



## Development directorate

### Five whys analysis

Spring 2007

*developing people, improving young lives*

**Notes**

## Five whys analysis

### What is it?

- A simple diagnostic tool to explore an 'intractable' issue
- Helps the team to understand all the causal factors that have a bearing on the change issue, ie. why it's so challenging!
- A more forensic analysis than Mind Mapping or Fishbone Analysis

### When would you use it?

- During the Deepen stage

### Are there any rules?

- Use it *always* before developing a solution; that way you avoid slipping into 'fix-it' mode and addressing symptoms rather than causes
- Never overlook using it; otherwise solutions may be shortlived and unsustainable

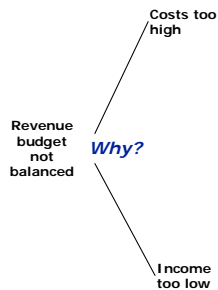


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## Notes

The five whys tool provides a more forensic analysis of an issue than that achieved by brainstorming, mind mapping, or fishbone analysis. Use it as a complement to these other tools, to drill down to the 'root' causes of an issue before embarking on the development of a solution.

## The five whys analysis identifies underlying causes to a challenging issue



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### Notes

Start your analysis with a concise statement of the challenge or change issue you are facing; in this example the challenge is: “Revenue budgets not balanced”.

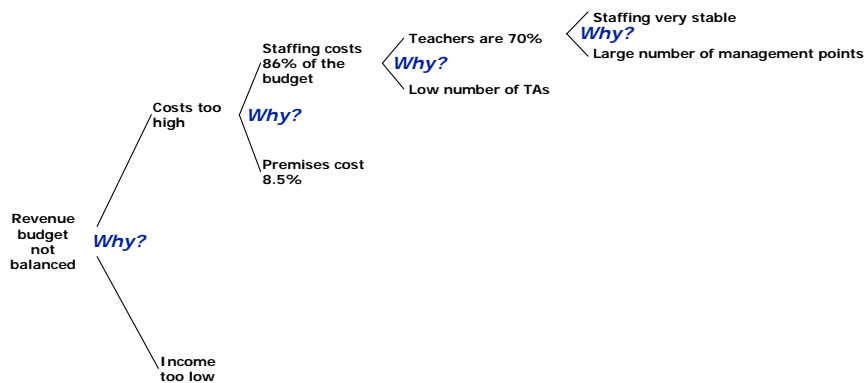
Having captured the issue on the left, move to the right and pose the question:

***“Why is that?”***

Capture the answers to that question as short, succinct phrases instead of single words. For example, rather than ‘Costs’ or ‘Income’, unpack these topics by describing the causes in a succinct phrase, such as ‘Costs are too high’ and ‘Income is too low’.

When deciding how best to capture the answer, it is good practice to check whether someone not involved in the analysis could nonetheless follow the logic of the analysis by reading your output afterwards.

## Posing the question “Why?” at successive levels of analysis



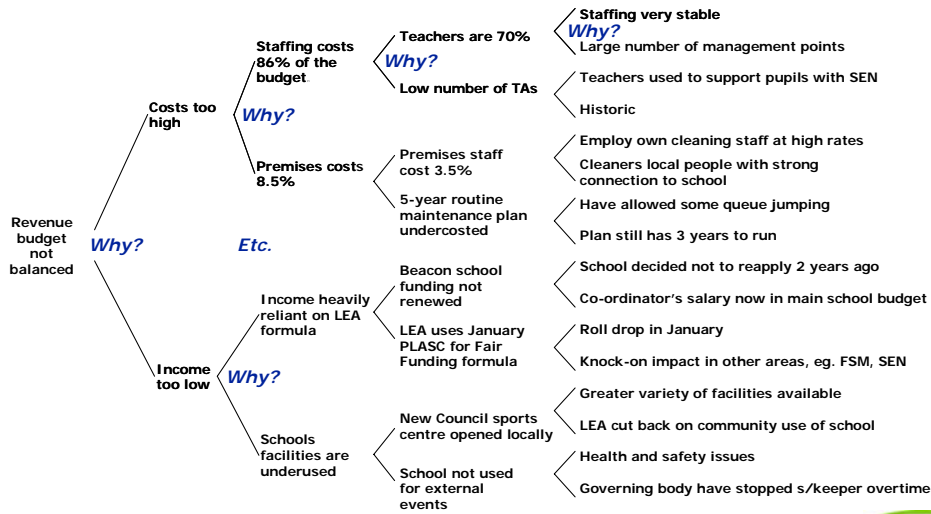
### Notes

Gradually work across, from left to right, as you pose the same question “**Why?**” at each successive level of your analysis. In this example we have worked the teaching staff cost issues through four levels of analysis.

Try to work a branch of your analysis to five levels or until you reach a ‘root’ cause – whichever comes first – before returning to a higher level and analysing another branch of the issue.

Note: For illustrative purposes in this example, we identified just two causes at each level. In your analysis there may well be more than two answers to “Why?” at each level.

## The five whys helps us to understand all the causal factors that condition a challenging issue



### Notes

The completed analysis identifies all the 'root' causes that must be taken into account in your solution to the issue. Not all of these will necessarily be within your immediate gift: for example, matters of government policy or those governed by legislation.

Nonetheless, having the insights from your analysis will ensure that your solution will be better informed and more embracing.