

5 Whys Technique Checklist

PREPARATION STEPS

- Schedule 60 minutes for team training session
- Set up training area with whiteboard or poster-board – have markers available
- Label top section of the board “5 Whys Technique”
- Have 5 Whys Technique audio loaded on device and ready to play aloud during the session
- Prepare a copy of the 5 Whys Technique Notes for each person to be trained
- If needed, refresh your own knowledge of waste and root cause – see The Essence of Lean Chapter 6, pp. 65-71.
- Preview listen to the 5 Whys Technique audio
- Identify a recent problematic incident that you will discuss in Step 4 below

1) Welcome the team and explain the purpose of the session

- Give out the Notes copies
- Explain that the purpose of the session is to provide management personnel with an introduction to the 5 Whys technique

The objectives of the session are to learn:

a) What is the 5 Whys technique?

b) How does the 5 Whys technique contribute to the Lean work improvement method?

c) How to apply the 5 Whys technique?

2) Listen to audio file: “5 Whys Technique” (13 minutes, 54 seconds)

3) Ask them to explain their understanding of “root cause” (in their own words)

Lean culture-building includes activities to create an atmosphere which is supportive of empowerment.

This kind of culture must include a sufficient level of mutual trust and respect among all employees.

4) Identify a problematic incident that has recently occurred and ask them to walk through the 5 Whys technique in searching for the root cause of the incident.

List each “why” question and the answer on the whiteboard. This may require some erasures before arriving at a possible root cause.

Remember that the root cause is the answer that can be controlled/fixed.

5) Optional assignment to be completed by _____ (date)

Choose a problem that directly affects your employees and apply the 5 Whys technique to identify a root cause that can be fixed. Review with employees to see if they agree or have other ideas.

When reviewing with employees, remember Ground Rule #1, Blame the System, Not the Person, to help build an atmosphere in which problem causes can be openly discussed.