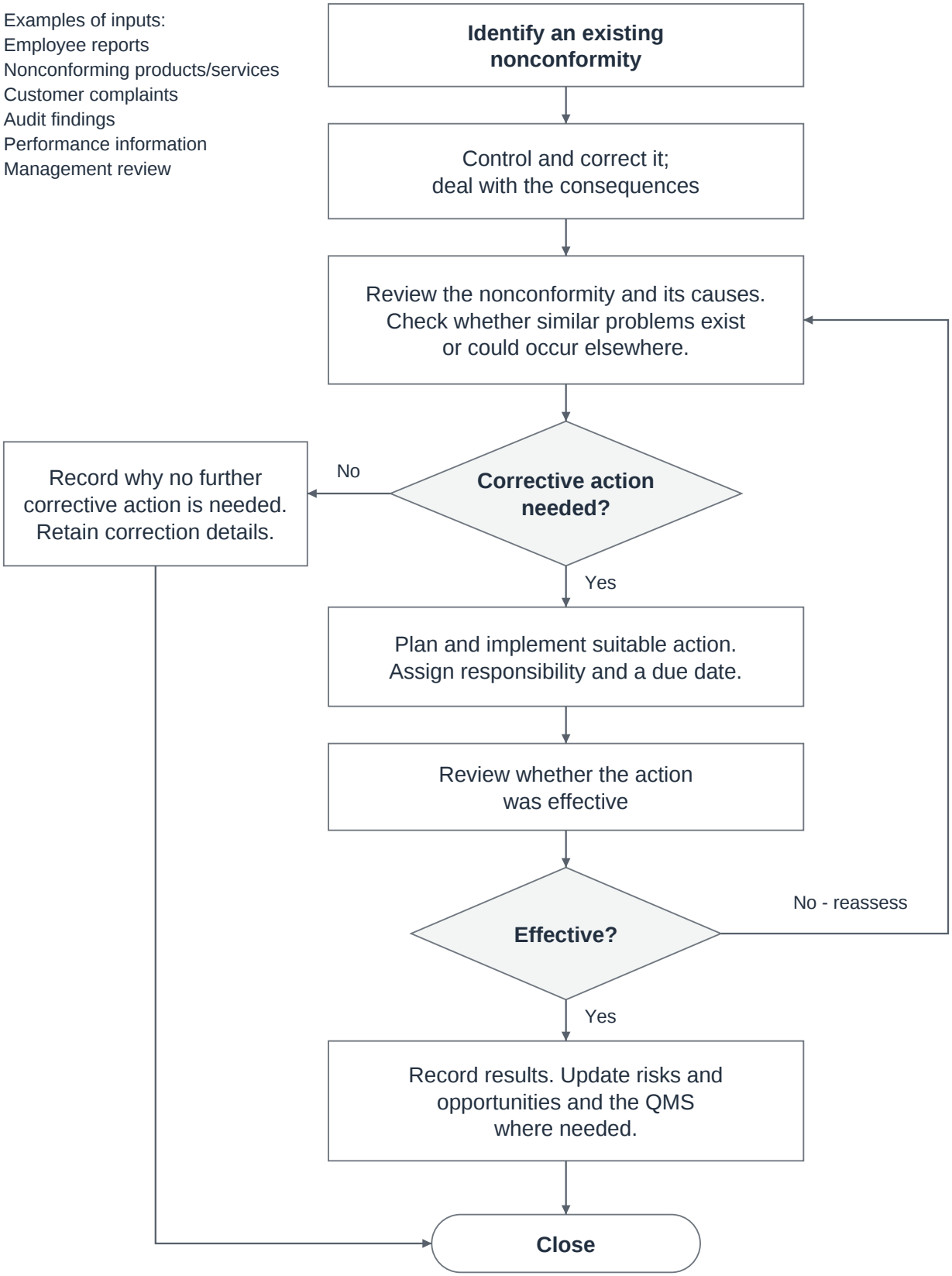
Corrective Action - Process Overview

Respond to an existing nonconformity and prevent recurrence where action is needed.

Examples of inputs:
Employee reports
Nonconforming products/services
Customer complaints
Audit findings
Performance information
Management review



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Step 1: An Existing Problem Is Identified and Handled

The corrective action process starts with the discovery of an existing problem. Such problems are identified through various sources, including:

- Employee input
- Nonconforming processes, products and services
- Customer feedback
- Audit results
- Metrics and their analysis
- Management review

Existing problems are reviewed and handled appropriately. Appropriate handling may include:

a) the immediate control, correction or repair of that particular problem, and
b) dealing with any consequences (according to other procedures in this manual).

Note that this is not corrective action, as corrective action addresses the root cause to prevent future recurrences.

Step 2: Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis is the systematic identification of the **underlying cause** of a problem. There are many ways to determine the root cause, one of which is the “5 Whys” approach.

Any root cause analysis starts with the proper identification of the nonconformity. Then ask “why?” repeatedly (e.g., “why did the nonconformity occur?” - “because of xyz.” - “why did xyz occur?” - and so on). Five is a guide, not a required number of questions; continue until the underlying cause is understood.

The extent of the investigation is appropriate to the problem and its effects. Management also checks whether similar problems exist or could occur elsewhere.

Step 3: Do We Need to Do Anything?

Once the root cause is determined, management evaluates if any action could prevent the problem from recurring or occurring elsewhere.

Management makes a judgment call considering the likelihood of recurrence, the effects of the problem, customer satisfaction and the absolute importance of safety: does the benefit justify the cost of the action? The decision also takes account of applicable customer and legal requirements.

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