

# Five Whys

A simple question to unlock break-through

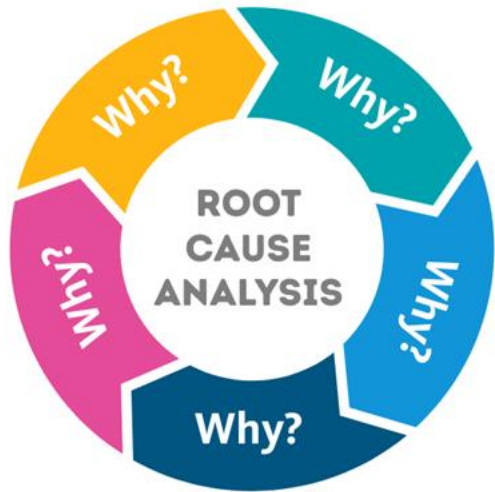
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# Welcome & Session Objectives



- Understand Five Whys technique
- Learn how to trace problems to their root cause
- Apply the method to sourcing-specific scenarios
- Other tools to drive continuous improvement



# What is the Five Whys?

- A simple, powerful root cause analysis tool
- Ask “Why?” repeatedly (usually five times)
- Origin: Toyota Production System
- Purpose: Identify and correct root causes, not symptoms





# Core Principle

When something goes wrong, ask **why** five times to understand the real problem.

- Not always exactly five
- Focus on depth, not speed
- Document each step clearly



# A Simple Example From Zoom Whiteboard Templates

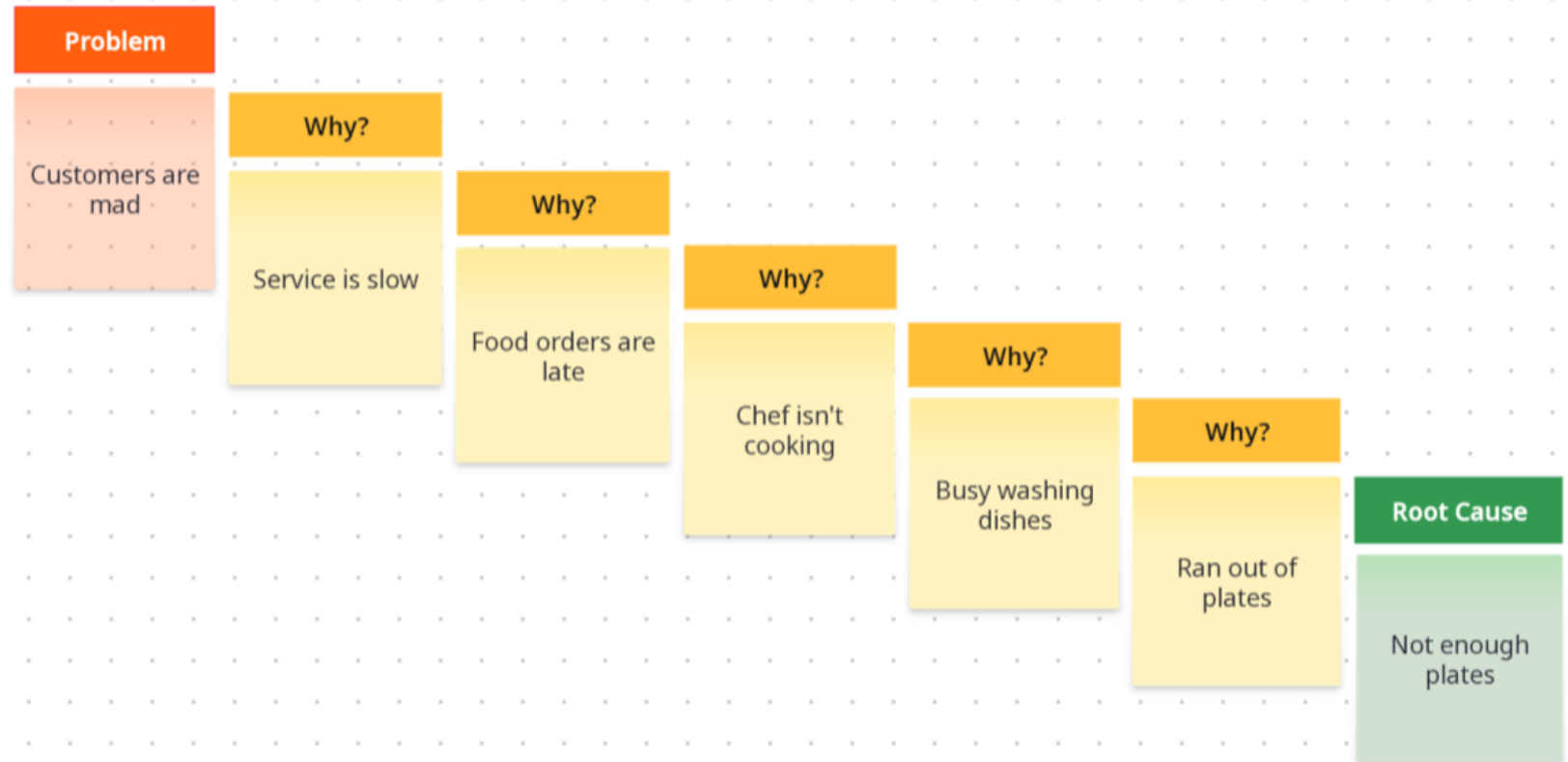


## 5 Whys

### How it works

Analyze and understand the root cause of a problem or issue.

- 1 Define the problem clearly
- 2 Ask 'Why' the problem happened and repeat the steps multiple times
- 3 Identify the root cause and take steps to address







# Why It Matters in Procurement



Procurement & Sourcing often face:

- No supplier responses
- Internal approval delays
- Value not as high as anticipated
- Late deliveries
- Spec misunderstandings



Five Whys exposes real process issues



# Applying Five Whys

## Step-by-step:



State the problem clearly



Ask "Why?" and document responses



Involve the right people



Repeat until root is found



Develop corrective actions



# Practical Sourcing Example #1

Problem: No supplier responses to high-value RFQ

Suppliers didn't have enough time to quote

RFQ deadline was only 24 hours

Internal stakeholder delayed the request

No clear lead time policy

No formal intake process

Root Cause: Lack of standardized intake process





# Tips & Pitfalls when conducting Five Whys



## Tips:

- Be curious
- Focus on process
- Dig deeper



## Pitfalls:

- Blame culture
- Vague answers
- Stopping too early



# Practical Procurement Example #2

Problem: Wrong product variant delivered

Supplier misunderstood spec sheet

Spec was unclear (or differs by campus)

Used internal terminology






No joint review

No kickoff call

Root Cause: No communication protocol for small orders

# Continuous Improvement tools to aide Five Whys



Tool	Role with Five Whys
 Pareto	Prioritize what to analyze
 Fishbone	Brainstorm root cause candidates
 GEMBA WALK	Validate firsthand what's really happening
 Process Mapping	Clarify where/ what the issue is
 PDCA	Implement & verify solutions

# How Fishbone could be combined with Five Whys



## Fishbone Diagram

The main purpose of a fishbone diagram is to help managers and leaders identify possible causes and effects for a specific problem.

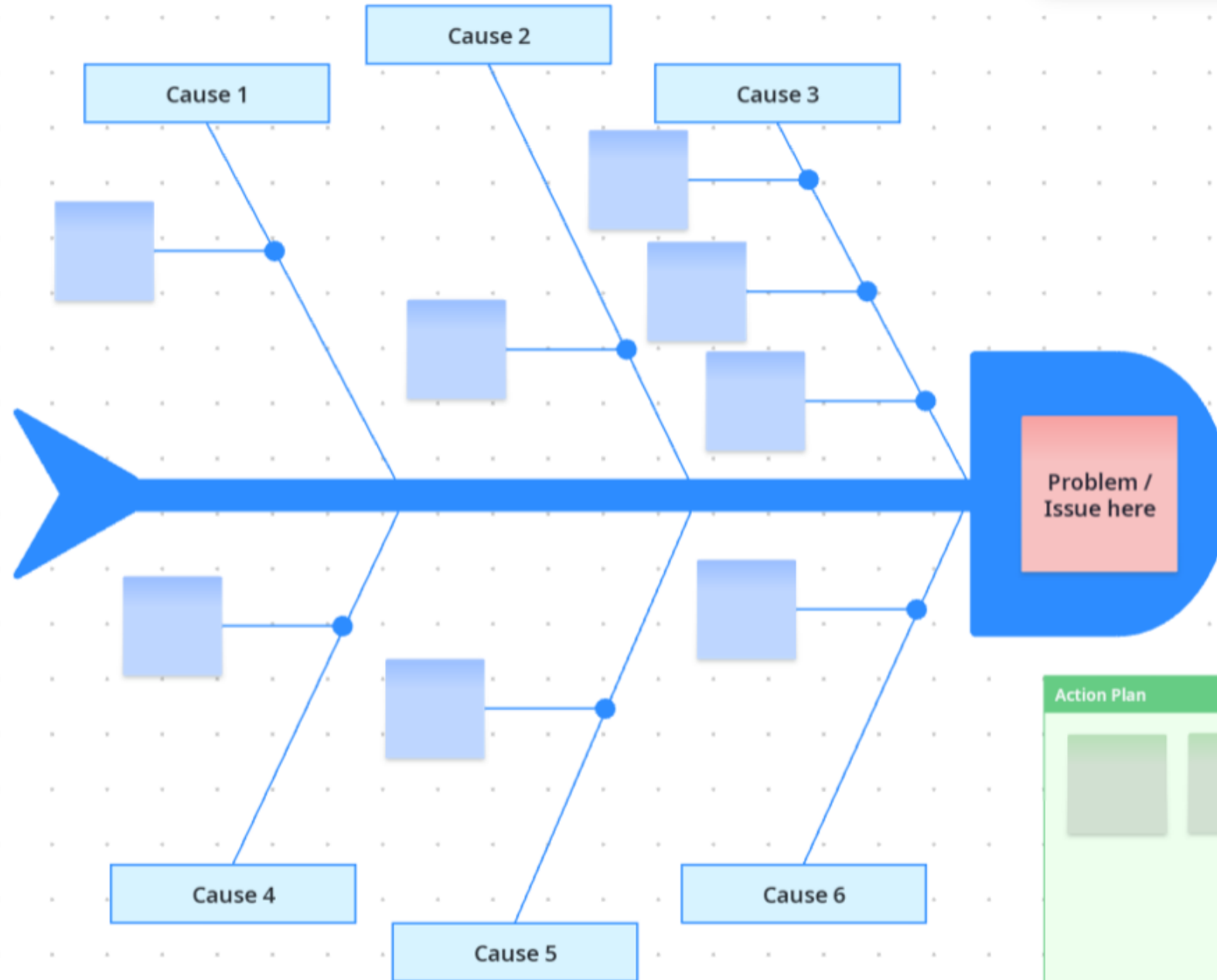
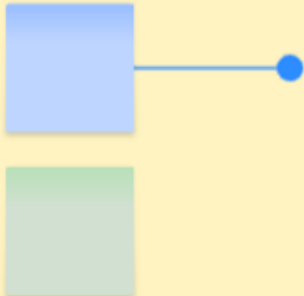
 People  
4 - 10 members

 Time  
1 hour

### How it works

- 5 mins  
Clearly state the problem or issue you want to address. This will be the "head" of the fishbone diagram.
- 5 mins  
Label the branches with major categories that might contribute to the problem. These categories are typically labeled as "causes" or "factors".
- 30 mins  
Under each category, brainstorm potential causes or factors that could contribute to the problem.
- 10 mins  
From the list of causes, identify the root causes, the fundamental factors that if addressed could lead to solving the problem.
- 10 mins  
Based on the analysis, determine actions or solutions that can address the identified root cause.

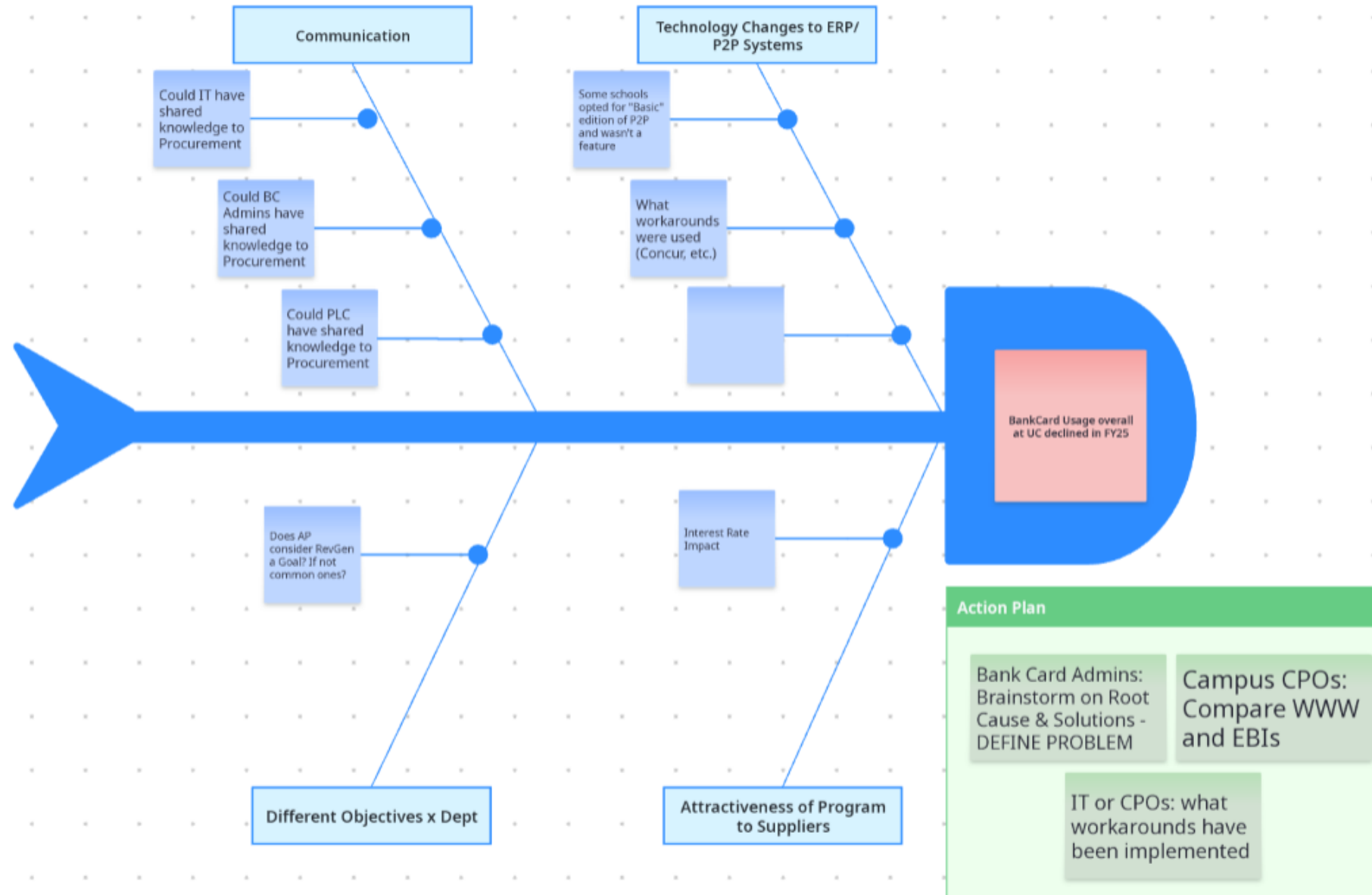
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### Action Plan



# Case Study **W.I.P.**: Bank Card Usage – Fishbone prior to Five Whys Analysis



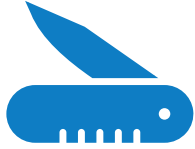


# Tips to Improve Root Cause Analysis

- ❑ Analyze the process first – Most root causes are hidden in process steps. Check for missing, ignored, or unclear standard procedures.
- ❑ Test your logic – Validate your Five Whys by reversing the chain using 'therefore'. Ensure the cause-effect sequence holds up.
- ❑ Monitor results – After applying countermeasures, observe for 30–90 days. If the problem returns, re-analyze.
- ❑ Learn and adapt – Involve people who do the work. Act quickly, reflect on what works, and improve over time.



# Five Whys Recap & Next Steps



- Quick, effective tool



- Traces issues to root cause



- Fosters collaboration



- Drives maturity and value



Try Five Whys next week; explore Zoom Whiteboard

Thank you!

Questions?

