

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

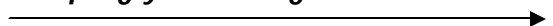
-The Concept of the Meeting-

Open Space is a concept coined by Harrison Owen in 1992. It is an innovative and highly effective way to engage people of different perspectives in meaningful conversations that can become productive problem-solving and planning sessions around complex issues. The design format:

- Lets the participants design the agenda and promises that anything that is important to any of the participants about the theme has the opportunity to be discussed
- Enables participants to connect with others who share their interests at the meeting with an opportunity to continue networking with these people beyond the meeting
- Acknowledges and works with the wisdom, experience and expertise that the participants have to work on the theme
- Provides the opportunity to have meaningful conversations about the theme, while involving and connecting the participants
- Enables participants to move from one discussion to another so that at every moment, people are either learning or contributing, thus not wasting time and energy
- Provides a written summary of every session, posted on a wall during the meeting as soon as the summary is recorded and is compiled into a book of proceedings for each participant to use beyond the meeting for ongoing work; and
- Supports action planning at the meeting itself and beyond.

Open Space can work with 6-600 participants, in sessions lasting 1 - 3 days, with at least one overnight being optimal. It requires a facility with a large enough room to accommodate the participants in a large open circle and a number of smaller meeting spaces that can be utilized for the small group sessions that emanate from the large circle. In order to have proceedings produced at the meeting, it is also necessary to have a number of computers hooked to a printer for recorders to enter the summaries of their meetings.

Helping you manage... to exceed.



OPEN SPACE BASICS

Open Space methodology is a process that enables a group to set its own agenda of topics, times and spaces to meet and discuss the issues that are the most meaningful to the participants. The agenda is built by the participants at the beginning of the retreat by raising and identifying the Big Questions that people want to explore more deeply with their colleagues. It is a self-directed, self-managed process that optimizes the perspectives and the interaction of those interested in the chosen topics. Because each discussion group has a "scribe," summaries of each discussion can be produced for everyone at, or shortly thereafter, the retreat itself.

In 'pure' open space, a theme is established for the discussion questions and at the end of each day, those topics converge for discussion the next day. For Prometheus, the theme is executive leadership and because the participants come from different associations, the convergence of topics does not occur. Rather, the discussions tend to build upon the ones that took place the day before, enhancing their richness.

The Four Mechanisms

- Open circle for discussions
- Breath - collective energy and voice
- Bulletin Board - public posting of topics to discuss
- Marketplace - choosing your topics and finding your space

The Four Principles

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

The One Law...and One Promethean Rule

- If at any time during our time together you discover that you are neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet and move on to another discussion circle.
- By agreement of the participants, what's said in the room, stays in the room

Two Driving Engines

- Passion for the issue to be discussed
- Responsibility to ensure that it is discussed

The Open Space Guarantee

- Every issue of real concern to anybody will be discussed if people choose to do so
- A full written record will be created from the Scribes' notes
- (Immediate "next steps" will be identified, as appropriate, with responsibility for those next steps assigned and accepted, if possible)

Adapted from Owen, Harrison, *Expanding Our Now. The Story of Open Space Technology*, Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, CA, 1997, page 41
