

Facilitation Tip 6: Utilize the Question Mark

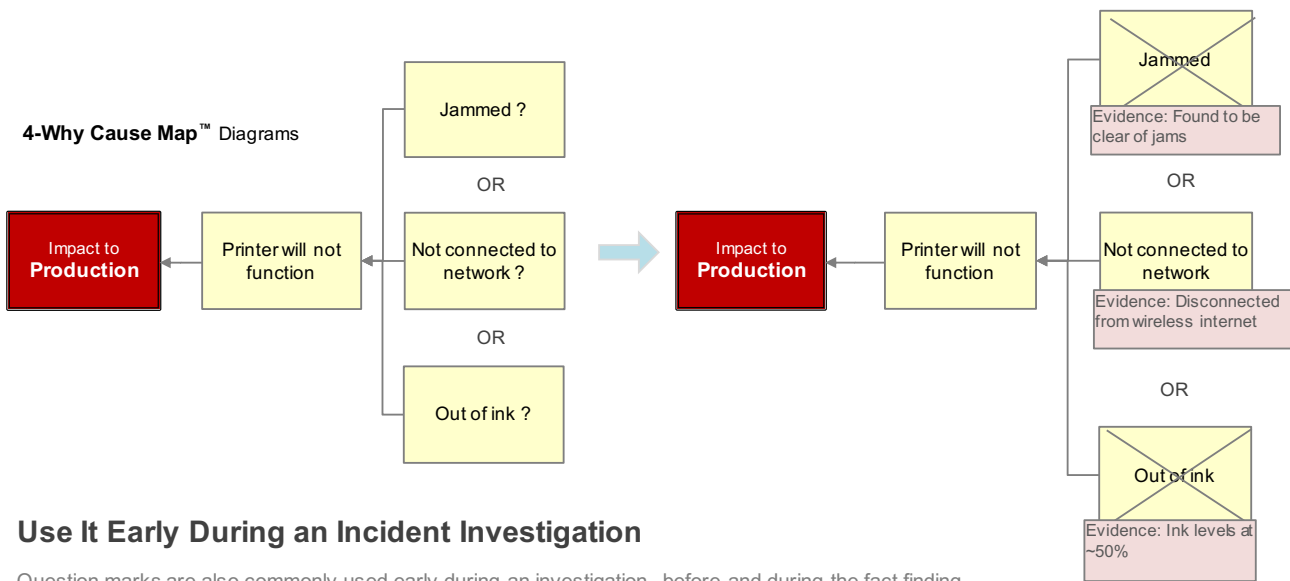
Believe it or not, the question mark can be a very powerful tool for a facilitator during an incident investigation. As the team is developing the problem outline or conducting the analysis and information is unknown or being debated, as a facilitator, you can keep the discussion moving forward by documenting the statement and including a question mark. This acts as an indication that additional information or evidence is required to prove or disprove the cause or the piece of information. This will then become "info to get" and be assigned an owner, so the team can move past the question and continue the investigation process. There isn't a lot of value in debating speculation, so this allows a quick and easy way to move forward. We capture all possible scenarios or perspectives and make a plan to proceed. If there are a lot of question marks on one section of the outline or on a certain section of the Cause Map™ diagram, it may be a good indication that the team has gone as far as they are able to without speculation. So, before proceeding, collect the required information. This will save the investigation team time and allow for more productive conversations.

Use the question mark to help:

- Capture differing perspectives without bogging down the conversation,
- Provide cues to the team of what may need to be validated with evidence or included in the next steps of the investigation, and
- Indicate to the unfamiliar reader what is unknown or uncertain (and underline the draft nature of your findings thus far).

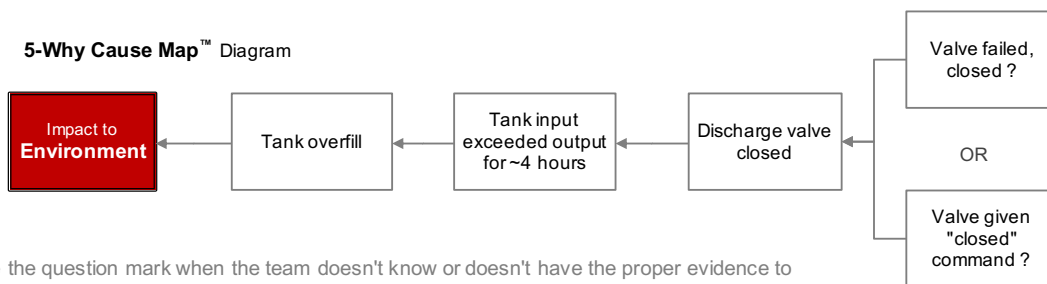
Use the Question Mark During Troubleshooting

Question marks are commonly used during the troubleshooting phase. Once evidence is collected and the cause of the issue are known (or better understood), the other causes will be crossed out--not deleted--and the associated evidence documented.



Use It Early During an Incident Investigation

Question marks are also commonly used early during an investigation--before and during the fact finding stages. They provide an indication of what needs to be learned or collected. In the below example, it's clear that we need to understand why the discharge valve was closed.



LESSON: Utilize the question mark when the team doesn't know or doesn't have the proper evidence to prove or disprove a cause. This will allow the discussion to continue past the potential debates, differing perspectives or unknowns to give a clear direction of what needs to be further understood in the investigation.

Learn how to find better solutions by diagramming the details within your problems. Being effective at cause-and-effect analysis is a career skill, and it's the focus of our *Cause Mapping* training. Attend a free webinar, an online short course or one of our full online *Cause Mapping* Root Cause Analysis workshops. Visit www.thinkreliability.com/events for more details about our upcoming training schedule.

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Check out this video that further explains the value of the question mark as you collect information during your incident investigations.

(5 minutes)