Why Are Lessons NOT Learned?

By **Yousef A. Rayes**

How many times did you ask yourself why a problem stays unaddressed for a rather long period time? How much did the organization spend in terms of money, time and effort to keep addressing the recurring problem? Why doesn't the organization learn lessons from the problems it already experienced to prevent the next major one? As answers to those questions, I have noticed two (2) main issues during problem investigation process in my career life: Majority of the problems I have ever studied, either minor or major, had many precursor incidents. Many investigations are focusing on identifying problems and propose recommendations only without effective implementation.

So why are lessons NOT learned? According to the approach of continues improvement cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Adjust), failures to learn lessons are mostly due to five causes that mainly fall under Check and Adjust phases: Think about getting things done regardless to final outcome quality, Lessons don't apply to us, Shallow root cause analysis, Identify improper corrective actions that don't address the identified root causes, Failure of related parties to get corrective actions implemented

Obviously there can be other causes, however utilizing effective process improvement and investigation tools such as Lean Six Sigma, Pareto rule (80/20), TapRooT® or Minitab software, and focusing on these causes will help effectively to utilize the lessons learned and prevent the reoccurrence of similar problems in the future.

How can these five causes of failures be fixed? By utilizing historical records of problems if any, Conduct efficient root cause analyses with proper documentation actions, Apply a root cause analysis method that helps to develop effective corrective actions, Identify proper corrective actions that efficiently address the identified root causes, Implement continued improvement processes by monitoring the effectiveness of corrective action, conducting scheduled audits and adjust the outcomes accordingly. The answer to these questions can identify problems along with current root cause analysis, corrective action or implementation methodology. Identifying and correcting these problems at the initial stage is an important action to prevent the recurrence of similar accidents in the future which may lead to loss of human lives or other organizational assets. Getting work done correctly at first is cheaper and easier than repeating and fixing it later. Remember that lessons learned are very useful when they are utilized in an appropriate and efficient manner.