

Project Name:

Project Lead:

1. Why?

The key to solving a problem is first trying to truly understand it. Often our focus shifts too quickly from a problem to the solution and we try to solve a problem before understanding its root cause. It is important to note that there may be multiple root causes of a problem and that different people see different parts of the system and may answer things differently.

2. How?

One way of identifying the root cause is to ask 'Why?' 5 times. The problem identified by the fifth 'why' is very different from the original event and requires a different solution.

An example of the 5 Whys

1. Why did the patient receive the wrong medication? The nurse did not complete patient identification
2. Why did the nurse not complete patient identification? The patient did not have a wristband
3. Why did the patient not have a wristband? The wristband had been removed for a procedure and not replaced
4. Why was the wristband not replaced? The printer for the wristbands was not working
5. Why was the printer not working? The staff needed to support IT had been reduced and was overworked

Event: What happened?

Pattern: What's been happening?

Define the problem as a pattern by selecting a poor performance factor.

Structure: Why is it happening?



Action: What are the implications for actions? What can you do to change results?