

5 WHYS

Root Cause Analysis Method

How It Works

- Start with a clearly defined problem statement
- Ask "Why did this happen?"
- Use the answer as the basis for the next "Why"
- Repeat until the cause is within your control
- "5" is a guideline — fewer or more may be required

Key Principles

- Focus on process causes, not people
- Use facts and evidence
- Avoid jumping to solutions
- Each answer leads to the next Why

When to Use

- Analyze phase of DMAIC
- Defects, delays, rework, safety
- After Fishbone analysis
- When fast root cause is needed

Strengths

- Easy to learn and apply
- Encourages deep thinking
- Effective for teams

Limitations

- Can oversimplify complex problems
- Depends on facilitation skill
- Requires data validation

The 5 Whys helps teams move beyond symptoms by repeatedly asking "Why?" until the real, controllable root cause is identified.



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