**Action Plan: Evaluating Effectiveness**

One of the steps in completing the action plan is evaluating whether an identified gap or non-conformity has been effectively addressed. Evaluating the effectiveness of the action(s) taken to address a gap or a non-conformity, closes the loop between identifying a problem and successfully completing the actions to solve it. It is reasonable to assume that if a problem is worth solving, that it is also worth checking that the solution is effective.

Possible ways that can help you to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to address a gap or non-conformity are to assess:

- Documentation (including records)
- Training

**Documentation**

Assessing the effectiveness of documentation that has been developed – procedures, forms – focuses on assessing how well the new or revised documentation is understood and followed by area staff. This means staff are able to perform the required tasks and record results as outlined in the procedure. They don't require additional support to complete the tasks nor are there gaps which require individuals to decide on their own what steps to complete and how to do them.

**Example:** To test the effectiveness of the developed document, give the procedure to a staff member to see if they can perform the tasks outlined in the document, including completion of forms, using only the information available in the document. This will help determine if there is enough detail in the document. Has all the information that was identified as required to close the gap been included and clearly described? Achieving the desired outcome does not mean including every possible detail, rather it means that sufficient detail is provided for the user to understand and correctly apply the information. In fact, including too much detail can actually have the opposite effect.

Documents can include:

- **Procedures, Job instructions, User manuals:** Does the information in the document enable the user to properly perform the steps? Does it describe the process in enough detail? Does the documentation enable employees to operate safely and effectively? Can the user understand the process clearly enough to prevent problems or respond to problems when they occur? Can the user perform all of the safety procedures? Is it easy for a new employee to get up to speed?

- **Forms:** Is there sufficient information provided to enable the user to accurately record results of monitoring and testing?

**Training**

After steps have been developed to address a gap or non-conformity, training is required to implement and support these changes. Training plays an important role in creating an effective solution as it helps people and organizations manage change to achieve the intended outcomes. Any time changes occur in a company that affects what is done and how it’s done, such as processes, goals, equipment and technology, all staff directly and indirectly impacted by the change require training.

After training has been completed, the effectiveness of the training must be evaluated. There are different approaches to assess training effectiveness:
Observation – the learner demonstrates their knowledge by performing the task. Visually confirming the learner performs a task as written indicates the training is effective. This would also include record review to ensure forms are being completed as required in the procedure. Likewise it can also show that training hasn’t been effective or that the changes initiated aren’t effective. In that case the company would need to determine if the documentation is lacking or if the training to perform the task is inadequate to meet requirements.

Skill assessment – as described above the learner is observed applying the new skill they’ve learned to assess their competency. This type of assessment is usually done by the trainer to deem the person as ‘qualified’ to perform a task as part of the requirements for their role or job. The training is deemed effective if the person is able to apply the information in the written procedure to properly perform the required steps including the completion of forms. An example of demonstrating a skill could be the calibration of a thermometer or monitoring device and completion of the calibration or monitoring form.

Ownership – the learner teaches another staff member. Ownership puts learners in the position of showing others how to apply new concepts or new information. Showing others, engages employees because they teach and learn from each other and it also gives the trainer the ability to assess how well and consistently concepts are being applied. This approach can also detect when staff have found better ways to complete a procedure or work arounds that may or may not meet all requirements. In the former instance this may trigger the revision of a procedure and the latter may indicate the need to repeat and reinforce staff training to ensure they understand why it is important to follow the procedure as written.

Example: Assessing the Effectiveness of Training for a new ‘Sampling of Finished Product’ Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

- New SOP describing the steps in the process required to obtain a finished product sample was developed
- Staff training on the new sampling of finished product SOP including associated forms was conducted
- Post training staff were provided the SOP to follow and were observed completing the steps in the finished product sampling procedure to determine if training was effective.
  - Did staff follow the SOP as written to correctly obtain the finished product sample
  - Did staff follow the SOP as written to correctly document taking the finished product sample
- If trained staff were able to demonstrate they followed the written SOP the training would be assessed as effective and that step in the action plan would be considered complete.
- If trained staff were unable to demonstrate they were following the written SOP training would be considered ineffective and the following may be required:
  - Review of SOP to determine if sufficient information was included – possible revision
  - Review of the training to assess if training method needs revising
  - Re-training of staff on the SOP – existing or revised
- Re-training of staff on the existing or revised SOP would then be conducted followed by assessing staff again to determine if training was effective.

For more detailed information on “Evaluating Effectiveness of Training”, please refer to the Kirkpatrick Method

http://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/OurPhilosophy/TheKirkpatrickModel

(http://www.leadersinbusinessanalysis.com/blog/how-to-measure-the-effectiveness-of-your-documentation)