

Why RCAs Exist / How We Create Them

Ever wonder why we are so interested in Root Cause Analysis (RCA)? The answer is simple. RCAs help us understand what caused a particular incident and what we can do to avoid such an incident in the future.

What causes us to need an RCA?

Whenever there is an incident that needs resolution, then we likely need an RCA. We don't necessarily need an RCA for every single incident. The need for an RCA is determined by the process listed in the company's *Incident & RCA Procedures* guide. As stated in the guide, if the severity of the incident has been designated as a "1" or a "2," then an RCA will be needed. For any other severity level, an RCA would be nice but not required, unless your manager wants one.

Before we go into more details about RCAs, let's make sure that we are all adhering to the same operating principles for RCAs. These operating principles are:

- Have an Owner's Mindset. This shows how we all take ownership of the incident, but there is no blame or finger pointing.
- RCAs show how we operate with transparency.
- Test & Learn – we need to make sure that we try things so that we learn a better way of doing things.

To get the most out of the RCA, you will need to cover the following questions:

- Cause of the incident?
- What/Who was affected by the incident?
- How long did the affect last?
- Was there any monetary loss? If so, what was the approximate loss?
- What was the successful remediation/solution?
- What preventative measures are being enacted to prevent this type of incident happening again?

Hint:

Be sure to incorporate the "[5 Whys](#)" in determining the cause of the incident. This means that you keep asking "Why?" at least five (5) times until you can no longer come up with an answer. Once you reach that place, you have your root cause for the incident.

Our Process for Creating and Presenting RCAs

1. An incident occurs and has been given a severity level of “1” or “2.”
2. An incident owner is assigned. The incident owner starts the RCA.
3. The incident is resolved.
4. The incident owner gathers all the relevant information and fills in the RCA. (Refer to the *RCA Template* for what information is needed.)

Note: This can be done with assistance from any of the technical writers.

5. The incident owner notifies the technical writer group that the RCA has been completed and is ready for review.
6. A technical writer is assigned to the RCA (if they haven't already helped with the writing of the RCA) and reviews the RCA for content, grammar, formatting, etc.
7. The RCA is presented at the next weekly RCA Review meeting.
8. All RCA Review meetings are recorded and stored on the *RCA Review Google Drive*.

RCA Template – *change to title of incident*

Date of Incident	
Incident Owner	
Contributors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Short Description of Incident	
System(s) affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Down Time	
Approx. monetary loss (if applicable)	
Cause of incident	
Resolution	
<p><i>Please note if these are long- or short-term measures. Include relevant Jira ticket numbers.</i></p>	
Preventative measure(s) put in place	
<p><i>Please note if these are long- or short-term measures. Include relevant Jira ticket numbers.</i></p>	

Timeline of Incident

Include the timeline of key events for the incident along with the measure taken to determine the cause and implement the solution. These entries should be in the following format:

- Date (01/01/202x) and Time (00:00) and Time Zone (ET, CT, MT, or, PT)

Attachments – *attach any relevant documents (if needed)*

Follow-up: *add in any follow-up actions that came up during the RCA Review meeting.*