OPERATIONS INSIDER

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THE MANAGER'S PROBLEM SOLVING QUICK START CHECKLIST

Score one area in twenty minutes, with evidence you can point at.



SEE THE GAP. FIND THE CAUSE. HOLD THE FIX.

START HERE

How to Use This Check

One area, one walk, the people who solve its problems. Twenty minutes, twenty-five statements, one number.

01 WALK	02 SCORE	03 ACT
Go to the area with the team leader and one operator. Look at the board, the log and one recent problem. Do not score from a desk.	Score each statement from 0 to 4. Without something you can point at, the score is 2 or lower.	Pick the weakest block and agree one action with an owner and a date before you leave.

The Scoring Scale

POINTS	MEANING
0	Not in place.
1	Happens occasionally, depends on individuals.
2	Partly in place, not consistent across shifts.
3	Mostly in place and visible in the area.
4	Consistently in place, visible, reviewed and improved.

WHY ONE AREA

A plant does not solve problems. Teams do, one area at a time. Score the area with the most repeat problems and repeat the check there every quarter.

Before You Start

- **Area:** choose a line, a cell or a department with one team leader and one board.
- **Evidence:** the problem log, a closed 5 Why, an A3, the board. Ask to be shown the last three problems that were closed.
- **Tone:** you check the system, not the people. Ask how a problem was solved, never who caused it.

THE CHECK

01 Problem Definition and Visibility

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
01	Every problem in the area is recorded in one problem log with date, description, level, owner and status.	
02	Problem statements describe the gap between standard and actual condition with numbers, and contain no cause and no solution.	
03	The person who leads a problem has been to the place where it occurred and has seen the part, the process or the data.	
04	Operators stop and call within the shift when the standard cannot be met, and the call is answered within minutes.	
05	Open problems are visible at the area board with their age, and the oldest open problem is discussed first.	

02 Containment and Quick Response

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
06	Every problem that can reach the next process or the customer is contained before analysis starts, and the containment is recorded.	
07	Quick fixes at the line are made within the shift and written on a problem card, even when they take two minutes.	
08	A quick fix that repeats three times in four weeks moves to a structured 5 Why, and the log shows it.	
09	Every temporary measure has an owner and an end date, and none is older than its end date.	
10	For each open problem the team leader can show which level it is worked at and why.	

THE CHECK

03 Root Cause Analysis

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
11	Each 5 Why chain is read backwards with "therefore", and each answer is verified at the workplace or with data.	
12	Root causes name a condition in method, machine, material or measurement, never a person or carelessness.	
13	Complex problems use a cause and effect diagram, an is / is not analysis or a Pareto, and the evidence is attached.	
14	The root cause is confirmed by switching the effect on and off, or by data before and after, before a countermeasure is chosen.	
15	Root causes are recorded in a fixed list of categories, and a Pareto of causes is built every month.	

04 Countermeasures, Check and Standard

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
16	Each countermeasure is linked to a verified root cause and has an owner and a due date.	
17	Retraining or a reminder to be careful is never accepted as the only countermeasure.	
18	The effect of every structured problem is checked with data after an agreed period, typically 30 days, and the result is recorded.	
19	An effective countermeasure is written into the standard and trained before the problem is closed.	
20	The recurrence rate of closed problems is calculated and reviewed every month.	

THE CHECK

05 Capability, Coaching and Escalation

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
21	Escalation rules are written down: which problem goes to which level after how many hours or days, and they are used.	
22	Leaders coach problem solvers at the workplace with open questions, at least every two weeks for each open A3.	
23	A skills matrix shows who can lead each level, and every team has at least two people per shift who can lead a 5 Why.	
24	Customer and serious problems follow the eight-step method with a dated record for every step.	
25	Lessons from closed problems are shared with similar lines and sites, and the transfer is recorded per line.	

Your Result

BLOCK	POINTS	OUT OF
01 Problem Definition and Visibility		20
02 Containment and Quick Response		20
03 Root Cause Analysis		20
04 Countermeasures, Check and Standard		20
05 Capability, Coaching and Escalation		20
TOTAL		100

YOUR RESULT

Read the Number

The total tells you where the area stands. The weakest block tells you where to start.

TOTAL	WHAT IT MEANS	WHAT TO DO FIRST
0 to 39	Firefighting. Problems are fixed and come back. Nobody counts them.	Start one problem log. Write every problem with level and owner.
40 to 59	Reactive. Problems are logged, but causes are guessed and checks are rare.	Verify every 5 Why at the workplace. Check the effect after 30 days.
60 to 79	Structured. Levels, tools and checks are used, depending on the leader.	Coach every open A3. Write escalation rules. Measure recurrence.
80 to 100	Capable. Problems are solved at the lowest level and lessons travel.	Hold the level. Share lessons across lines and train the next coaches.

Your Three Priorities

NO.	WHAT TO IMPROVE	FIRST ACTION	OWNER	DUE

THE RULE FOR EVERY ACTION

Owner and date, or it did not happen. Repeat the check in the same area in 90 days and compare the blocks, not the feeling.

What to Do Next

NEXT STEP	WHAT YOU GET
PROBLEM SOLVING STARTER KIT	The guide for your first 30 days in one area, plus the problem log and 5 Why tracker in Excel.
PROBLEM SOLVING EXCELLENCE BUNDLE	The full playbook, workshop pack, shop floor forms, the Excel system and a ready-to-use workshop deck.

Both are available at operationsinsider.com.