

Root Cause Analysis (Five Whys) Worksheet

The Five Whys technique helps identify the true cause of a problem by repeatedly asking “Why?” until the underlying issue becomes clear. This worksheet provides a structured way to analyse problems, avoid quick fixes, and implement lasting solutions.

1. Purpose of This Tool

- ☐ Identify the real root cause behind recurring issues.
- ☐ Prevent treating symptoms instead of causes.
- ☐ Improve decision-making and corrective actions.
- ☐ Encourage analytical, evidence-based problem solving.
- ☐ Support a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

Tip: Most problems have more than one cause - the key is to find the one that matters most.

2. Problem Definition

Description

Clearly describe the issue or symptom that needs to be resolved.

Include specific facts, data, or examples if possible.

- ☐ Focus on *what is happening*, not *why* yet.

Tip: Define the problem clearly before moving into analysis - vague problems lead to vague solutions.

Notes

3. Immediate Impact Assessment

Area Affected Impact Type Severity (H/M/L) Notes

People

Process

Cost

Time / Schedule

Quality

☐ Assess how the problem is affecting operations or results.

Tip: Quantify impact wherever possible - numbers help prioritise action.

4. The Five Whys Analysis

Step	Question	Answer Notes / Evidence
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1st Why	Why did this problem occur?	
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2nd Why	Why did that happen?	
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3rd Why	Why did that happen?	
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4th Why	Why did that happen?	
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5th Why	Why did that happen?	
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☐ Keep asking “Why?” until you reach a cause that is within your control to correct.

Tip: Stop when the next “Why” no longer adds useful insight or moves beyond your influence.

Notes

5. Root Cause Verification

Potential Root Cause Evidence / Data Supporting It Confirmed? (Y/N) Notes

☐ Verify each proposed root cause before committing to action.

Tip: Avoid assumptions - validate with data, observation, or testing.

6. Corrective Action Plan

Root Cause Corrective Action Owner Target Date Status

☐ Create clear, actionable steps linked directly to confirmed causes.

Tip: Every action should eliminate or minimise recurrence, not just fix the latest incident.

7. Preventative Measures

Improvement Area Preventative Step Responsible Person Due Date Review Date

☐ Identify how you will stop similar problems from happening elsewhere.

Tip: Prevention saves more time and cost than correction.

8. Effectiveness Review

Review Date Action Taken Result / Outcome Recurrence? (Y/N) Notes

☐ Review completed actions after implementation to confirm success.

Tip: Sustained improvement is proven through consistent results, not quick fixes.

9. Lessons Learned

Lesson How It Can Be Applied in Future Owner

☐ Capture insights to strengthen future projects or operations.

Tip: Sharing lessons across teams multiplies their value.

10. Summary of Findings

Root Cause Identified	Action Implemented	Status	Improvement Observed
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☐ Keep this summary at the front of the report for easy reference.

Tip: Clear summaries help communicate progress to stakeholders quickly.

How to Use This Worksheet

Use the Five Whys method whenever a recurring problem appears or when you need to understand a process failure. Conduct the session with people closest to the work to ensure accuracy. Combine this worksheet with the Process Mapping Template and Lessons Learned Template for a complete improvement cycle.

Notes