Embrace change: Why asking "Why" is vital for business growth

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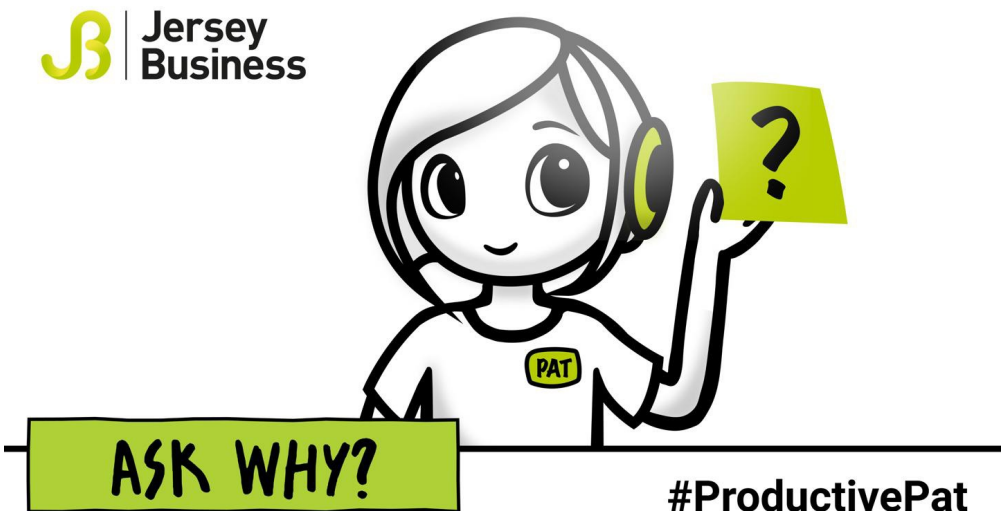
As children, we learn about the world around us by getting to the bottom of those burning questions and asking ‘why’. Why is the sky blue? Why must I eat vegetables? Why do I have to go to sleep? It's a simple word, yet it holds the power to unravel complexities, challenge assumptions, and pave the way for growth.

However, as we get older, our confidence to keep asking why and challenge the status quo dampens. This can be especially true in the workplace. The spirit of curiosity in some organisations is stifled by complacency and fear of change. Employees may hesitate to challenge the status quo at work for fear of rocking the boat. Yet, this reluctance to question inhibits progress and innovation.



At the heart of every successful business lies a culture of questions, an open

pursuit of understanding the rationale behind actions and decisions. Much like children probing the world around them, employees of these organisations happily ask "why". Why do we operate the way we do? Why do certain processes exist? Why do we allocate resources in a particular manner?

As business leaders, by embracing curiosity we unlock untapped potential and drive productivity in our organisations.

The Five (or more) Whys

The concept of the "five whys" is a powerful tool. By asking "why" at least five times, we can peel back the layers of surface-level issues to reveal underlying systemic flaws. It's a method that forces us to address fundamental issues head-on.

Consider the case of a life science business confronted with a costly error. By delving into the root cause with a series of "why" questions, it uncovered a chain of events that led to an expensive mistake. Here's how it looked:

- A batch of materials had to be poured away at a cost of £40,000 to the business – WHY?
- Because the batch got contaminated – WHY?
- Because two solutions had been mixed incorrectly – WHY?
- Because someone has picked up the wrong bottle – WHY?
- Because the person has misread the label – WHY?
- Because someone had unclearly hand-written the label…

Finally, we're at the very root cause of the problem – unclear labelling. The solution to stop this expensive mistake happening again? A label printer. Through this process, the company not only rectified the immediate problem but also implemented safeguards to prevent its recurrence.

Embracing Change

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, clinging to outdated practices – such as handwritten notes - is a recipe for stagnation and error. What worked yesterday may no longer suffice in the face of new challenges and opportunities. Embracing change requires a willingness to challenge assumptions, rethink processes, and continually adapt to shifting realities.

As business leaders, we must cultivate a culture of curiosity - one where asking "why" is not only encouraged but celebrated. By challenging the status quo and embracing change, we can position our businesses for sustained

growth and success in an ever-changing world. So, the next time you find yourself hesitating to ask "why," remember: curiosity is not a childish trait - it's the catalyst for transformation in business and beyond.

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on the 5 whys? It's time to ask the important questions