Clean Up This Mess...

The Site Manager is doing his daily inspection of the facility. As he walks around, he narrowly avoids slipping in a puddle of water on the floor. He calls over the nearest staff person and, pointing to the water, says “Clean up this mess! I nearly fell over - it’s dangerous!” and continues his tour of the site.

The following day, as he’s walking through the same part of the building, he slips over because there is water on the floor. Spotting the same member of staff, he calls “Hey! Didn’t I tell you to clear that up? You’re in big trouble, buddy - I just fell over!”

The employee points to a pipe running the length of the ceiling and explains “I did clean it up yesterday but there is a leak in this pipe so however much I mop the floor, there’s still water on it. It’s real strange because that pipe is quite new.”

The Site Manager, realizing that only immediate corrective action had been completed, determined to get to the root cause of the problem.

When he gets back to his office, he calls the Maintenance Manager. The Maintenance Manager checks through the records and reports that the pipe is only a few months old, but he’s not surprised it’s leaking because it wasn’t the one he wanted to order. The Purchasing Manager had vetoed his preferred pipe as being too expensive.

The Site Manager calls the Purchasing Manager and tells him off, asking “Why did you make the Maintenance Manager buy a sub-standard pipe? Now it needs to be replaced, which will cost more!”

“But Sir,” came the response, “any orders over a certain amount have to be run past you and you refused to authorize the first request as it was just too much money to pay for a pipe.”

“Ah,” thought the Site Manager, “now what?”

Having an effective root cause analysis and correction system is vital to quality. Could yours be improved?