

GMP Training Systems, Inc.

Creators of the GMP Ready-to-Use Training System™

Turning Problems into GMP Learning Points

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Many companies conduct GMP training on a schedule, according to the calendar. That's good but often it's not good enough. Good enough means taking advantage of events or episodes in your company where GMP training can be made more relevant and more meaningful. These training sessions should be conducted when the occasion arises.

Occasions like problems, or mix-ups, or errors. When problems occur, we often invoke caPA™ – Corrective and Preventive Action.

(Yes, we know the conventional acronym is CAPA – but we prefer to use the lower case ca with an upper case PA, as this denotes the relative importance of Preventive Action over Corrective Action.)

It's common practice to have Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) work on the caPA™ project. These are usually people who work "on the process" and not "in the process."

One aspect often left out of a caPA™ project is to use the

problem or issue as a learning tool for everyone involved. This important aspect can lead to a better understanding of the process under review by everyone working on or in that process.

One useful method for capitalizing on our caPA™ activities and turning them into learning points is through the use of an After Action Review. An After Action Review can be defined as an assessment conducted after a project or major activity that allows employees and leaders to discover (learn) what happened and why.

It may be thought of as a professional conversation about an event that enables employees to understand why things happened during the progression of the process and to learn from that experience.

Here's how you might use an After Action Review as part of your GMP Training process. Gather the "right people," those working on and in the process, in a comfortable conference room or training room. Find

someone with good facilitating skills to lead the session. The SMEs who worked on the caPA™ project are usually not good candidates for the role of facilitator, but should be included in the session for their unique knowledge of the system.

In fact, it is often useful to have the facilitator be someone with little or no knowledge of the issue under review. The facilitator's job is to manage the After Action Review process.

Where Do You Start?

Start with a comprehensive examination of the problem or issue. The following questions are designed to help you manage an effective After Action Review as part of a GMP training session.

- What happened?
- Which factors most contributed to the event?
- What was the genesis or root cause of the event?
- Was there a "turning point" in causing this to occur? If so, what was it?
- What did the organization fail to do in picking up any signals that may have

alerted us to the problem before it occurred?

- Did our organizational culture lead us in this direction?
- What did the organization do correctly, in terms of responding?
- Can this re-occur?
- What can we do to prevent this from happening again?
- How can we make this prevention action a priority?

The objective when using these questions is not necessarily to make a decision. Rather it is to seek a better understanding of the systems and processes involved. Peter Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline*, defines this as dialogue¹.

He describes dialogue as a means to go beyond any one individual's understanding. In dialogue, individuals gain insights that could not be achieved individually. Dialogue leads to better understanding.

Senge contrasts dialogue with discussion. In a discussion, decisions are made. Hence, it's always useful to engage in dialogue before moving into discussion.

Here's how dialogue helps. When everyone involved in a particular process better understands how the process works, the probability of something going wrong or future mix-ups and errors decreases.

People are equipped to make better decisions when faced with process variation when they have a better understanding of the process itself.

Warning – Do NOT blame the people!

Note that none of the questions above start with the word Who. Do NOT use an After Action Review session to assess blame on people. This will surely shut down any productive dialogue. W. Edwards Deming taught that 94% of the problems belong to the system.² And people work in the system.

The focus of the session should be on the system or process. A system is comprised of two or more processes. A process is comprised of the equipment, the materials, the facility or environment, the procedures and policies, and the people.

Therefore we can use the questions above to drill down in each of these categories.

What happened?

- Relative to our equipment
- Relative to our materials
- Relative to our facility or environment
- Relative to our procedures and policies
- Relative to our people

Which factors most contributed to the event?

- Relative to our equipment
- Relative to our materials
- Relative to our facility or environment
- Relative to our procedures and policies
- Relative to our people

Follow through with each of the questions, or additional questions you may develop to help analyze and understand the situation.

Wrap up

Wrap up the session by having everyone jot down what they have learned. Give people 5 to 10 minutes to think about what they learned and insist that they write these down.

(Hint: Provide a handout form they can use.)

Then go around the room and have each person read one thing from their list. Go around until all the learning points have been disclosed.

(Hint: Have someone designated to record these as they come up.)

As a result of this exercise, it's not unusual to discover opportunities for further improvement or optimization.

Get started – Incorporate After Action Reviews into your GMP Training Process

Don't wait for the calendar to tell you when to conduct your next GMP training session. Conduct an After Action Review as part of your GMP training process. Conduct these as close in time to the event that triggered it. AND, don't forget to document these sessions as GMP training sessions.

David Markovitz is the Founder and President of GMP Training Systems, Inc., (www.GMPTrainingSystems.com) a top tier provider of GMP training products and services. David can be reached at David@gmptrainingsystems.com and at 714-289-1233.

Get a copy of our ebook, GMP Makes Good Business Sense. It's free, go to www.gmptrainingsystems.com and click on Free ebook.

¹ Senge, Peter, The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization, 1990

² Deming, W. Edwards, The New Economics for Industry, Government, Education, 1994