

# Facilitation Tip 15: Minimize Speculation

A facilitator coordinates all the steps of an investigation and builds a Cause Map™ diagram that accurately represents what did happen. The incident occurred one way. It has causes; it does not have possible causes. The *investigation* may have possible causes because the team is unsure of specifics -- they're missing evidence. If the team doesn't have sufficient evidence, possible cause(s) can be labeled with a question mark (see Facilitation Tip #6). Don't spend a lot of time speculating or making up potential alternative scenarios. When evidence is missing, you can make educated guesses, but you must collect evidence. Conjecture can drag on, and people will speculate on speculation, but they shouldn't. Identify what is unknown and label it with a question mark. The meeting may be much shorter than scheduled because of those unknowns (question marks). Use that time to collect the necessary information, then reconvene. Details and facts are essential to conduct a thorough investigation. An investigation team should be biased to evidence, not opinion.

Minimizing speculation will:

- Keep the investigation and findings factual,
- Provide cues for where evidence or follow-up is required, and
- Make meetings more efficient and productive.

**Facilitation Tip 15**

Check out this video that further explains why speculation should be minimized in your incident investigations.

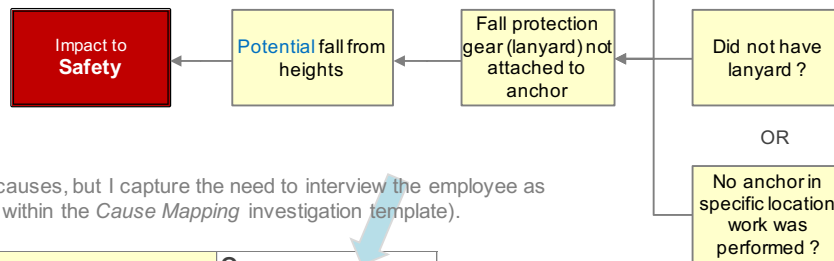


(5 minutes)

## Potential Fall from Heights

The below *Cause Map* diagram may represent a team's first meeting. There were a couple of possible causes the team identified, but it became clear we needed to interview the employee to understand what happened and why.

5-Why Cause Map™ Diagram



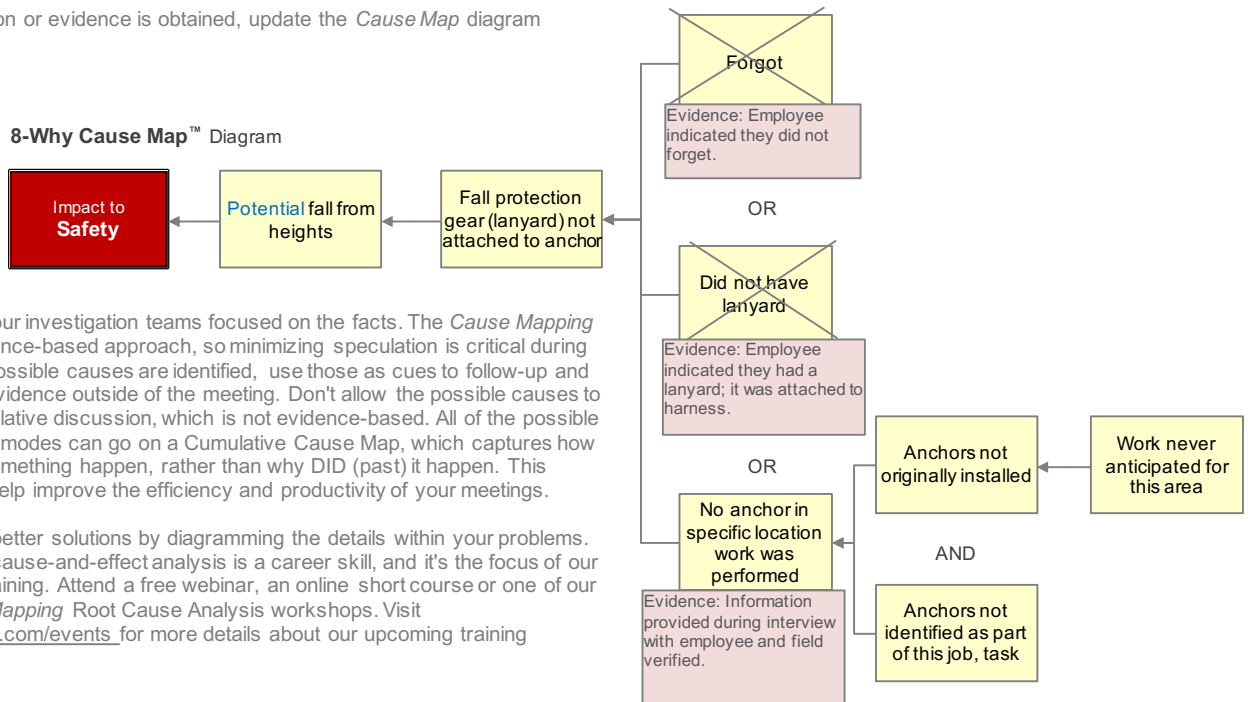
### Info To Get

I may document a couple of the suggested causes, but I capture the need to interview the employee as "info to get," which has its own worksheet within the *Cause Mapping* investigation template).

No.	Investigation Action Items:	Owner
1	Interview employee to understand why lanyard was not worn.	Jane Smith

Once the information or evidence is obtained, update the *Cause Map* diagram accordingly.

8-Why Cause Map™ Diagram



**LESSON:** Keep your investigation teams focused on the facts. The *Cause Mapping* method is an evidence-based approach, so minimizing speculation is critical during your analyses. If possible causes are identified, use those as cues to follow-up and obtain validating evidence outside of the meeting. Don't allow the possible causes to devolve into speculative discussion, which is not evidence-based. All of the possible causes and failure modes can go on a Cumulative Cause Map, which captures how COULD (future) something happen, rather than why DID (past) it happen. This facilitation tip will help improve the efficiency and productivity of your meetings.

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](http://www.thinkreliability.com/events) for more details about our upcoming training schedule.