

Laddering

Description

This activity allows you to have a conversation 'up the ladder' (more abstract) or 'down the ladder' (more concrete). The technique encourages you to use "Why" and "How" to look at a problem through different levels of focus as you move up and down the ladder in order to analyse it better.

Level ★★☆☆☆

🕒 15-60 mins

👥 3-20 people

Materials & Prep

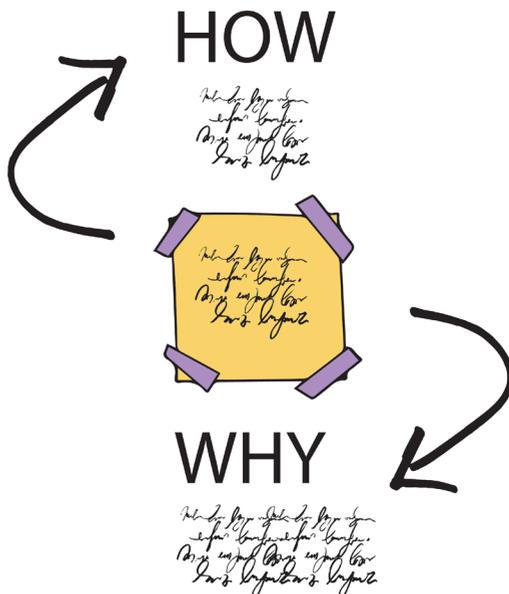
This exercise can be done on a whiteboard, a large poster board, or even just a piece of paper.

Markers

Access Online Toolkit



explorations.cyprusinteractionlab.com



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Case Study

The head of the department used the method to focus more deeply on wide issues for improvement identified by the national accreditation agency in their review of the department. Through this method, comments such as 'the department needs to connect better to the industry' became specific lines of inquiry identifying that connection to the industry requires 'bringing back alumni for visits', 'adding a new practice course' and 'creating agreements with industry partners'.

Process

Step 1. Gather your team and write your problem statement in the middle of your board.

Step 2. Using statement starters, zoom out from the problem (i.e., move up the ladder) by asking, "Why?" (i.e why are we having this problem?)

Step 3. Use "How" questions to move down the ladder in an effort to focus the problem. (i.e how can we make this happen?)

Step 4. Do not spend too much time organizing the team's thoughts while moving up and down the ladder. The exercise will be more effective if the team is free to state their thoughts as they occur to them.

Tip! If you have a large team (>10 participants) you can make smaller teams to work on the same problem statement and then have each team present their board and share thoughts.