**Purpose: To identify the root cause of a problem**

Although deceptively simple the Five Whys technique provides a powerful framework for identifying the root cause of a problem. It simply involves asking five times, why the problem exists in order to get to the root cause of the problem.

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The Five Whys chart shown above demonstrates the level of analysis that can be generated by working through five levels of why.

**Directions:**

**Step 1:** Ask the question 'why'.

**Step 2:** Taking the answer resulting from the previous step and ask the question 'why'.

**Step 3:** Repeat Step 2

**Step 4**: Repeat Step 2

**Step 5:** Repeat Step 2

Each answer generates a potential source of further investigation, enabling you to drill down deep into the root cause of a problem. This tool is particularly effective when working with teams as often their knowledge and experience of a process provides a level of insight that would otherwise not be accessible.

**Additional Information:**

If more than one reason results, both can be investigated, as in the diagram below, which demonstrates the level of insight that can be achieved using this tool.