What is 5 Whys Problem Solving?
The 5 Whys Problem Solving technique is a simple process to follow to solve any problem by repeatedly asking the question “Why” (five times is a good rule of thumb), to peel away the layers of symptoms that can lead to the root cause of a problem. This strategy relates to the principle of systematic problem solving.

Proper uses of the technique:
1. To help identify the root cause of a problem
   - A root cause is the most basic reason, which if eliminated, would prevent reoccurrence.
2. Provides a framework for a team to work through a more complex problem
3. To solve problems as they occur

Improper uses of the technique:
1. To emphasize the person or blame: turning the 5 Whys into the 5 Whos
2. Making it a tedious, desk intensive project

Activity Procedure:
1. Write down the specific problem.
   - Writing the issue helps you formalize the problem and describe it completely.
   - It helps a team focus on the same problem.
   - Always describe the current condition.
   - Use data where possible.
     - Example: Overall customer complaints are up 50%.
2. Ask WHY the problem happens and write the answer down below the problem.
3. If the answer provided doesn’t identify the root cause of the problem that you wrote in step 1, ask WHY again and write that answer down.
4. Loop back to step 3 until the team is in agreement that the problem’s root cause is identified.

Case Example:
Problem Statement: Your company was unable to get the customer’s product request to them on time.
1. Why were you unable to produce the product on time?
   - Because the equipment failed.
2. Why did the equipment fail?
   - Because the circuit board burned out.
3. Why did the circuit board burn out?
   - Because it overheated.
4. Why did it overheat?
   - Because the air filter wasn’t changed.
5. Why wasn’t the filter changed?
   - Because there was no afternoon preventative maintenance shift scheduled to change it.