

## **Initial Problem Definition**

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The Initial Problem Definition at the beginning of a new Industrial Engineering project is very important. Don't just focus on recent complaints that may only be anecdotal information, when examining the main problem at the start of a new Root Cause Analysis project. And don't get distracted by the initial confusion that often is encountered when first seeing an activity or operation that is encountering problems.

It often helps to utilize some simple activities like building a Cause & Effect diagram or a 5-Whys chart, when starting to develop the initial problem definition in order to state the Project's Objective. It also helps to utilize some Systems Thinking in order to view the "big picture" so you are not merely just addressing some of the symptoms.

This is a good time to utilize your Informational Interviewing skills and talk to several people directly involved with the processes being examined. Try to get an understanding of the issues involved, and look for relevant data that helps clarify what is being learned in the Informational Interviews, with useful supporting data.

Build a good Project Plan and determine if you also need to create a Project Team (based on the size and Scope of the Project). Discuss the initial observations and Project Plan with the internal Customer, before proceeding too far.

Don't rush the Initial Problem Definition, since this will set the stage for how the entire Project is structured and organized.