Find the cause you can change

In Lean: 5 Whys worksheet

Page 1: one chain of whys

Start from one specific problem. Ask why it happens, then ask why about that answer, until you reach something in the process the team can change.

Who and when

Team or process _____ **Who took part** _____ **Date** _____

The problem (in Lean: problem statement)

Facts someone could check. No cause, no fix and no names.

What should happen?

The expected result, as the next person or the customer needs it.

_____

_____

What actually happens, where and how often?

What you saw or counted in the work, not what you remember.

_____

_____

Why does it happen? (in Lean: 5 Whys)

Ask why about the answer on the line above, using its own words. Five is a rule of thumb, not a quota: stop as soon as you reach something the team can change.

Why	Because... *One fact, in the words of the line above.*	How do we know? *What someone saw: an email, a log, a setting, items counted.*	Did we see it? *Tick only if someone looked.*	Is it enough? *Does it explain all of the line above?*
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

> **Stop rule: stop at a process, a policy, a tool or an owner the team can change. Never stop at a person. If an answer names someone, ask what in the process lets it happen; anyone in that role would do the same on a busy week.**

Not seen? Go and look before asking the next why. Not enough? Something else explains the rest: use page 2.

The cause you can change (in Lean: root cause)

Which answer can the team change, and what is it?

A rule or policy, a missing tool or link between tools, an unclear owner, or information missing at the start.

_____

_____

Read the chain backwards, from the cause to the problem, joining each line with and therefore. Does every link hold?

Tick one.

- ☐ Yes, every link holds
- ☐ No, a step is missing or guessed Go back to the work and look.

If the team changed this, would the problem stop coming back?

If only partly, a link or a second cause is missing.

_____

Next: before choosing a change, ask whether the step behind this cause should exist at all. The countermeasure plan template starts with that question.

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Find the cause you can change

Page 2: two causes behind one problem

Use this page when one why has two answers and both are backed by what you saw. Follow each branch to its own cause. Do not pick the more convenient one.

Where the chain splits

What is the problem, as written on page 1?

Which why has two answers, and what are they?

Both must be backed by something someone saw. If only one is, there is no second branch yet.

Branch A (in Lean: branch of the 5 Whys)

Why	Because...	How do we know?	Did we see it?	Is it enough?
A1				
A2				
A3				
A4				

What is the cause you can change on branch A?

Branch B (in Lean: branch of the 5 Whys)

Why	Because...	How do we know?	Did we see it?	Is it enough?
B1				
B2				
B3				
B4				

What is the cause you can change on branch B?

Do the branches explain the whole problem?

How many of the items you counted does each branch explain?

For example, six of fourteen and eight of fourteen. Items left over point to another branch.

Which branch will you work on first, and where is the other one recorded?

Start with the one that explains more of what you counted. Record the other as a problem of its own so it is not lost.

> **Stop rule: each branch stops at a process, a policy, a tool or an owner the team can change, never at a person. If the next why leads beyond your reach, step back to the last answer the team can act on, and tell whoever owns the rest.**

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