

# Root Causes at a Glance

Figuring out the source of any tension, conflict, or inefficiency can be difficult. Usually we are presented with the symptoms (high costs, low productivity, low morale, interpersonal conflicts, etc.) and have to “dig deep” to determine the root cause of the symptoms. Unless you identify and deal with the source, the issue will most likely remain or grow larger despite all other efforts. Identifying the source impacts your strategy for handling it. The root of the issue can usually be found on one of three levels. The following chart may be helpful in conducting a first glance effort of identifying the root cause.

1. Highlight the sources you believe are the underlying root cause of the presenting symptoms. The more teammates who can do this, the better as you will then be able to tabulate the input and see themes.
2. Discuss outcomes with team and begin to ask, “...and what might be causing that?” Ask this a number of times until you all agree you have reached the true root of the issue.
3. Brainstorm solutions.
4. Agree on next steps.
5. Follow up.

Organizational Sources	Team Sources	Individual Sources
Unclear strategic goals and/or vision	Unclear team direction and expectations	Communication and personality styles
Unclear corporate values	Unclear team or individual roles and responsibilities	Personal perspectives and beliefs
Ineffective or inconsistent policies and processes	Inefficient feedback and performance management systems	Conflicting values, philosophies, or opinions
Lack of organizational support and/or resources	Ineffective inter- and intra-team communication processes	Outward behavior and body language
Poor organizational structure	Inability to see cause and effect on team (silo thinking)	Lack of knowledge and/or job competence
Inefficient systems and job tools	Ineffective leveraging of team strengths	Education or experience levels
Ineffective organizational communications	Inefficient workflow/project management	Inaccurate or outdated facts
		Personal problems or distractions
		Disengagement