

The 5 Whys

The Five Whys tool aids in the identification of the root cause of a problem. Begin by identifying a specific problem, and ask why this is occurring. Continue to ask “Why?” to identify causes until the underlying cause is determined. Each “Why?” should build from the previous answer. There is nothing magical about the number five; sometimes a root cause may be reached after asking “Why?” just a few times; other times deeper questioning is needed.

STEPS

- a) Define a problem; be specific.
- b) Ask why this problem occurs and list the reasons in Box 1.
- c) Select one of the reasons from Box 1 and ask “why does this occur?” List the reasons in Box 2.
- d) Continue this process of questioning until you have uncovered the root cause of the identified problem. If there are no identifiable answers or solutions, address a different reason.

The problem: _____

Why does this occur?

