

Guiding Questions for Developing a Fishbone Diagram

Consider the guiding questions below while developing and reviewing the Fishbone Diagram. Remember that the Fishbone Diagram helps in determining and clarifying the problem. The questions below are designed to prompt the team to consider the problem from many angles. It is from this examination of the many factors, and causes of those factors embedded within the problem, that some of the best ideas about how to address the problem will emerge.

Problem Statement

- What problem are you trying to address?
- Is the problem clear, specific, and measurable?
- Is the problem clearly articulated?
- Does the problem seem too big to address? Is the problem too general? Is it unrealistic to think that any changes could be made related to the problem?
 - If the answer is yes to any of these questions, revisit the problem and try to focus or narrow it.

Factors/ Primary Causes

- Are the factors contributing to the problem? Are they directly related to the problem?
- Are the factors just symptoms of the problem? In other words, are they evidence of the problem rather than actual conditions or circumstances that contribute to the problem?
 - If the answer is yes to any of these questions, continue to brainstorm factors that are causing the problem.
- Do the factors represent the multiple perspectives of those involved?
- Is any critical perspective missing?

Potential/ Secondary Causes

- Are the potential causes directly related to the factors?
- Are the potential causes clearly stated?
- Are the causes at a more specific grain size than the factors? In other words, do they go further than the factors in terms of specifying the problem?