

The Timeline

The Timeline is a method for joint reflection on a network process. It helps participants to share perceptions on what is going on. It uncovers the history of the network, as seen through the eyes of those involved.

The result is a narrative story, which provides a basis for further analysis (see The Learning History). It's a relatively straightforward exercise and not too time consuming (around an hour).

A Timeline is made with the people engaged in the network. They take a break in the ongoing process, move their attention from the contents to the process itself, and reflect on pivotal moments. This usually reveals what matters most, and stimulates them to take more responsibility for the process. When there are both veterans and newcomers it helps everyone to arrive on the same page.

- Participants are asked to recall all the moments they consider most significant in the history of the network, from the start of their involvement until the present day.
- Moments can be categorised in three ways:
 - Positive: adding energy to their involvement
 - Negative: taking energy away
 - Flash: when new insights broke through or new opportunities arose
- Participants write each moment on a separate Post-it note. They should be described in statements.
- All the Post-its are stuck onto a large sheet with three rows.
- The vertical lines on the sheet represent milestones in time.

All contributions are appreciated on the Timeline. Different points of view can sit side by side, and are part of the story too. There is no need to reach consensus.

The result could look like the example overleaf. It shows the energy curve of a process.

