is responsible, and by when. It should match the size of the problem and not

This document is a property of Asaseeyat Academy - © Copy Right Protected.

create new problems elsewhere. Then the team carries out the plan and tells everyone affected about the change.

Example: a family that keeps losing its keys puts a hook by the door, and everyone uses it.

At work: Nadia's team moves the two products to different shelves and adds a barcode scan before packing. The warehouse manager owns the change, and it is finished in two weeks.

4. Verify Effectiveness

Many teams stop here, but CAPA asks one more question: did it really work? Verifying effectiveness means checking the results over a fair period, with the same facts that described the problem. If the problem does not come back, the action was effective. If it returns, the real cause was probably missed, so the team looks again.

Example: a driver who tries a new route checks the travel time for a few weeks before calling it faster.

At work: Nadia follows the complaints for three months. The wrong-product errors almost disappear, so she closes the corrective action.

5. Document and Share

The final step is to record the problem, the root cause, the action and the proof that it worked. Good records help auditors and the next team that meets a similar problem. Sharing the lesson turns one fix into prevention across the organization. A CAPA is complete only when the lesson is recorded and used.

Example: a restaurant adds a new cleaning step to its checklist, so every new employee follows it.

At work: Nadia shares her CAPA with the other warehouses. One of them separates two similar products before any mistake happens, which is a preventive action.

Conclusion

In summary, CAPA helps organizations solve problems for good. Corrective action removes the cause of a problem that happened, and preventive action removes the cause of one that could happen. The steps are simple: identify the problem, find the root cause, plan and implement, verify, and document. The key is to look for weak processes, not for people to blame. Every problem that is handled well makes the organization stronger.

This document is a property of Asaseeyat Academy - © Copy Right Protected.