

The 5S Whys

The origin of the 5 Whys

The 5 Whys technique was developed and fine-tuned within the Toyota Motor Corporation as a critical component of its problem-solving training and as part of the Toyota Production System, commonly known today as Lean Manufacturing.

Taiichi Ohno, (Toyota's Chief Engineer), the architect of the Toyota Production System in the 1950s, describes the method in his book *Toyota Production System: Beyond Large-Scale Production* as "The basis of Toyota's scientific approach. By repeating why five times, the nature of the problem as well as its solution becomes clear." Ohno encouraged his team to dig into each problem that arose until they found the root cause. "Observe the production floor without preconceptions," he would advise. "Ask 'why' five times about every matter."

Sometimes things do not go according to the plan. Tools break, wires become crossed and the best-laid plans fall apart. It is on these occasions it helps to know exactly what happened—so it does not happen again.

The 5 Whys technique is a problem-solving and root cause analysis tool used to get to the root cause of an issue by asking "why?" 5 times (or more). Typically, the first two or three answers to "why?" point to symptoms of problems and not to the root cause. Do not limit your questioning to just 5 Whys and ask why as many times as is needed to reach the route cause. When applying the 5 Whys technique, you want to get to the problem's essence and then fix it. Actually, the 5 Whys may show you that the source of the problem is quite unexpected. Often, issues that are considered a technical problem actually turn out to be human and process problems. This is why finding and eliminating the root cause is crucial if you want to avoid iteration of failures.

In Summary

The 5 Whys technique is a simple and effective tool for solving problems. Its primary goal is to find the exact reason that causes a given problem by asking a sequence of "Why" questions.

- The 5 Whys method helps your team focus on finding the root cause of any problem.
- It encourages each team member to share ideas for continuous improvement, rather than blaming others.
- It gives your team the confidence that it can eliminate any problem and prevent the process from recurring failures.

Course duration:

Workshop (Classroom element) - 4 to 5 Hours.

Practical - 1 Hour.

Maximum number of delegates: Eight (8) per session.