The Five Whys

Adapted from *The Change Agent's Guide to Radical Improvement*, Ken Miller, ASQ Quality Press, 2002

Purpose:
To uncover the root cause of a problem to ensure that proposed solutions address the problem, not just "symptoms" of the problem.

Method:
1. An action team co-chair writes the main issue, challenge or problem on a post-it note that is placed on the far left-hand side of a flipchart page, halfway down.
2. Each action team member writes on post-it notes the major causes of the issue. These notes become the second column on the flip chart.
3. When the action team members feel the that the primary causes have been identified (column two), each member writes brief notes about *why* the primary causes are occurring. These notes form the third column on the flip chart.
4. Repeat this process two more times, until you have at least one, and possibly several rows of "five whys."

Note: the use of post-it notes offers flexibility in arranging diverse responses from team members in a logical (hierarchical) fashion.

Duration: 30-45 minutes.

Tip: Read relevant sections of the TriWest Group report related to the issue you are analyzing prior to using this tool.

Example