



Five Whys Worksheet

Step 4.5 – Identify All Factors

Instructions

Use this analysis technique and worksheet to help the team identify the root cause of the problem.

Introduction

The Five Whys analysis technique focuses on a problem by asking multiple "Why?" questions or "What caused this problem?" to identify the root cause. When asking the questions, include team members with personal knowledge of the processes and systems involved in the problem being discussed. This technique works well if the problem is simple. If, after asking "Why?" several times, and the answer does not seem correct, further analysis may be needed. The more complex the problem, the more likely it will take further analysis to reach the root cause.

How to Use

1. Develop a clear and specific problem statement.
2. The team facilitator asks why the problem happened and records the team response. Ask the team to consider "If this [the most recent team response] were corrected, is it likely the problem would recur?" If the answer is yes, this is a contributing factor, not a root cause.
3. If the answer provided is a contributing factor to the problem, the team keeps asking "Why?" until there is agreement from the team that the root cause has been identified, and if corrected, the problem would not recur.
4. It often takes three to five times of asking "Why?" But it can take more than five. Keep going until the team agrees the root cause has been identified.

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Team members

Date

Problem Statement

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Root Cause

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

To validate root causes, ask the following: “If you removed this root cause, would this event or problem have been prevented?”

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