

# Symptoms and Causes of a Problem

## Introduction:

People have to deal with many problems throughout their life spans. Some problems are big and other might fall into the category of small ones, but they all create some kind of issues for everyone. Everyone thinks of not creating a mess out of any problem, but they might not be able to do it as there is not much guidance on this specific topic. If we are able to find out the causes of the problem early, then it will heavily help us not to get caught in the trap of that specific problem and knowledge about its symptoms of it is surely a plus.

## Definition

The main reason behind the occurrence of any problem is known as the cause of the problem. When the end result didn't come out as expected then it is called a symptom of a problem.

In other words, A problem's symptom is an indication that something didn't work out quite as expected. And a problem cause, on the other hand, is the reason why the problem occurred in the first place.

## Details

Understanding a problem means identifying the cause. Addressing symptoms will probably just create many more problems and unintended consequences.

The difference between a cause and a symptom is that a cause is usually the result of a decision, whereas a symptom is a direct or indirect result of a cause.

For example, if a business decides to acquire another business, then all the subsequent consequences are symptoms of that decision. The cause is the original decision.

Here are some examples of symptoms:

### **1- High ratio of checking & review**

If QA checks are taking too long, there is likely a better way to tackle that repeatable process. Look for ways to empower your employees to "set it & forget it" once they've set a process in motion.

### **2- Things aren't right the first time**

Human error is a part of life, but many processes can be easily automated with technology to reduce the possibility of error. For instance, when completing forms on paper, a lot of time can be wasted on back-and-forth phone calls and e-mails if the information is incorrect or incomplete. Moving an error-prone process, like HR onboarding, to a digital workflow can allow built-in quality assurance (QA) checks that can save you time and money:

### **3- Customers are unhappy**

When things don't flow smoothly, people get frustrated. It may go without saying, but identifying areas of customer frustration can quickly key you into an area of your business that needs improvement.

### **4- Things take too long**

We all know that customers can occasionally have unrealistic expectations. However, if your customers, employees, and vendors consistently have the feeling that things could be happening at a much faster pace, then it's time to look at revising that cumbersome process.

**5- You throw money at a problem, but nothing improves**

If you've invested in more staff or technology to solve a troubling business issue, but the problem persists, it is definitely time for a closer look. It could be a personnel problem.

**6- High frustration factor**

Good employees will have legitimate concerns when things aren't happening as they should for their customers. Be on the lookout for areas where employees are doing their best but still not able to meet customers' needs.

**7- Finger-pointing across departments**

It isn't uncommon for a process to span departments. In this case, take extra care to make sure the lines of communication remain open. If a problem persists, however, it could also be that there simply isn't an efficient process for the transfer of information between departments.

**8- Employees circumvent procedures to expedite work**

If hard-working employees are doing everything, they can to get the job done, they will often side-step established processes to find a better way.

**9- The process is managed in pieces**

Most processes will involve multiple people (and even multiple departments), but if there is no final authority when a decision needs to be made, then you're asking for trouble. Clearly define roles and responsibilities at all levels of the process to ensure that it can be executed properly.

**10- Managers spend too much time "fighting fires"**

If your leadership team is spending too much time in the trenches fixing avoidable mistakes and repeating work that's already been done, you're missing out on their ability to contribute the strategic vision of the company. You could also be at risk of losing good people due to burn out.

**Sources:**

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