

Asking the 5 Whys

The 5 Whys are used to help a group delve deeper into a problem and find the underlying cause, one that can be addressed. It is not a form of brainstorming because the group must agree at each why question on the predominant cause.

TIPS:

- The people involved in the work know it best, and so the right participants with access to the right information, experience and expertise are key to the effective use of the 5 Why exercise.
- Teams often attribute lack of resources as the cause of problems or issues. The purpose of this exercise is to explore decisions and processes that the team can change, not to attribute cause to others.
- Look for the most relevant cause of the problem, this is not brainstorming but rather is identifying the root cause. The team may need to gather information between each 'why' question.

Describe a problem that is a significant frustration or issue to the group:

Problem Statement:

Why does this problem occur? Answer is "A"

Why does "A" occur? Answer is "B"

Why does "B" occur? Answer is "C"

Why does "C" occur? Answer is "D"

Why does "D" occur? Answer is "E"

