**5 WHYs TEMPLATE**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DEFINE THE PROBLEM** |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   | Define problem here |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?** |   | **PRIMARY CAUSE** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|   | Why is it happening? |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1 | It is happening because  |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | Why is that? |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   | 2 | It is happening because |   |
|   |   |   |   | Why is that? |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | 3 | It is happening because |   |   |   |   |
|   |   | Why is that? |   |   |   |
|   |   | 4 | It is happening because |   |   |
|   |   | Why is that? | **ROOT CAUSE** |   |
|   | **NOTE: If the final "Why" has no controllable solution, return to the previous "Why."** | 5 | It is happening because |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **CORRECTIVE ACTION TO TAKE** |   | **CORRECTIVE ACTION** |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | PARTY RESPONSIBLE |   |
|   | Describe action here |   |   |   |
|   |   | DATE ACTION TO BEGIN |   |
|   |   |   |   |
|   |   | DATE TO COMPLETE |   |
|   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

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**5 WHYs Guide**

The 5-WHYs is a simple brainstorming tool that can help teams identify the root cause(s) of a problem. Once a general problem has been recognized, ask “why” questions to drill down to the root causes. Asking the 5 WHYs allows teams to move beyond obvious answers and reflect on less obvious explanations or causes.

**Step-by-Step Instructions**

1. State the problem you have identified as a strategic problem to work on.
2. Start asking “why” related to the problem. Like an inquisitive toddler, keep asking why in response to each suggested cause.
3. Ask as many “whys” as you need to get insight at a level that can be addressed (asking five times is typical). You will know you have reached your final “why” because it does not make logical sense to ask “why” again.

It is said that only by asking “Why?” five times successively, can you delve into a problem deeply enough to understand the ultimate root cause. By the time you get to the 4th or 5th why you will likely be looking squarely at management practices (more than five whys may be required for complex problems).

This methodology is closely related to the Cause & Effect (Fishbone) diagram and can complement the analysis necessary to complete a Cause & Effect diagram.