Preventing Problems Using Internal Audits

As your production floor busily produces more of your company's product, you learn that an important customer has called about a defective piece of equipment they just bought from you.

How could this have happened? Your processes are monitored and standards are maintained every step of the way. The boss is upset and you need to solve this problem fast. Where to begin?

Containment

The first step is to contain the problem. Quickly hone in on where in your facility could have been involved in a noncompliant action. Stop production or quarantine any product that needs to be reviewed to assure quality.

Root Cause Investigation

Discover the root of the problem. What processes, areas, workers were involved in producing the faulty equipment?

Correction

Once you've discovered the nature of the nonconformance, you can correct the inventory awaiting delivery to customers. This ensures that you won't repeat the call from your boss about a customer who is complaining about a defective product.

Corrective Action

Different from the correction, corrective action is the action taken to eliminate the cause of nonconformities. In other words, it's understanding what actions need to be taken to prevent the problem from happening again. To implement effective corrective action, the root cause investigation must be very thorough and must also investigate the sequence and interaction of events that led to the nonconformance. Even when you think you've identified the root cause, consider further evaluation to ensure the totality of root cause is identified. Your corrective action must remedy the entire root cause(s) of the nonconformance.

Preventive Action

Preventive action differs from corrective action in that no event has yet occurred but the potential has been identified. Many quality management systems only require employees to identify preventive actions as part of a corrective action process designed for the handling of nonconformances. Instead you should be seeking ways to improve preventing issues from ever happening in the first place.

Role of Internal Audits

Auditing on a regular basis, especially with an outside firm, can save vast amounts of time and money in the long run. Third-party auditors can provide unbiased accounts of compliance, continual improvement, and risk monitoring. An auditor can prompt policy and procedure updates and recommend controls based on risk. Auditors can highlight areas that require more employee training and more communication. Ultimately, an auditor can spot red flags - allowing your team to resolve and remediate any that poses a risk to quality before you have a noncompliance issue.

Need a Quality Audit?

Our team is an experienced group of auditors and consultants available to help your systems run smoothly. Feel free to reach out to start the conversation!