

The 5 why's root cause analysis

Problem	Why	Action
Clients confidential records were not secured.	Files were in an unlocked filing cabinet.	Lock the filing cabinets.
Files were in an unlocked filing cabinet.	There was no room in the secure filing rooms to store the records.	Additional secure filing area to be identified.
There was no room in the secure filing rooms to store the records.	Consideration had not been given to the confidential filing requirements for new contracts.	Evaluate the availability of secure storage at the quarterly business meeting and identify when additional storage facilities are required.
Consideration had not been given to the confidential filing requirements for new contracts.	Staff who complete tenders were not aware of the confidentiality requirements of the records.	Provide training to staff on storage of records and confidentiality requirements.
Staff who complete tenders were not aware of the confidentiality requirements of the records.	This had not been considered in the tendering process.	Review tender process and include the requirement to include information about the storage of clients confidential records.

1 WHAT ARE THE FIVE WHYS?

Five whys (5 whys) is a problem-solving method that explores the underlying cause-and-effect of particular problems.

The primary goal is to determine the root cause of a defect or a problem by successively asking the question "Why?". The number '5' here comes from the anecdotal observation that five iterations of asking why is usually sufficient enough to reveal the root cause.

In some cases, it may take more or fewer whys, depending on the depth of the root cause.

2 HOW TO COMPLETE A FIVE WHYS ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

Begin with a specific problem. What is it that you are having an issue with? This can also help the team focus on the same problem.

Ask why the problem happened and write the answer down below the specific problem you listed in step one.

Keep asking "why" to each of the successive answers you write down until you reach the root cause of the problem.

Again, this may take more or less than five "why"s. Make sure your team sees eye-to-eye with each of the questions being answered as well as the final root cause.

3 KEY THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Distinguish causes from symptoms or causal factors

To make sure that you are attributing the correct answer to each "why", try working backwards. (Answer to the "Why?" + "and therefore" + the Problem Identified for that Question)

You can break down your answers as much as you like. The more the better.

Answers should always be based on facts and data

Last but not least, assess the process, not the people.

4 DOCUMENT OWNER AND APPROVAL

The Information Security Manager is the owner of this document and is responsible for ensuring that this procedure is reviewed in line with the review requirements of the ISMS.

5 CHANGE HISTORY RECORD

Issue	Description of Change	Author	Approval	Date of Issue
1	Initial issue	BSI and https://tulip.co/glossary/five-whys/	JSC Consultant	25.11.2021