

WHAT IS OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY?

Open Space Technology is one way to enable all kinds of people, in any kind of organization, to create inspired meetings and events. Over the last 15 years, it has also become clear that opening space, as an intentional leadership practice, can create inspired organizations, where ordinary people work together to create extraordinary results with regularity.

In Open Space meetings, events and organizations, participants create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance, such as: What is the strategy, group, organization or community that all stakeholders can support and work together to create?

With groups of 5 to 1000 -- working in one-day workshops, three-day conferences, or the regular weekly staff meeting -- the common result is a powerful, effective connecting and strengthening of what's already happening in the organization: planning and action, learning and doing, passion and responsibility, participation and performance. See also [WorkingInOpenSpace](#) (Guided Tour).

When and Why?

Open Space works best when the work to be done is complex, the people and ideas involved are diverse, the passion for resolution (and potential for conflict) are high, and the time to get it done was yesterday. It's been called passion bounded by responsibility, the energy of a good coffee break, intentional self-organization, spirit at work, chaos and creativity, evolution in organization, and a simple, powerful way to get people and organizations moving -- when and where it's needed most.

And, while Open Space is known for its apparent lack of structure and welcoming of surprises, it turns out that the Open Space meeting or organization is actually very structured -- but that structure is so perfectly fit to the people and the work at hand, that it goes unnoticed in its proper role of supporting (not blocking) best work. In fact, the stories and work plans woven in Open Space are generally more complex, more robust, more durable -- and can move a great deal faster than expert- or management-driven designs.

What will happen?

We never know exactly what will happen when we open the space for people to do their most important work, but we can guarantee these results when any group gets into Open Space:

1. All of the issues that are MOST important to the participants will be raised.
2. All of the issues raised will be addressed by those participants most qualified and capable of getting something done on each of them.
3. In a time as short as one or two days, all of the most important ideas, discussion, data,

recommendations, conclusions, questions for further study, and plans for immediate action **will be documented in one comprehensive report -- finished, printed and in the hands of participants when they leave.**

4. When appropriate and time is allowed for it, the total contents of this report document can be focused and prioritized in a matter of a few hours, even with very large groups (100's).
5. After an event, all of these results can be made available to an entire organization or community within days of the event, **so the conversation can invite every stakeholder into implementation -- right now.**
6. AND... results like these can be planned and implemented faster than any other kind of so-called "large-group intervention." It is literally possible to accomplish in days and weeks what some other approaches take months and years to do.

The good news, and the bad news, is that it works. Good news because it gets people and work moving, bad news because that may mean lots of things are going to be different than before. Wanted things can appear, unwanted things disappear, and sometime vice versa -- but that's how life is. In short, then, Open Space brings life back to organization and organizations back to life.

We should note, here, that Open Space can only fail for two reasons: **if people show up with no passion and/or if somebody tries to control the process in order to achieve some sort of pre-determined outcome(s).** And, the commitment to openness, passion and responsible self-organization begins with the invitation process itself.

Source:

<http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?WorkingInOpenSpace>

Sample Open Space Guidelines

Start the topic you wish to work on. The person who posted the topic will be there and will begin the dialogue. You should use these guidelines in deciding how to behave.

- Butterflies: Feel free to flit from topic to topic.
- Bumblebees: Take ideas from one topic to another and cross pollinate.
- The rule of two feet: When the discussion is no longer of interest, use your two feet to move on.

Open Space principles

1. Whoever comes are the right people.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. When it's over, it is over.