WORKSHEET 4.8

Find the Cause First

Subchapter 4.8 · case in the book: Banff

When your hotel sends a corrective action plan to the certification body after stage 2, does it say why each nonconformity arose, or only what you now intend to do? And how will the auditor recognise, weeks later, that your action has worked?

This worksheet turns the tools of the subchapter into a form you can fill in. The texts come from the book; the empty columns are for your own property. Adapt it before use: an unadapted checklist is exactly what the book warns against.

Practical application: what to do in your property

Step (from the book)	Done?	What we found / owner
Correction first: Malhotra called the clients of the next conferences to confirm any particular needs, and the ramp was set out for the conference on 4 November. The scale was calibrated by its supplier, and the food-waste indicator since May was corrected by the factor of the deviation; it fell from 182 to 162 grams per cover.		
The cause, found with those involved: Malhotra, Sinclair and an engineer walked the path of a list. Participant lists arrived in the sales mailbox; the event order had already been drafted from the option; it had no field and no hand-over step. For the scale, the plan named a monthly check with no owner and no test weight in the house. For induction, an onboarding sheet with no line for the system.		
An action that fits only that cause: A “special requirements” field on the event order, a shared banquet mailbox for all lists and a fifteen-minute briefing 48 hours ahead with kitchen and engineering. Because weddings and tour groups use the same route, the rule covered them too. The scale received a named owner and a test weight; the onboarding sheet received its line, and the two staff signed.		
Evidence named in advance: For the scale, a monthly check log. For induction, the signed sheets. For the major finding, the event orders of the next eight conferences with initials from kitchen and engineering, and a visit by the body to a running conference.		

These steps are the book’s method, not requirements of ISO 20121. Evidence can take whatever form suits the property; a separate document is needed only where an applicable requirement, or the property’s own system, makes it necessary.

Verification Pact: what is believed, tested against the standard

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	Our position
The body accepts any plan that arrives on time	No. It reviews and accepts plans for minor nonconformities (ISO/IEC 17021-1, 9.5.2); reviewing means it can refuse	
For a major nonconformity a good plan is enough	No. Correction and corrective action are verified before the decision (9.5.2)	
The auditor must say which action she will accept	No. The body must not offer or provide management system consultancy (5.2.5)	
Training is a corrective action	Only partially true. Only where the cause is missing knowledge or skill; causes must be evaluated (ISO 20121, 10.2 b)	
A corrective action covers the case where the error occurred	Only partially true. It must be appropriate; reach follows cause and the risk of recurrence elsewhere (10.2)	
The hotel must keep records of nonconformities	Yes. Documented information on nonconformities and actions is required (10.2)	
The deadline for the plan is in the standard	No. The body sets it under its own rules; it appears in the audit report	

Common mistakes: a self-check

Mistake (from the book)	Present here?	Action / owner
Sending the plan after one evening: fast, and without a cause.		
Offering training for everything, when it works only where knowledge or skill is missing.		
Writing words that cannot be checked, such as “awareness”.		
Leaving the old figures standing after the cause has been found.		
Fixing only the case that was found, when other events take the same route.		
Asking the auditor for the solution, which she must not give.		
Setting one deadline for every action and naming no owner.		
Sending evidence with more personal data than the body needs to see.		

Operative synthesis

- **Does every finding have its own cause?: One action for several findings shows that no cause was sought**
- **Does each cause name a process, material or time rather than a person?: Blaming a person leaves the process unchanged**
- **Does each action fit only its own cause?: An action that fits any cause proves nothing**
- **Have figures and statements made wrong by the gap been corrected?: A future action leaves the past figure standing**
- **Have we checked where else the same gap exists?: Corrective action must be appropriate to the risk of recurrence**
- **Is the evidence of effect named in advance, with its owner?: For majors the body must verify before the decision**
- **Act on immediately. Write the correction for each finding before anything else, including any figure or statement the gap has made wrong, and correct it.**
- **Plan for. Use the time the body gives to find each cause with the people who walk the process daily, test every action against its cause and name the evidence in advance.**
- **Monitor going forward. Check the evidence at the next events, not only before the body's deadline, and ask the body how it intends to verify any major nonconformity.**

Action plan for our property

Action	Owner	Due	How we will know it worked

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 8b «The Lens», subchapter 4.8. Edizioni Effedore, 2026. Clause references are paraphrased; this sheet does not reproduce the text of ISO 20121, ISO 19011 or ISO/IEC 17021-1. It is not legal advice: the law that applies is that of the place where the property operates.