

Plotting the Group's History

The Historical Scan or Journey Wall Technique®



Developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs
(www.ica-usa.org or www.ica-associates.ca)



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Introduction

A process I often use to assist complex decision-making or precede strategic planning is a technique developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). It is called the *Wall of Wonder*, *Journey Wall*, *Environmental Review* or *Historical Scan*. Each time I use this process I am impressed with the depth of understanding and "a-ha" that comes to the group. This will often be the breakthrough they need. They realize they have weathered difficult decisions and/or events before and have enormous experience to undertake the change needed ahead. Here is the most common way I use this technique. There are many others.

What is the technique in a nutshell?

This visual technique is a time lining exercise where the group names key past and present events of the organization, the community and the world. They can also brainstorm possible positive future events. They then name the "chapters" of their organizational story. The data can go back in time as long as is feasible (100+ years to last year) and forward from 1-5 years. Typically the scan takes 2.0-3.5 hours. I have done it more quickly using flipchart pages. Group size can vary from three to 75+. The optimal size is 12-30 persons.

Why Use this technique?

I have experienced the following benefits when using this technique with groups:

- Brings new people up to speed
- Honors long time members
- Diffuses conflict
- Reduces blame towards a specific event or person(s)
- Generates common understanding and foundation
- Reveals emerging trends
- Prepares group for visioning
- Celebrates the past
- Acknowledges low points in a safe setting
- Helps the group take risks
- Creates organizational learning

