DEFINING THE ORGANIZATIONS HISTORY

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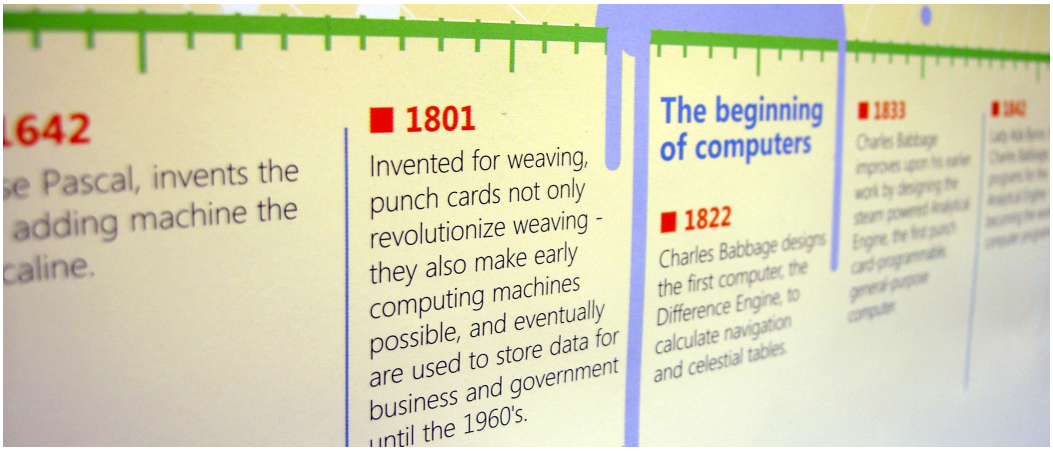
GLOBAL INSTITUTE OF ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



Understanding the history of the organization is very important to helping it chart its future. The history provides a record of the past, which can help inform where the organization is going.

WHY AND HOW

BACKGROUND

It is often helpful to have people who have been in the organization the longest make a presentation about how the organization started, its original mission, and service/product evolution. It's important to identify the significant events, major changes, successes, failures, and values that have persisted over time. People do not move toward the future without honoring the past.

KEY QUESTIONS IN DEFINING THE ORGANIZATIONS' HISTORY

The following questions can be asked to chart the history of the organization. It's important to get many views rather than just a few long-term employees.

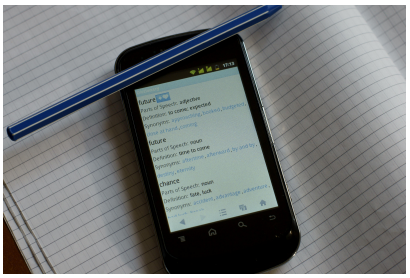
- What were some of the significant events that have happened?
- What are the core values?
- How has the organization developed over time?
- What changes have occurred?
- What are the major accomplishments?
- What are some lessons learned?
- Who are the customers?
- What was the structure then compared to now?

Have the team ask questions to bring their perspectives of the current situation into agreement. You may want to use a large piece of paper on the wall and have the team use sticky notes to write down answers to these questions. Draw a timeline on the paper beginning the year the organization began to the present.

In addition to asking these questions, you can research past milestone events through previous issues of a company newsletter, memos, or external news articles written. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance when gathering this information.

DEFINING THE HISTORY

Review and discuss the history and close gaps on differing perspectives. This process is like the blind man describing the elephant; the organization can look very different from different perspectives. Discuss why those perspectives might be different.



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