HR Root Cause Analysis

GUIDE

Getting to the Root of a Problem

In the world of HR, challenges such as employee dissatisfaction, turnover, and workplace conflicts are common. However, treating only the symptoms of these issues is like bandaging a wound without addressing its root cause.

The pitfalls of symptom management

Addressing the symptoms of HR problems may provide temporary relief, but it fails to tackle the root cause beneath the surface. For instance, offering financial incentives to boost employee morale may temporarily uplift spirits. However, if the underlying cause of dissatisfaction remains unaddressed, the problem will persist and resurface in different forms.

The need for root cause analysis

Identifying the root causes of HR challenges is paramount for implementing effective and sustainable solutions. Root cause analysis involves delving deep into the core factors contributing to a problem, whether they stem from organizational culture, leadership deficiencies, inadequate policies, or systemic issues.

BENEFITS OF ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

Sustainable solutions

By unraveling the root causes of HR problems, organizations can implement solutions that address underlying issues, fostering long-term improvements rather than short-lived fixes.

Resource optimization

Root cause analysis enables HR professionals to allocate resources judiciously, focusing efforts on areas where they can have the most significant impact.

Enhanced resilience

Understanding the root causes of HR challenges empowers organizations to build resilience, proactively mitigating future issues and adapting to evolving dynamics.

The Fishbone Diagram

In this resource, you will explore the fishbone diagram as a tool for conducting root cause analysis in the realm of human resources. The fishbone diagram provides a structured approach to identifying and categorizing potential causes underlying a particular problem.

By visually mapping out various factors contributing to HR challenges, you can systematically explore the interconnected relationships between different elements, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of root causes.
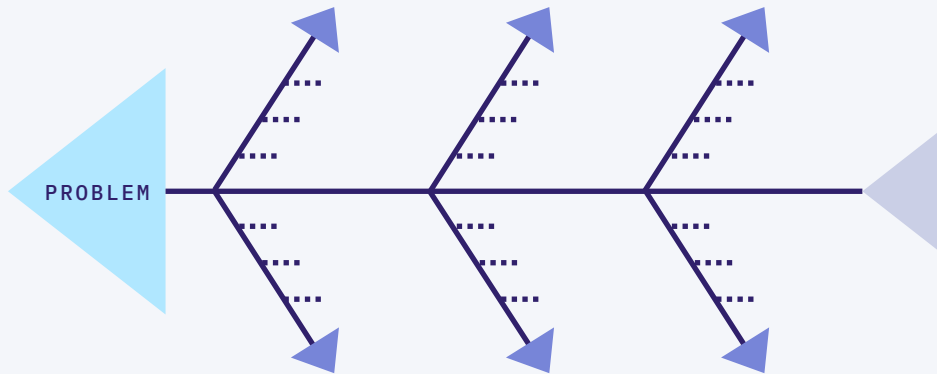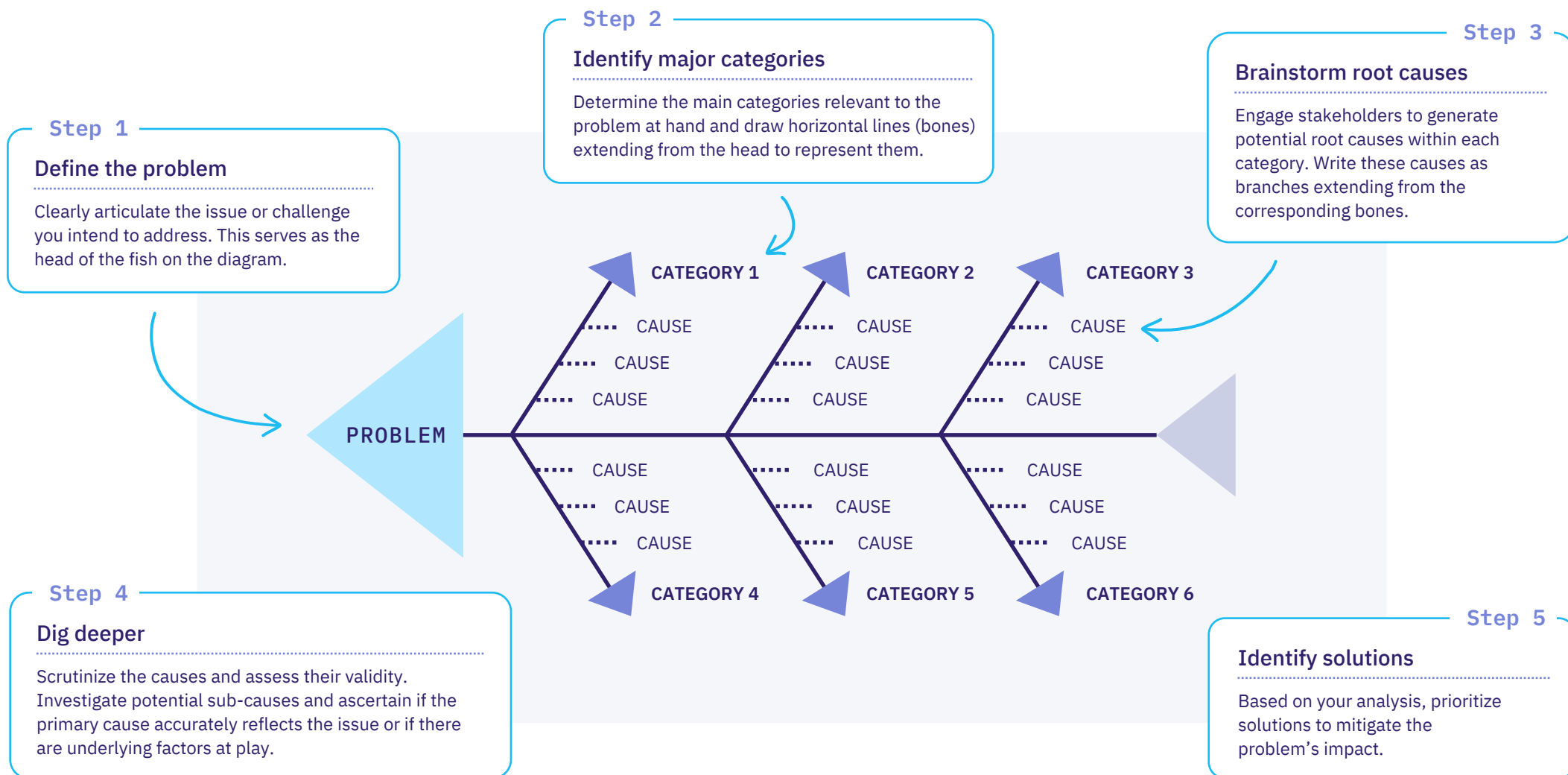

The fishbone diagram

Fun fact!

The Fishbone Diagram was originally developed in the 1960s by Dr. Kaoru Ishikawa, a prominent Japanese quality control expert. He initially created this visual tool to explore the root causes of shipbuilding problems. The fishbone diagram gained popularity due to its effectiveness in helping teams systematically analyze and address complex issues.

Understanding the Fishbone Diagram

At its core, the fishbone diagram resembles the skeletal structure of a fish, hence its name. It consists of a central horizontal line representing the problem or effect under scrutiny, with diagonal lines branching out like ribs. These branches categorize various potential causes contributing to the identified problem. Commonly utilized categories include people, processes, environment, equipment, and management, which should be customized to suit specific contexts.

Step 2

Identify major categories

Determine the main categories relevant to the problem at hand and draw horizontal lines (bones) extending from the head to represent them.

Step 3

Brainstorm root causes

Engage stakeholders to generate potential root causes within each category. Write these causes as branches extending from the corresponding bones.

Step 1

Define the problem

Clearly articulate the issue or challenge you intend to address. This serves as the head of the fish on the diagram.

PROBLEM

CATEGORY 1
CAUSE
CAUSE
CAUSE

CATEGORY 2
CAUSE
CAUSE
CAUSE

CATEGORY 3
CAUSE
CAUSE
CAUSE

CAUSE
CAUSE
CAUSE
CATEGORY 4

CAUSE
CAUSE
CAUSE
CATEGORY 5

CAUSE
CAUSE
CAUSE
CATEGORY 6

Step 4

Dig deeper

Scrutinize the causes and assess their validity. Investigate potential sub-causes and ascertain if the primary cause accurately reflects the issue or if there are underlying factors at play.

Step 5

Identify solutions

Based on your analysis, prioritize solutions to mitigate the problem's impact.
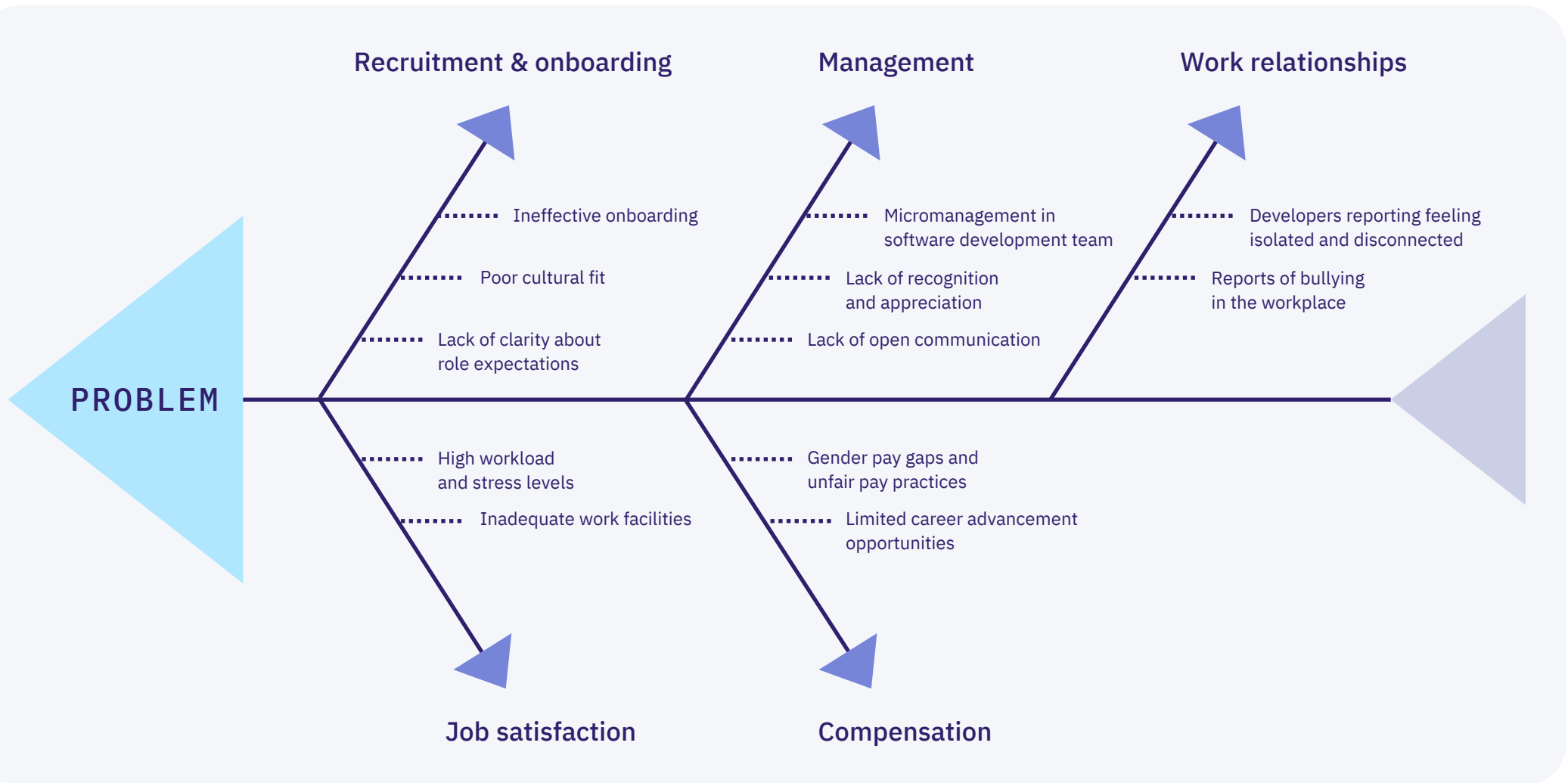
Scenario 1: High Employee Turnover

Pixel, a midsized technology company, faces a surge in staff turnover, notably in its software development team. Despite competitive compensation, skilled developers are leaving rapidly, affecting projects and team morale.

Alina, an HRBP, is tasked with investigating the issue. She analyzes Pixel's context and data from exit interviews and engagement surveys to categorize and identify causes with stakeholders.
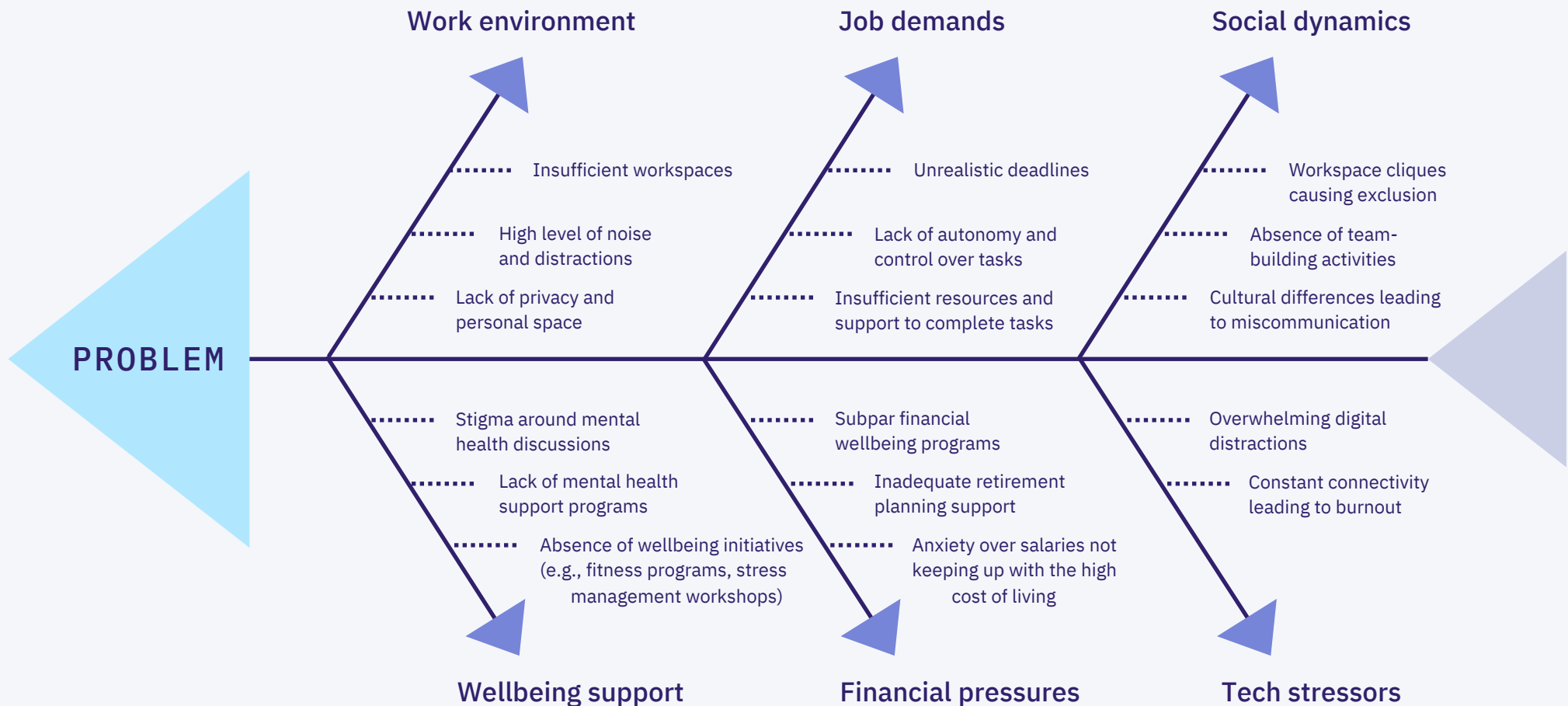
Recruitment & onboarding

- Ineffective onboarding
- Poor cultural fit
- Lack of clarity about role expectations

Management

- Micromanagement in software development team
- Lack of recognition and appreciation
- Lack of open communication

Work relationships

- Developers reporting feeling isolated and disconnected
- Reports of bullying in the workplace

PROBLEM

- High workload and stress levels
- Inadequate work facilities

Job satisfaction

- Gender pay gaps and unfair pay practices
- Limited career advancement opportunities

Compensation

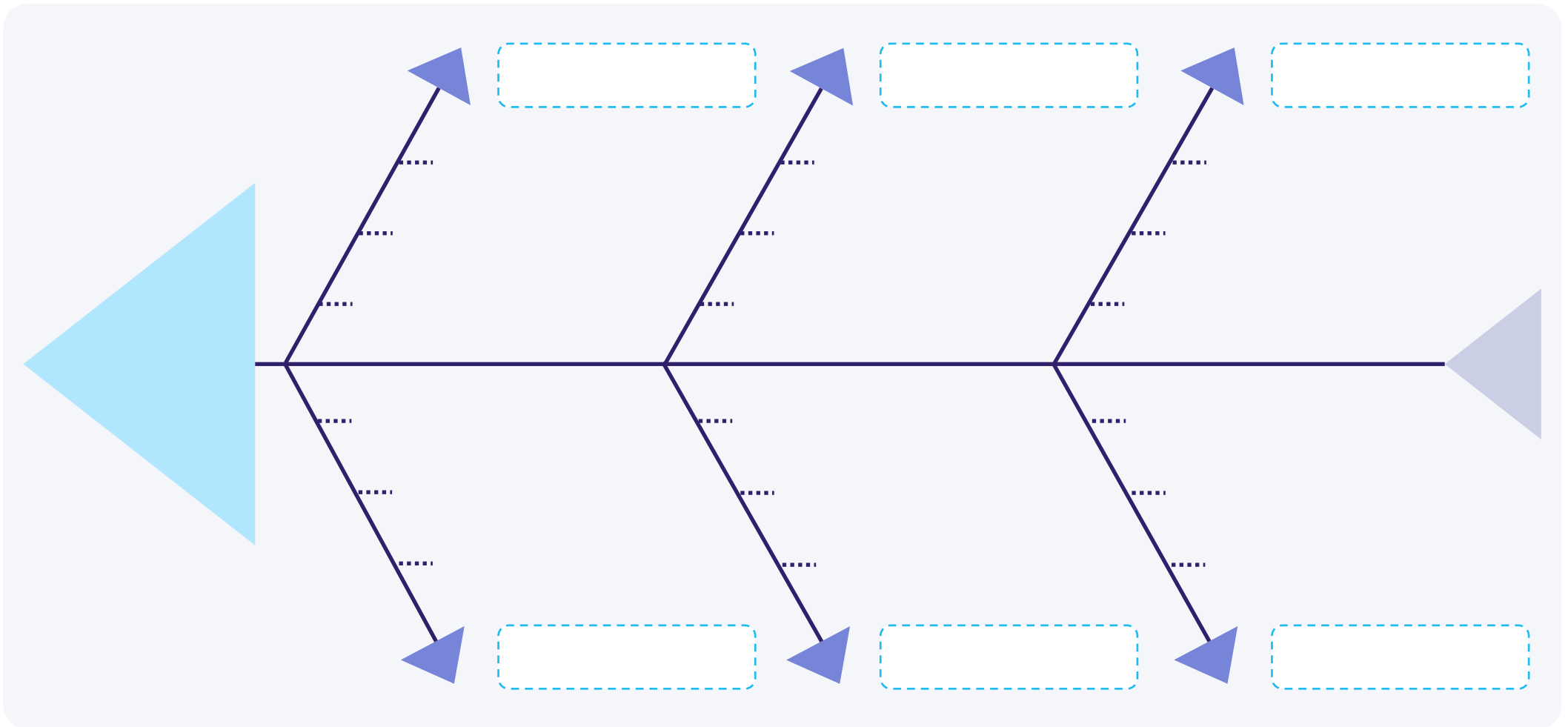# Scenario 2: Decline in Employee Wellbeing

MONSTERA creative design

Monstera, a creative design agency, is witnessing a worrying decline in workplace wellbeing among its employees despite its innovative culture. Stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction are on the rise, leading to decreased productivity and morale. Henry, an HR manager, is tasked with investigating and addressing this issue.

Recognizing the decline across departments, Henry approaches it as a company-wide problem. After conducting a wellbeing survey, he discovers various contributing factors, ranging from work environment to financial pressures.

Work environment

- Insufficient workspaces
- High level of noise and distractions
- Lack of privacy and personal space

Job demands

- Unrealistic deadlines
- Lack of autonomy and control over tasks
- Insufficient resources and support to complete tasks

Social dynamics

- Workspace cliques causing exclusion
- Absence of team-building activities
- Cultural differences leading to miscommunication

PROBLEM

- Stigma around mental health discussions
- Lack of mental health support programs
- Absence of wellbeing initiatives (e.g., fitness programs, stress management workshops)

Wellbeing support

- Subpar financial wellbeing programs
- Inadequate retirement planning support
- Anxiety over salaries not keeping up with the high cost of living

Financial pressures

- Overwhelming digital distractions
- Constant connectivity leading to burnout

Tech stressors

Utilizing the Fishbone Diagram

Keep in mind ⚠️

We encourage you to tailor the fishbone method to effectively address your specific requirements. Depending on the complexity of your problem, you may need to adjust the number of categories or causes accordingly. In this regard, utilizing a collaborative digital tool or drawing on a physical board can cater to your unique situation.

Tip 💡

As you progress, feel free to add, remove, or refine categories as needed. Occasionally, you may discover that a category isn't as pertinent as initially presumed, or unexpected categories may emerge. Flexibility is key in this process!

Operationalizing the Fishbone Diagram

After conducting your root cause analysis, it is vital to document your findings and recommendations to facilitate the implementation of effective solutions. On the right are listed the essential elements your documentation should cover. You can use this checklist to ensure your report includes all necessary components.

Problem statement

Clearly state the HR problem you've investigated. ☐

Root causes

Summarize the primary and contributing causes identified through the fishbone analysis. ☐

Impact evaluation

Assess the impact of the root causes on the organization and its employees. ☐

Recommendations

Propose actionable solutions to address the root causes and mitigate the problem's impact. ☐

Implementation plan

Outline steps for implementing the recommendations, including timelines, responsible parties, and resources required. ☐

Monitoring and evaluation

Define metrics for measuring the effectiveness of the solutions and establish a process for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. ☐