

Effective Problem-Solving: *Getting to the Heart of the Matter*

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"To address this mistake we must use root-cause analysis. I'll begin by saying it's not my fault."

Root Cause Analysis

Getting to the heart of the problem by asking "why"

The Five Whys

- A problem-solving method that can help you get at the root of a problem/issue
- A simple, yet effective approach to **problem-solving**
- Helps to identify an issue or an abnormal condition
- If something goes wrong, ask why – but don't stop there
- Ask "why" at least five times

Symptom vs. Cause

- We tend to focus on the symptoms instead of the root causes
- If you focus on treating only the symptoms this may result in short-term improvement, but:
- The problem(s) or root cause will continue – because you have only addressed the symptom(s)

Applying The Five Whys

Situation:

Chronic late deliveries

THE PROBLEM

SYMPTOM

Why: drivers leaving warehouse late

Why: difficulty pulling orders and supplies

Why: stock shortages – excessive searching

Why: inconsistent purchasing patterns

Why: lack of performance expectations

ROOT CAUSE

Applying Five Whys to Problem-Solving - Review

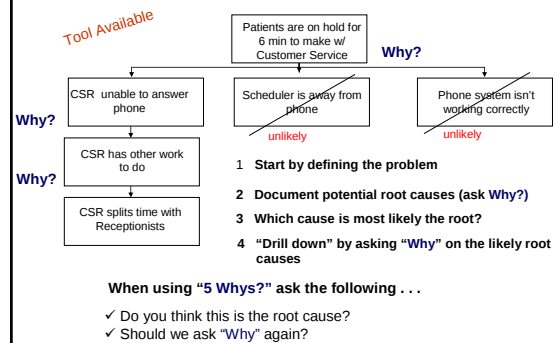
The Washington Monument

The Performance Improvement Picnic

There might not be exactly 5 “Whys”—five is an arbitrary number to remind you to dig deeper into the problem and get past the surface explanation

A run through the 5 whys analysis, though, is usually enough to get to the heart of the issue

Problem Definition Tree-Example



Fishbone Diagram

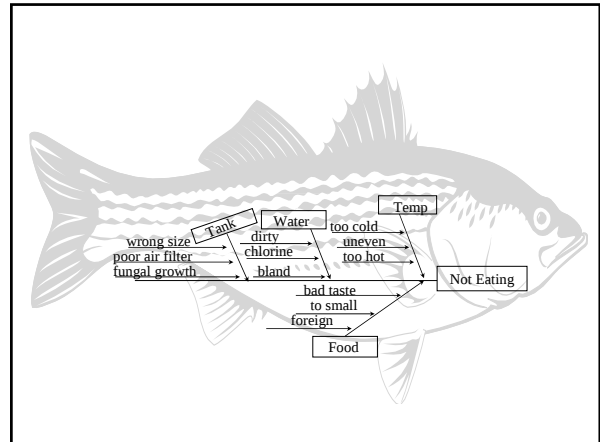
- Can be used to identify possible cause of problems
- Relatively easy to use
- Begin with one problem statement (head of the fish)
- Fill in potential causes and contributing factors (skeleton of fish?)

Using a Fishbone Diagram

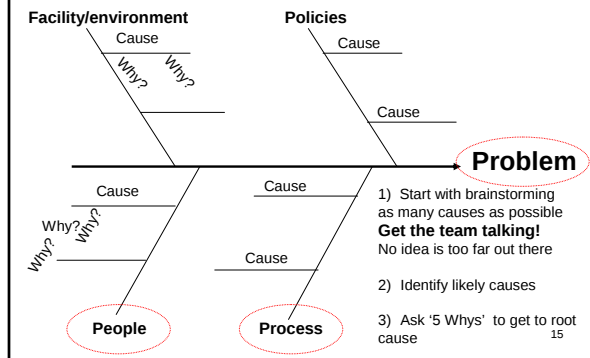
- Fishbone diagram is a simple graphical problem-solving technique that helps users to get to the root cause of a given problem quickly
- To create fishbone diagram: identify problem (effect), identify main causes, categorize causes, and drill down to root cause

Key Points - Fishbone Diagrams

- Fishbone diagrams is an effective tool for uncovering the root cause of a problem
- It is easy to learn
- Can be adapted quickly
- Can be applied to almost any problem



Cause and Effect Diagram



Problem-Solving Errors

- Common to propose solutions before knowing true nature of problem
- Common to propose “front-door” solutions
- Common to rely on “no” statements

Cause and Effect Worksheet

