

5 Whys Technique Notes

What is the 5 Whys technique?

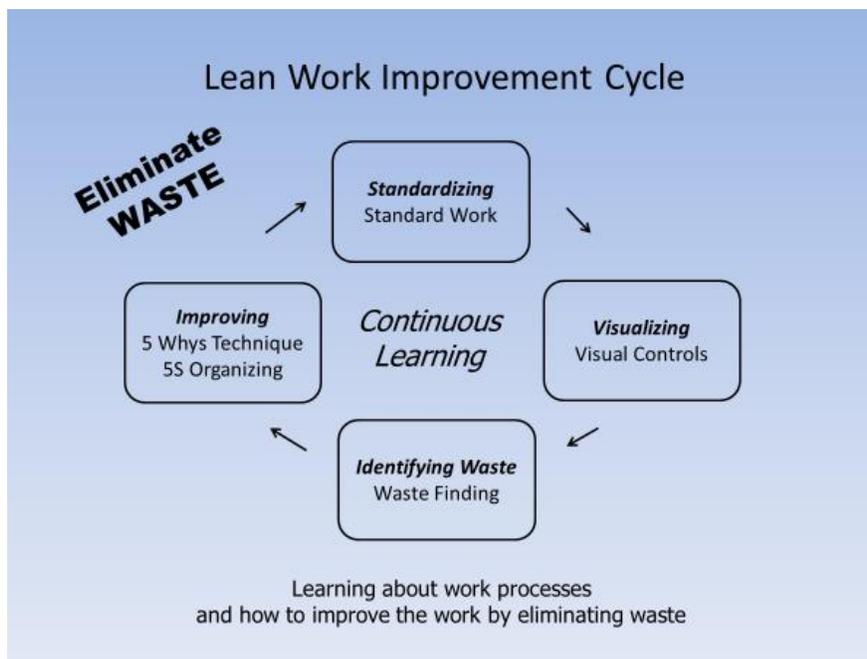
The 5 Whys technique is a way of finding the root cause of a problem

A root cause of a problem is a reason for the problem that can be fixed

5 Whys is used to find the root cause of waste so that the waste can be eliminated

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

The 5 Whys Technique is a bridge between Identify Waste and Improve Process



How to apply the 5 Whys technique?

Ask "why" a number of times to get to the root cause (it doesn't have to be exactly 5 times)

Keep asking "why" until you know more about the waste and how it might be eliminated

Ask clarifying questions in addition to the why questions, to learn as much as possible

Overcooked steak example why questions:

First Why: Why did the steak have no pink center?

Second Why: Why did the steak come out of the kitchen with no pink center?

Third Why: Why did you cook the steak for 10 minutes at 350-degree heat?

Overcooked steak clarifying questions:

Did the order ticket specify “medium rare”?

Does cooking a steak for 10 minutes at 350-degree heat leave it with a pink center?

When a customer orders a medium rare steak, do you check for a pink center?

Should a medium rare steak have a pink center?

To be aware of ...

Before you begin 5 Whys, get a clearly defined statement of the waste to be investigated

Apply 5 Whys to a specific waste incident if possible

Remember Ground Rule #1, Blame the System, Not the Person

Don't stress if you don't find every single root cause the first time because the Lean cycle will continue