

Abstraction Ladder: Overview

What is your objective for this activity?

What: Asking '5 whys' allows us to get to the root cause of a given problem or issue

Why: When you look thoroughly at your current thought patterns and work to disrupt them, you can build new, innovative solutions for previously exhausted issues. You can also push through surface empathy and really start to connect.

1. Answer the 5 Why's

Ask a core question to your product or service then continue to ask “Why” four more times.

2. Create a Problem Statement

Create a problem statement using the root of the 5 Why's i.e., what’s the REAL problem

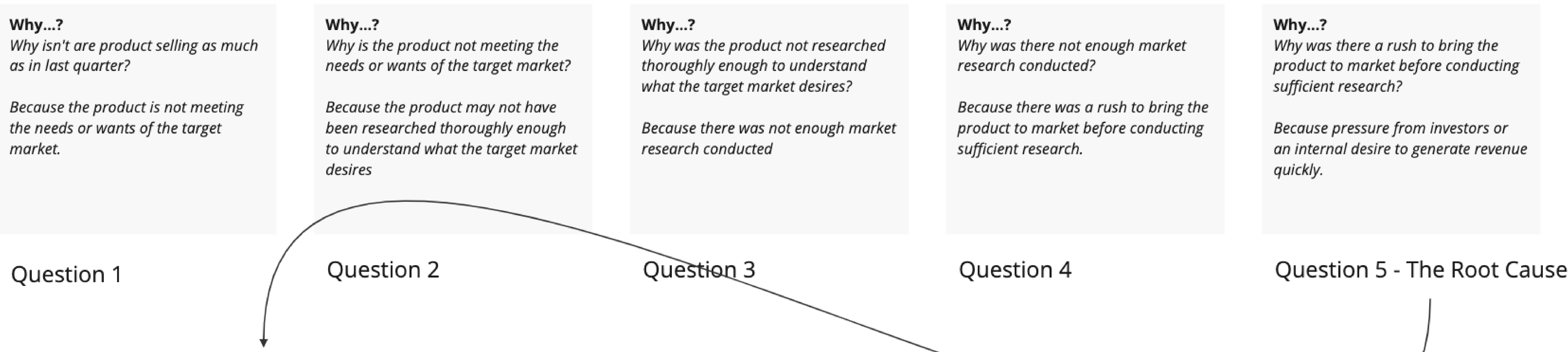
3. Abstraction Ladder using your Problem Statement

Using abstraction laddering, move up and down in abstraction using your problem statement. Move up the ladder by asking "How?", and move down by asking "Why?".

Problem Statement Example


Step 1: 5 Why's

Ask an initial question of why a current issue is happening. Build off from the first question by continuing to ask and answer why it is happening.



Step 2: Create your problem statement

The product is not selling due to a lack of understanding of the target market's needs and wants. This issue may have arisen due to a rush to bring the product to market, resulting in a lack of resources for research and a misconception that speed was more important than accuracy.

 A good problem statement should include the context of the problem and those affected by it. It should also be no longer than 3 sentences.

Step 3: Abstraction Ladder



Abstraction Ladder: Worksheet

Step 1:
Ask an initial question of why a current issue is happening. Build off from the first question by continuing to ask and answer why it is happening.

Question 1

Why...?

Question 2

Why...?

Question 3

Why...?

Question 4

Why...?


Question 5

Why...?

Next: move to step 2

Step 2: Create your problem statement

What are the problem, context, and stakeholders?

 A good problem statement should include the context of the problem and those affected by it. It should also be no longer than 3 sentences.

Step 3:

Abstraction Ladder

