

Five Whys

Root Cause Analysis Worksheet

Date: _____ Event / Finding / Hazard: _____

		Explanation	Root Cause
Why it Occurred	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why		
Why not Detected	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why		
Why not Prevented	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why 		
	Why		

Five Whys

Root Cause Analysis Worksheet

Root cause analysis enables us to evaluate various issues in a way which helps us identify the initial causal factor(s) which led to the condition, situation or event we now see. Its purpose is to effectively identify “Why” an issue has occurred based on appropriate analysis and evaluation.

When conducting root cause analysis, it is highly recommended and beneficial to include at least one front-line staff member close to the identified problem.

The Five Whys is useful when problems involve human factors or interactions and is suitable for all types of business situations. The benefits of the Five Whys include:

1. Helps to quickly identify the root cause of a problem
2. Helps determine the relationship between different root causes of a problem
3. Can be learned quickly and doesn't require statistical analysis to be utilized

When an issue is identified, ask why it occurred, but don't stop there. Continue to ask why, trying to go five questions deep, or at least continue until you can no longer identify another cause (remember that some things just are and some things are out of our control). That is the point where you have identified a root cause of the problem.

When considering the “Why” at each stage of the Five Whys process, consider the following potential influencing factors:

1. Manpower, Training, Competence and Supervision
2. Facilities, Equipment, Tooling and Materials
3. Policy and Procedure / Documentation / Software
4. Human Factors
5. Environmental Factors
6. Significant Organization Changes

There might not be exactly five “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 Five Whys analysis, though, is usually enough to get to the heart of an issue.

This Five Whys Root Cause Analysis worksheet includes two alternative starting questions in addition to the “Why it Occurred?”. These additional questions may assist in refining the identification of root causes related to quality control measures built into the associated processes (Why it wasn't Detected) and/or those related to defences / barriers built into the associated processes (Why it wasn't Prevented?).