The 15-Minute Specification

"Should I continue doing Problem Analysis when I don't have all the data?"

The answer to this question is "it depends"!—it depends upon exactly what data is available to the supporting engineer. If no factual data is available to construct an accurate problem statement then the answer is "no"—more time needs to be spent in Situation Appraisal to ensure a deviation actually exists before 'wasting time' in PA.

However, in very few cases will 100% accurate data be available to the supporting engineer during the first customer interaction. This is one of the benefits of Problem Analysis—the specification questions will demonstrate where there is a paucity of data—and hence give the agent and customer a focus for further data collection. Besides this, in many cases 100% accurate data is not needed to find cause. Frequently there will be one or two pairs of Is/Is Not data that in the final analysis will prove to have been critical in terms of finding root cause. Unfortunately, it is not until after cause has been found that this will become obvious!

In response to this concern of lack of data, together with some supporting engineers' perception that PA can take too long, the "15-minute specification" approach was developed. The intention is to reflect the specification questions a supporting engineer would ask a customer during a first call. For example, it is unlikely that a supporting engineer would ask "What other problems could you be experiencing with our product, but are not?" They allow the supporting engineer to put together a quick picture of the customer issue through the specification. If cause is not found quickly, the remaining questions can be asked in a subsequent call.

Empirical testing of the "15-minute specification" has demonstrated that (assuming the data is available) it is possible to complete a specification in less than 15 minutes. In fact the mean time is around 8 minutes!

		IS	IS NOT
WHAT	Object	√	√
	Deviation	√	**x**
WHERE	Geographically	√	√
	On the Object	√	**x**
WHEN	First	√	√
	Since	√	**x**
	Lifecycle	√	Depends
EXTENT	How Many	√	√
	Size	√	**x**
	# of Occurrences	√	**x**
	Trend	√	**x**

√ Always ask
x Not necessry to ask at first

Problem Analysis

Instructions

1. List the time pressure situations you face on the job where quick action is required to handle a deviation.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. Select one of these. What two or three specific Problem Analysis questions would best test whether you know cause?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. What can you do to make sure you will use these questions?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____