Guidelines for Interviewing People During an RCA in Industry

Interviewing people is an important part of any event investigation. Interview participants as soon as possible after the event since memory of events tend to fade over time. Identify and interview all participants to find out what each person knows about the event and to corroborate knowledge and/or perceptions about the event.

Review the initial event report any related documentation (i.e. – drawings, specs, training records, purchasing records, etc.) prior to the interview when possible. Identify a list of those who should be interviewed and questions to be asked. Use the attached list of questions as a reminder of relevant and required information to be gathered.

Contact the manager(s) of the involved unit(s)/department(s) to schedule interviews and identify a location for the interviews. Efforts should be made to accommodate staff schedules, but there may be circumstances where the urgency and severity of the event requires involved parties be interviewed during their off-work hours. Be sure to inform the manager if urgency is required. Personnel should clock in and out as instructed by the manager for their interview.

The manager should provide them a brief explanation of the interview process, purpose (safety, risk, quality and process improvement), and timing. Manager should stress the following points in their explanation:

- The event investigation process is non-punitive. Their input is critical to being able to prevent recurrence of like events.
- Nothing discussed in the interviews can be discussed outside of the interview meeting with anyone, even others involved in the event.
- The objective is to determine what system deficiencies existed that adversely affected proper decision-making. Emphasize the focus is not on the decision-maker but understanding 'why' the decision-maker felt the decision they made at the time, was the correct one.

Be sure to take detailed notes during the interview and ask clarifying questions as needed during the session. Having another interviewer present during interviews may be beneficial, especially if one serves as the scribe or note-taker while the other focuses on the line of questioning. Two people must be present during interviews if the case involves an allegation of abuse, neglect or misconduct.

Help the interviewee relax by starting with general questions (background, education, experience, etc.). Interviews should be done individually and in person if possible. Interviews should be conducted in an area where there is privacy, where the interviewee is comfortable and where there will be no interruptions. Consider having water or other beverages available.

Prior to the Interview(s):

1. Obtain background information and event description. A basic timeline in a graphical format will suffice.
2. Determine the information that will be needed from each witness/interviewee
3. Determine where the interview will take place
4. Determine the date and time of the interview
5. Obtain all relevant materials and equipment that will be needed for the interview.
6. Determine if the interviewee requests to have a representative and/or an attorney present for interview. Guidelines should be set ahead of time on how to handle such a request.
7. Dress in a manner in which the interviewee will feel more comfortable and not intimidated (i.e. – not a suit and tie).

During the Interview(s):

1. Introduce yourself (and any other participants) and explain the purpose of the interview. Let the associate/involved parties know the investigation process is not punitive or about the individual parties and the objective is to determine what system/cultural issues could be improved to prevent recurrence.

2. Ask the interviewee if it is acceptable for you to take notes during the interview. Ask you take notes be sure to show the interviewee your notes from time to time and ask them if what you wrote, is a fair representation of what they intended to express.

3. Use active listening and repeat back a summary of what you heard. This assured the interviewee their message was received as intended.

4. Use your RCA process flow diagram to show the interviewee the basic steps of the RCA analytical process.

5. Explain that information shared during the interview is confidential and is not to be discussed outside of the interview(s) and team meeting(s). A face-to-face witness interview is preferred over a written statement. Request any notes/documents related to the case be submitted to the investigation team.

6. Ask the interviewee to tell you about his or her background/education/experience.

7. Ask the person in his or her own words to convey to you his or her role in the event and/or their knowledge about what happened. Ask if there were any unusual or extenuating circumstances (i.e. – deviations from the norm) that occurred on the unit at or around the time of the event. Encourage the interviewee to draw diagrams and/or provide a demonstration for clarification and/or memory recall.

8. Listen actively to the interviewee's account of events. Clarify any information that is not absolutely understood. Do not interrupt the interviewee during the account, as interruption can cause him/her to forget an important detail. Focus on the following:

    - From your perspective, what happened?
    - Can you please describe what normal looks like?
    - What makes your work hard to do? Those things that get in the way, and the things you have to adapt your behavior to get around (i.e. – workarounds).
    - What makes your work easier to do? Those things that we could/should replicate to help others achieve their goals.
    - Where did it happen?
    - Who was involved?
    - What were the perceived immediate causes from your perspective?
    - Why, in their opinion, did it happen?
    - How do you feel it could it have been prevented?

9. Clarify information and ask any follow-up questions as needed. It may be helpful to go to the location where the event occurred (or similar location) and/or to observe a demonstration of the process. It is helpful to map out the layout and record actions taken within that layout.

10. Wrap up the interview session and thank the interviewee for their time and cooperation. Explain next steps so the interviewee will be aware of what will occur and the time frame. Provide your contact information should the interviewee want to follow up with any details remembered, or for support.

11. <u>Note:</u> Keep in mind with regard to the following questions, that they are simply launching points. They are intended to spark a conversation where the interviewee will elaborate further. As the interviewer, this will be your signal to redirect your line of questioning based on the answers provided.

RCA Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about what you were doing at the time of the event?
2. Please tell me about how things were going that day? Were things flowing normally on the unit? Were there any unusual issues or circumstances that day? Was staffing at normal/acceptable levels? Were there any unusual events that day such as unexpected shutdowns, unavailability of parts/equipment in customer orders, lack of adequate staff)?
3. Was the work that you were performing routine (something you do all the time) or exceptional (something that was new or that you rarely do)? How long were you into your shift? Were you working more than one shift that day? Had you had adequate sleep?
4. Can you please give me a timeline of your day from the beginning of your shift up until the event occurred? If you prefer to draw it graphically here is a pen and piece of paper if you like.
5. Did you have all of the information you needed available to you at the time of the event or was there other information that would have helped you take care of your work responsibilities? What information was lacking (if any) and how did you attempt to get the information you lacked?
6. Did you have all the resources (human, equipment, supplies, etc.) you needed available leading up to the time of the event? What other resources might have helped ensure the process was running reliably?
7. What could we (you, your team, your manager, or others involved in the process) have done better or differently in this situation, to support you?
8. If you were using equipment and/or a testing device, was it being used as intended? Were you trained to use it properly? If so, how long ago was your training? Do you use this equipment often? Was the equipment used in this case, the appropriate equipment?

© 2023 Prelical Solutions, LLC

9. Was the preventive/predictive maintenance routinely kept up on the equipment involved? Are maintenance logs available? Had this equipment had any issues in the past that you were aware of? Are maintenance procedures kept current as new equipment is purchased and put into service? Had there been any recalls on this equipment?
10. Did the equipment meet the current codes, specifications and regulations? Are you aware of any safety and/or risk reviews/audits done on this equipment? Were there any back-ups plans implemented in the event the primary equipment failed?
11. Were there any alarms or alerts sounding off? Were they working properly? Did you heed them or were they turned off/bypassed for any reason? If so, why?
12. On the day of the event, what was your workload? Is this your usual workload?
13. Was there anything different or unusual going on for you before this event? How had your week been – working your usual shifts and hours, any stressors outside of work, any illness?
14. How much experience do you have performing this work process or taking care of this kind of equipment/processes?
15. What orientation or training was provided to you prior to this shift assignment?
16. Please tell me about how communications were going that day. Any challenges with hand-off reports, between departments, shifts, and/or providers? Was there adequate communications across organizational boundaries?
17. Can you please tell me about any other issues that were concerning to you that day? Did you report such concerns to anyone and/or note them in the CMMS (or equivalent data collection system in place)? What was the response to your concerns?

© 2023 Prelical Solutions, LLC

18. Had such an issue ever occurred in the past? Do you know if an RCA was done? If so, do you know if the recommendations were acted on?
19. What policies/procedures/rules do you feel were applicable to this event? Do you think they are implemented as written, on a day-to-day basis? If not, why not (sometimes ‘practices’ evolve due to time pressures that encourage taking short cuts)?
20. What barriers and/or controls were at play in this event? Did they perform as intended? Are such controls routinely reviewed and updated as necessary? Were barriers and/or controls non-existent, that should have been in place?
21. Do you have any thoughts, ideas, or suggestions about how we could better handle this type of situation in the future?

© 2023 Prelical Solutions, LLC