

**CareerSense**

# **The 5 whys of problem solving**



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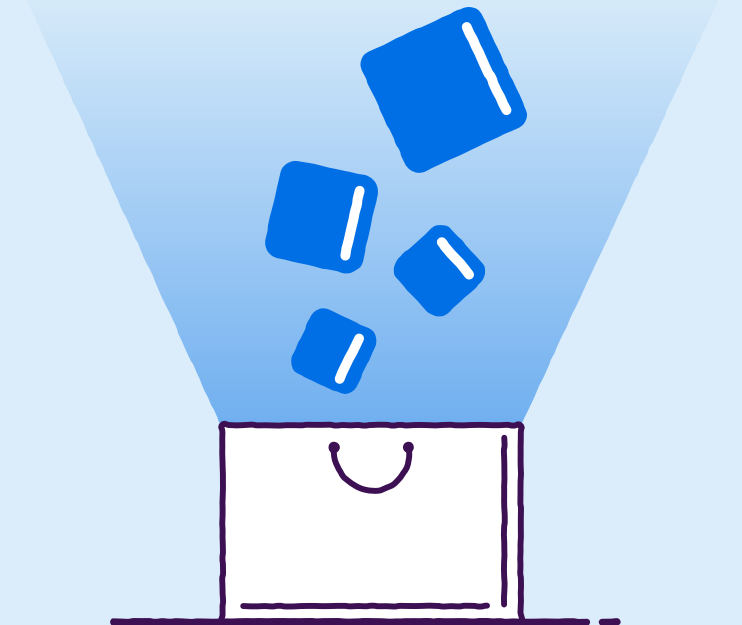
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## Here's a problem solving technique

The 5 Whys technique helps us get to the root cause of a problem. **A 5 Whys analysis means you ask why? up to five times, or sometimes even more.** This lets you drill down far enough to get to the root cause of a problem, and then decide what you need to do about it.



First, you select a cause. There may be more than one, so choose the one that seems to be having the most impact. **This is the most important of the 5 Whys: why does the problem exist?** With each answer, ask why again until you find the root cause.



Don't be afraid to be curious. **It may take five questions, or as many as fifteen, or as few as three.** The point is to be willing to explore all the possibilities. The 5 Whys technique makes sure you're getting to the root cause of a problem. That means you're not applying a quick fix to an issue that will crop up again later.



## Here's an example

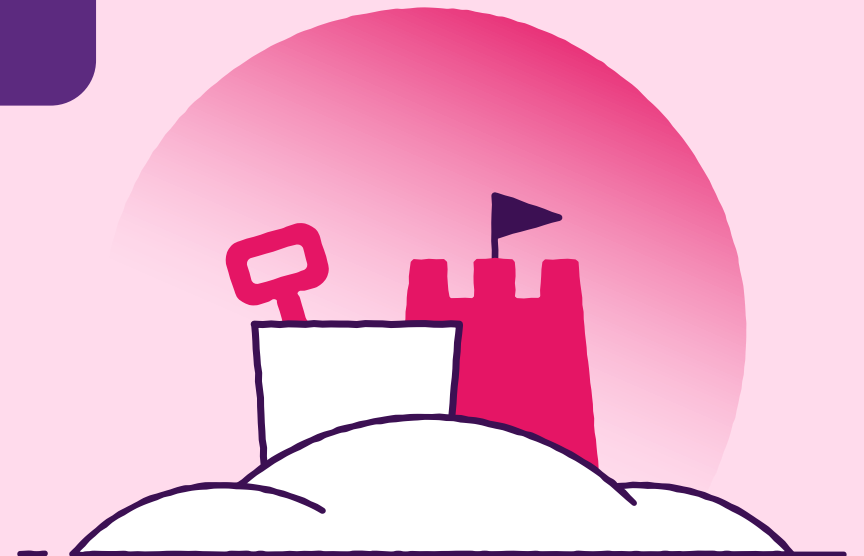
Suppose you're running an app development start-up. You run into a problem: you aren't receiving as many downloads of your app as you used to. Here's how you could apply the 5 Whys.

- 1 Why has the issue been brought to our attention?**  
The sales team noted a drop in downloads and noticed there was a technical issue with the app.
- 2 Why hasn't the testing team caught the issue?**  
The testing team only performed testing prior to and shortly after launch.



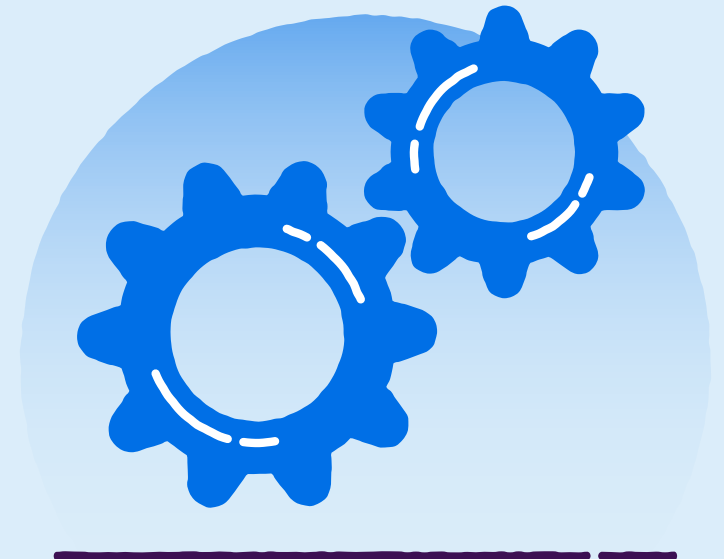
## Here's an example

- 3 Why hasn't continuous testing or spot checks been done?** Because the team don't have enough time and testers to do the testing.
- 4 Why is there not enough time for testing?** Because three other projects are tying the testers up.
- 5 Why was on-going testing and maintenance not built into the plan?**



## And so on...

The root cause of the problem may be that app maintenance wasn't considered enough. Your solution could be to ensure that planning always includes ongoing maintenance and testing. That could involve making sure you prioritise work according to importance and urgency.





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