



## Wise to the WHY

### Understanding clients' needs leads to stronger project outcomes

As airline travel continues to grow at a rapid pace, airports worldwide strive to provide infrastructure and technology to meet demand of modern day travel. Expanding and developing airports are particularly tricky because they must be completed efficiently while still enabling airlines to remain at maximum operational capacity.

The key to approaching these endeavours in a manner that benefits all stakeholders and delivers on expectations rests firmly within the ability to understand our client's business model and operational requirements. While this seems like common sense, it's actually all too easy to become focused on developing the end product, when the real success is at the beginning of the project by understanding and appreciating WHY?

Airports and airlines each have their own fundamental needs and often developing the project requires a "Tetris-game" like approach to fit the works around the demands of the operational environment we're in. By way of example we highlight within this article one particular priority for airlines: bay availability.

For an airline, bay availability is tied directly to revenue and customer satisfaction. Reducing the amount of space available to park and service aircraft could ultimately cause the company to lose significant revenue every day - not to mention the likelihood of damaging public relations due to reduced flight schedules, inconvenient boarding processes and flight delays.

These issues don't just affect the local airport operations. An airline's flight schedules are a much more complex puzzle which must consider aircraft departing and arriving from destination airports. Any delay to on-time performance (OTP) could result in a domino effect, impacting flights in multiple destinations.

Similarly, airports rely upon bay availability to meet the requirements of lease agreements and service those airlines through the common-use gates. The more construction works impact these arrangements, the more time and resource required to negotiate amended agreements with airlines and potentially impact long-standing relationships.



## The heart of the project: Understanding why?

Each construction project is an investment for success and we cannot expect to achieve strong results without understanding why- in terms of the project deliverables and our client's needs.

Why are we delivering the project? Why are these works important to our client? Why are these works important to the stakeholders? Why will these works affect the stakeholders?

Continuing to ask and answer questions of why at the outset of the project develops a deeper appreciation of and connection with our stakeholders for the delivery of the project. Having this appreciation will formulate a stronger, more flexible plan from the very beginning and result in less confrontation and effort throughout the delivery phase of the works.

How can we foster this deep understanding? We suggest using the "5 Whys" model to dig into the greater purpose behind a project, the root causes of issues and the broader needs of our clients.

## Asking the 5 Whys

The 5 Whys method is an analysis framework that recognises the most important information often lies beneath the surface. Originally created by vehicle manufacturer Toyota, the technique involves asking the question "why" at least five times - until you hit the root of the matter.

After you identify a question, come up with as many causes or reasons as you can. Then, ask "why" again for each of those responses. The result will be a better understanding of your client's needs and the greater purpose of the project.

As an example relating back to maximising bay availability:

- 1 Why** is bay availability important to our clients? To adhere to the lease agreements in place between airport and airline.
- 2 Why?** To minimise flight turnaround times and maximise flight schedules.
- 3 Why?** So flights can maintain successful on time departures and customers aren't frustrated.
- 4 Why?** Because these are key performance indicators (KPIs) for the airline.
- 5 Why?** Increase customer base and business revenue.

After asking the whys, you'll be able to develop strategies to address all of the real issues and implement the "How". How will we deliver the project while supporting our client's core KPIs? This is where our value-add commences. As project managers we are engaged to deliver positive project outcomes for our clients, and with a strong understanding and appreciation of our stakeholders' needs, we are investing ourselves to ensure success. ■

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