



What is a Fishbone Diagram?

The Fishbone Problem Solving Tool uses the knowledge and experience of frontline team members to discover the root cause of problems impacting their work. Like the Five Why tool, it helps determine root cause, but it allows users to examine different reasons that the problem occurred. Once the problem and its root causes are understood, a plan can be put in place that improves the work process so the same problem does not happen again.

How to use the Fishbone Problem Solving Tool in 5 easy steps:

1. Assemble a team of people who are familiar with the problem and the process you're trying to improve. Include people who do the work and will have to live with the improvements you've made.
2. Define the problem as simply as possible. Get agreement and buy-in from the team. Write the problem at the head of the fish.
3. Select categories for possible causes of the problem. Traditional categories are: Materials, Methods, Machines, Measurement, and Manpower, but you can use whatever works best for you. Write each cause category on one rib of the fish.
4. For each category, ask "Why?" that might be the cause of the problem. Ask, "Why?" again and again to examine the answer to your previous "Why?" Keep going until you get to the root cause.
5. Develop a corrective action that addresses your root cause or causes and check to make sure your corrective action actually improves the process.

Example of Blank Diagram

