Root Cause Finder

Separate the symptom from the cause before you spend.

Choose one brand, one problem, and one customer group. Use evidence, not internal opinion. This worksheet helps you form and test a hypothesis; it does not prove a root cause.

Brand / product:

Date / owner:

01 Name the symptom

What changed, for whom, where, and when? Write the metric, baseline, and current result. “Sales are down” is too broad.

02 Separate facts from assumptions

What have customers, retailers, or purchase data actually shown? Note the source and date. Label anything you have not verified as an assumption.

03 Find the point of failure

Where does the problem show up: discovery, understanding, first purchase, product experience, or repeat purchase? Which customers or channels are unaffected?

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Investigate the six Ps. Let the evidence lead.

For each P, record the evidence or the question you still need to answer. Look for competing explanations and connections between Ps. A suspicion is not a finding.

01 Proposition

Is the benefit relevant, distinct, and believable to the intended customer? Check comprehension, reasons to choose, and proof.

02 Product

Does the experience deliver the promise? Check usage, complaints, returns, and repeat purchase.

03 Pack

Can customers find, recognize, understand, and use it? Check shelf visibility, label clarity, familiar cues, and usability.

04 Price

Does the perceived value justify the price? Check price acceptance, alternatives, pack sizes, and reliance on discounts.

05 Place

Is it available where the intended customer buys? Check distribution, stockouts, channel fit, placement, and access.

06 Promotion

Does communication reach the right people with a clear reason to buy? Check reach, message comprehension, claims, and conversion.

Evidence / source / date, or an unanswered question. Mark each P: supported, suspected, or not yet assessed.

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Challenge the explanation. Choose the next test.

04 Compare the possible causes

Which three explanations from the six-P review best fit the symptom? What supports each one, what contradicts it, and which evidence is missing?

05 Choose a working hypothesis

We believe _____ is causing _____ because _____. What evidence would contradict this explanation?

06 Run the smallest useful test

What will you change or investigate? Name the owner, comparison, success metric, decision threshold, and review date before you begin.

DECISION AFTER THE TEST

Support the hypothesis, reject it, or gather more evidence. Record what the result permits you to decide; do not treat a promising signal as proof.