Root Cause Analysis & Resolution

A simple guide and worksheet for the everyday leader who wants to get their organization unstuck and thriving

Root Cause Analysis & Resolution Guide & Worksheet

Start resolving the sticky issues so you and your organization can thrive

In every venture, whether for-profit, non-profit, lifestyle business or fortune 100, there are challenges and problems that reduce the efficiency of the organization. Sometimes they are small problems, sometimes they are big, but one thing is common to all of them.

The presenting problem is rarely the actual cause of the problem.

Unfortunately, many organizations chase problems like playing whack-a-mole, that old arcade game where no matter how much you hit the mole when its heads pops up, another one pops up in a different hole. Of course, we all know that the mole in the game isn't the reason we see it's head pop up, it's just a manifestation of what's happening under the surface.

Problems in organizations are much the same. The issues we observe and the problems that occur are rarely the source. Often there are more significant things happening beneath the surface that are the catalyst for the problems we see. When we jump to quick conclusions about the cause, it usually only helps for a short period of time. Then, some version of the same issue surfaces again and we get frustrated.

The best way to deal with these issues is to dive below the surface. Not every single time with every single issue, but especially with the ones that are repetitive, or have significant impact on our business or customers.

A simple way to dive under the surface is with a root cause analysis and resolution exercise. This is employed in many high risk industries like aviation, medicine, auto manufacturing, etc where the cost of mistakes is a person's life. You may not have a whole risk management plan and staff for your company, but that's why we built this tool - to make the benefits accessible for the everyday leader. In the next page, we'll walk you through the basics for using this tool and encourage you to try it out as you go. This can be done on your own, but is often most beneficial when you can get your leadership team to work through it together. Depending on the complexity of the problem, this could be a 30 minute group discussion or could take several hours.

If you run into questions or challenges along the way and want some help, reach out to us. We offer a standard Root Cause Analysis & Resolution Walkthrough, but have a special offer for you since you already took the first step to download this pdf. Just click this link to book a discounted call where we'll discuss this tool and how it's working for you.

To use the tool, follow the steps below:

01

Pick a problem that has been repetitive or you just can't seem to tackle. Write the problem in a concise statement expressing what happened in the box on the top of the worksheet. If it's a repetitive issue, boil it down to the common thing that keeps happening.

02

In the second row, list three reasons why the problem occurred by asking "Why did this happen?" Avoid stopping at this point because it's just a Level 1 Cause so you should refrain from taking immediate actions.

03

Start by asking "Why did that cause happen?" for each column, moving from Level 1 Cause to Level 2 Cause, until you reach the Root Cause row. Repeat the process for the other two columns to identify three root causes for the problem on the first page.

04

Transfer the three root causes from the first page to the three root cause boxes on the left hand side of the second page.

It might be tempting right now to jump into action and start trying to fix things. Do everyone a favor and resist that urge. Trust the process - you're halfway there and you'll like the results so much more if you keep going!

Next Page

05

For each root cause, list three potential solutions to address it. Example: if staff struggle to access process documents, a solution could be converting them into a mobile-friendly format. Brainstorm solutions for each root cause and document them in the Potential Solutions column.

By the way, if this example given in step 05 would be helpful for you, check out this short video to see a great solution we have that might be just what you need.

CLICK HERE

06

For each potential solution, estimate the additional resources you would need to implement that solution. It may be personnel or financial, but either way you need to assess the viability of that solution before you jump into it.

07

Decide on three specific next steps from your list of solutions, balancing between simple quick wins and more complex long-term solutions. Assign each action to a specific person with a due date for implementation.

08

The last step is you making sure to follow-up on those actions and requires you to incorporate those commitments into your normal task and project management system. As with everything else in your business, you'll only do the things for which you have built in a plan and accountability.

Ok, you are officially briefed and commissioned to get out there and start solving and resolving the issues that are keeping your organization stuck. We'd love to hear from you as you use this tool in expectation of a version 2.0 refresh in the future, so let us know your successes and any frustrations along the way!

EXPLORE MORE

COMPLETED

PS - if project and task management, or planning and accountability are challenges for you, we'd love to help. Book a call for our Effective Actioning service and we'll help get you moving.
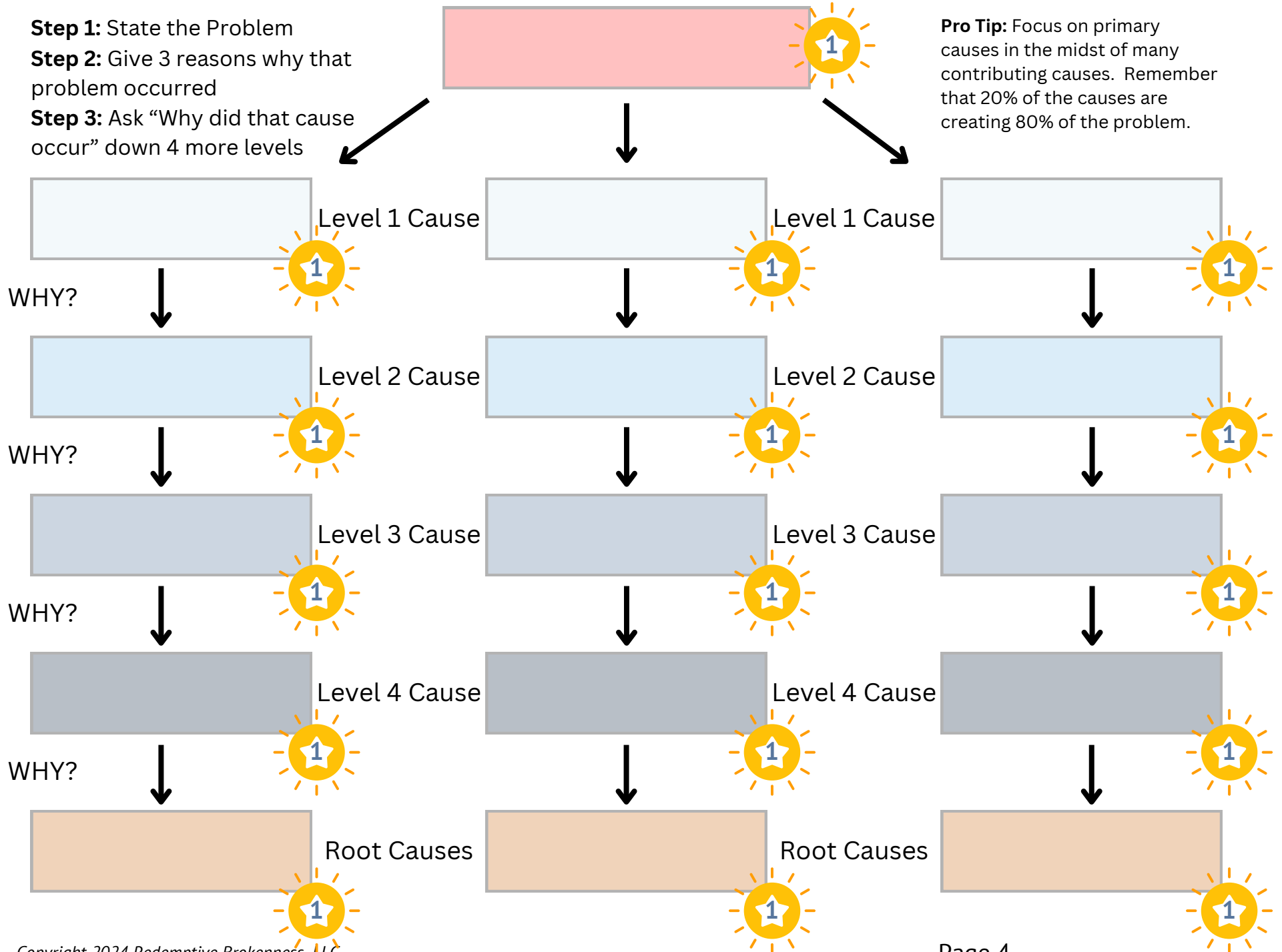
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Root Cause Analysis & Resolution Worksheet

Step 1: State the Problem

Step 2: Give 3 reasons why that problem occurred

Step 3: Ask "Why did that cause occur" down 4 more levels

Pro Tip: Focus on primary causes in the midst of many contributing causes. Remember that 20% of the causes are creating 80% of the problem.

WHY?

Level 1 Cause

Level 1 Cause

WHY?

Level 2 Cause

Level 2 Cause

WHY?

Level 3 Cause

Level 3 Cause

WHY?

Level 4 Cause

Level 4 Cause

Root Causes

Root Causes

Step 4: Transfer the Root Causes to this Page
Step 5: Identify potential solutions to the root causes
Step 6: Identify required resources for the solutions
Step 7: Commit to take 3 steps in the next week towards implementing your top 3 solutions

Pro Tips:
- Watch out for unintended consequences of solutions
- Look for single solutions that address multiple causes
- Your next steps might be to evaluate your resource options and select your top 3 solutions

Root Causes	Potential Solutions	Required Resources	Next Steps
			Next Step: Assigned To: By Date:
			Next Step: Assigned To: By Date:
			Next Step: Assigned To: By Date: