DIGITAL SOCIAL IMPACT



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Five Whys

Description

Five Whys

The five whys method can be used to either locate the basic grounds for a problem or to find the different reasons for the same problem.

Course Configurator > Step 1: Design

Best used for

Problem solving/brainstorming. Root Cause Analysis. Idea/solution validation.

Time to introduce this activity in lecture / Time to run this activity

10-15 min / 30 min

In the context of Digital Social Impact courses and learning activities

The initial challenge proposed by the partner or seen by the users can be a symptom to a deeper issue. It helps to try to get really to the root cause. For this, the Five Whys are a proven method.

Main Target Group

Students with partner / users

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Potential tools for digitising this activity

Could be down via an online call/breakout rooms

Additional Resources

Five Whys Activity approach as profiled by the University of Copenhagen

Learn more about Five Whys Activity approach from

Step by Step â?? Two ways to use the five whys

1 In the first version, the intention behind the Five Whys is to find underlying reasons. Ask: â??Why did this problem occur?â?• When you have an answer, then ask: â??Why is this the caseâ?• and repeat the procedure until you have asked â??Whyâ?? five times. The answer to the fifth â??whyâ?? is probably the underlying reason. The following example is commonly given to discover the root cause of a car that will not start. So, â??The Car Will Not Startâ?• is the initial problem, which is written at the top. From there, the person using the 5 whys would ask these types of questions:

Why Wonâ??t the Car Start? â?? Answer: The battery is dead
Why is the Battery Dead? â?? Answer: The alternator is not working properly
Why isnâ??t the alternator working? â?? Answer: The serpentine belt has broken
Why did the serpentine belt break? â?? Answer: It was not replaced when worn
Why wasnâ??t it replaced? â?? Answer: The owner did not follow the recommended service schedule

2 In the second version, one also asks the question â??Whyâ?? five times, but this time, you are looking for varying reasons to a problem.

Problem: We have a loss in profits â?? why?
Because too few customers visit our shop â?? why?
Because a competitor has opened a shop down the road â?? why?
Because we have stopped advertising â?? why?
Because we donâ??t have enough staff to provide good service â?? why?
Because our selection is too narrow.

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