



ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS USING THE 5 WHY'S

The 5 Why's is a problem-solving technique used to identify the root cause of an incident by asking a series of five (or more) sequential 'why' questions. The process encourages a collaborative and focused exploration of the incident to ensure we identify and address the fundamental and systemic cause(s) rather than just the surface symptoms.

1 REVIEW THE INCIDENT

Consider gathering a team with individuals involved and/or relevant expertise. Thoroughly understand what happened before proceeding.

2 IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Clearly define and articulate the specific problem or issue that needs to be addressed.

3 ASK THE FIRST 'WHY?'

Begin the investigative process by asking why the problem occurred. Document the direct causes that contributed to the issue.

4 ASK 'WHY?' FOUR MORE TIMES

For each answer, continue asking "why" to dig deeper into the causal chain, moving beyond superficial causes to underlying issues.

5 IDENTIFY THE ROOT CAUSE

Review the final answers to determine the fundamental root cause(s) that need to be addressed.

6 DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT CONTROLS

Create effective controls to address the root cause and prevent recurrence. Implement and communicate changes with clear responsibilities and timelines.

EXAMPLE: 5 WHY'S IN ACTION

PROBLEM: Puddle of water on the floor and an employee slipped and fell



WHY #1: A piece of equipment with a water tank leaked



WHY #2: The cap on the water tank wasn't installed correctly



WHY #3: The cap design is unique and the employee wasn't aware of the proper way to install it



WHY #4: Employees do not receive training for this specific piece of equipment



WHY #5: This piece of equipment was missed when creating general department specific training



CONTROL: Add equipment to department training program and bring current employees up to date





5 Why's Worksheet

5 is just a number...ask as many questions as you need until the root cause is identified!

What is the problem?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?



Root Cause(s)



Potential Controls