

Pattern Tracker

One event is information. Repetition is a management signal.

DEFINE

RECORD

COMPARE

CONNECT

DECIDE

VERIFY

Use this tool when a condition may be recurring, spreading, or worsening and management needs to decide whether it is isolated variation or an operating pattern requiring corrective action. Track one condition at a time. The tool does not diagnose root cause; it determines when the evidence is strong enough to move into root-cause investigation and formal corrective action.

1. Pattern Setup

Operation / Organization	
Operation Type	
Pattern / Condition	
Review Owner	
Area / Process / Unit	
Review Start Date	

Observable condition: _____

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Expected standard / normal condition: _____

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Why this is being tracked: _____

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2. Observation Log

Record distinct occurrences. Do not create duplicate rows for the same incident. Use additional copies if required.

Date	Time / Shift	Location / Unit	Observation	Evidence	Severity	Related Signal

A. Define the Condition

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
A1 * The condition being tracked is described in observable terms rather than a vague label such as 'poor management' or 'bad quality'.	☐	☐	☐	
A2 * The expected standard or normal condition is defined clearly enough to compare future observations against it.	☐	☐	☐	
A3 The location, process, product, shift, unit, or population covered by the review is defined.	☐	☐	☐	
A4 The review window and trigger for beginning the pattern review are documented.	☐	☐	☐	

B. Evidence & Observation Quality

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
B1 * Each observation is supported by a date/time and a specific location, shift, process, product, or operating context.	☐	☐	☐	
B2 * Observations are based on direct evidence, reliable records, or verified reports rather than memory alone.	☐	☐	☐	
B3 Different observers use the same definition of the condition so that one person's 'failure' is not another person's 'acceptable'.	☐	☐	☐	
B4 Known gaps, missing records, or changes in measurement method are identified before trend conclusions are made.	☐	☐	☐	

C. Recurrence & Frequency

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
C1 * The same or substantially similar condition has occurred more than once within the review window, or a single event is significant enough to require escalation regardless of recurrence.	☐	☐	☐	
C2 The time between occurrences is known well enough to determine whether frequency is increasing, decreasing, or stable.	☐	☐	☐	
C3 Repeated events are separated from duplicates of the same incident so recurrence is not overstated.	☐	☐	☐	
C4 The operation knows whether the condition appears at predictable times, volumes, days, products, or operating states.	☐	☐	☐	

D. Spread, Clustering & Concentration

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
D1 The operation has checked whether occurrences are concentrated in one person, station, machine, supplier, shift, product, outlet, or location.	☐	☐	☐	
D2 * The operation has checked whether the same condition is appearing in multiple areas, teams, products, or locations.	☐	☐	☐	
D3 Where a cluster exists, the common factor is documented rather than assumed.	☐	☐	☐	
D4 Where the condition has spread, management has identified whether a shared system, standard, resource, or management practice connects the affected areas.	☐	☐	☐	

E. Direction & Rate of Change

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
E1 * Management can state whether the condition is improving, stable, worsening, or too uncertain to determine.	☐	☐	☐	
E2 Severity is tracked separately from frequency so a less frequent but more serious event is not mistaken for improvement.	☐	☐	☐	
E3 The rate of change is considered; a condition that is worsening quickly receives attention even before a long history exists.	☐	☐	☐	
E4 Short-term improvement after an intervention is not treated as permanent until enough time or operating cycles have passed to verify it.	☐	☐	☐	

F. Connections & Companion Signals

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
F1 * Management has identified other measures, behaviors, complaints, losses, delays, failures, or workarounds that move with the condition.	☐	☐	☐	
F2 Possible cause-and-effect links are separated from simple correlation until evidence supports the relationship.	☐	☐	☐	
F3 The pattern review includes upstream and downstream effects rather than looking only at the location where the symptom appears.	☐	☐	☐	
F4 When a financial or KPI trend is involved, the underlying measure has been checked for integrity before the pattern is treated as real.	☐	☐	☐	

G. Normalization, Workarounds & Hidden Drift

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
G1 * Management has checked whether employees have developed a workaround, shortcut, extra step, or informal rule to live with the condition.	☐	☐	☐	
G2 The condition is not dismissed merely because employees describe it as normal, longstanding, or 'the way we do it here'.	☐	☐	☐	
G3 Recurring management intervention, heroics, overtime, rework, extra prep, or manual correction is treated as evidence rather than as proof the system is working.	☐	☐	☐	
G4 Temporary fixes that became permanent are identified and linked to the original unresolved condition.	☐	☐	☐	

H. Consequence & Risk

Mark the condition that best reflects current evidence. An asterisk identifies a decision-critical control. Use evidence notes whenever the answer is Partial or Not Confirmed.

ID / Control	Confirmed	Partial	Not Confirmed	Evidence / Notes
H1 * The actual or potential consequence is defined: safety, quality, financial loss, labor, service, compliance, continuity, capacity, or reputation.	☐	☐	☐	
H2 Management can distinguish nuisance variation from a condition that threatens a standard, target, legal requirement, or critical operating outcome.	☐	☐	☐	
H3 The pattern is considered in relation to exposure: how often the process runs, how many customers or units are affected, and how difficult recovery becomes if it continues.	☐	☐	☐	
H4 * Any immediate safety, legal, or continuity risk is escalated without waiting for additional recurrence data.	☐	☐	☐	

3. Pattern Review & Decision

Use the observation history and control review together. Do not classify a pattern from the number of events alone; consider spread, severity, direction, connections, exposure, and whether the condition is becoming normalized.

Pattern Classification	Management Meaning
☐ Isolated Event	Current evidence supports a contained one-time or unusual event. Record it, correct what is necessary, and watch for recurrence.
☐ Watch Pattern	There are early signs of recurrence, clustering, or connection, but the pattern is not yet established. Continue structured observation and define a review point.
☐ Established Pattern	The condition is repeating, clustered, or connected strongly enough to require assigned corrective action and verification.
☐ Escalating / Systemic Pattern	The condition is worsening, spreading, creating material consequence, or revealing a broader system failure. Leadership intervention and root-cause work are required.

Current classification: _____

Immediate containment required? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Already contained

Known connections / companion signals: _____

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What evidence would change this classification? _____

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4. Corrective Action & Verification Register

Action	Owner	Due	Evidence Required	Verification Method	Status

5. Next Toolbox Route

Measurement Integrity Check: Use when the pattern depends on a disputed KPI, cost, yield, quality, safety, or production measure.

Root Cause Finder: Use when the condition is established or escalating and management is ready to investigate why it keeps happening.

Corrective Action & Accountability Plan: Use when a cause or controllable contributing factor is understood and formal ownership is required.

Verification & Close-the-Loop Review: Use after implementation to prove the condition changed and did not simply disappear temporarily.

Management note: A recurring condition that employees have learned to work around is still a pattern. Repeated heroics, manual correction, overtime, rework, extra prep, or management intervention are evidence that the underlying system may not be stable.