

Open Space Technology: The Principles and Law

The principles and law enable the participants to stay focused on the event at hand and acknowledge that the wisdom to resolve the issue is present in the room.

The four principles are:

Step 1

Whoever comes, are the right people.

Step 2

Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.

Step 3

Whenever it starts is the right time.

Step 4

When it is over, it is over.

The Law of Mobility/Two Feet:

States that if participants find themselves in situations where they are neither learning anything or contributing anything, they are responsible for moving to another place, for example to another group meeting. The principles and law enable people to participate in ways that are most meaningful to them.

Open Space Technology: Passion and responsibility are the two keys to a successful meeting

Without passion, enthusiasm for an idea will soon wane, and without responsibility, there is risk that the ideas will never move forward. Open Space Technology is the most powerful meeting methodology for the 21st Century.

It taps into the spirit of an organisation like no other large or small group intervention can. Open Space creates an environment for innovation, problem solving, creativity, teamwork and rapid change.

OPEN SPACE MEETINGS ARE:

- Easy to organise, thus requiring very little lead time
- Effective for small and large groups (10-500)
- Interactive / Participative / Engaging
- Conducive for leadership to surface naturally
- Effective for existing organisations, coalitions, associations, or those that are newly formed
- Facilitated by only one facilitator, no matter how large the group
- Less expensive and less complicated than other large group methodologies.

WHAT IS OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY BEST USED FOR?

Almost any business or organisational issue including:

- Strategic direction setting
- Envisioning the future
- Identifying the issues and opportunities to realise the desired future
- Conflict resolution
- Morale building
- Organisational transformation to a high performing and high learning organisation.

WHEN IS OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY THE BEST MEETING FORMAT TO USE?

Any organisational situation in which there is:

- A real issue of concern
- Diversity of players
- Complexity of elements
- Presence of passion (conflict is an element of passion)
- Decision time is now.

"Open Space Technology is a meeting methodology that enables individuals and groups to become more effective in work environments that are rapidly and constantly changing by developing their skills as lifelong learners and collaborative problem solvers. It creates the conditions so that the maximum potential of the individual and the organisation can be realised. Open Space Technology captures the knowledge, experience and innovation in the organisation that is not captured through less open processes."

Billie Alban and Barbara Bunker.
Large Group Interventions, Jossey-Bass, 1997

THE TIME SPAN FOR HOLDING AN OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY MEETING:

Meeting the needs of your organisation may require a one-day, two-day, or three day meeting. One-day meetings are good for raising the issues and opportunities, and to make ownership of change possible. A two or three day meeting will go deeper into the issues and opportunities as well as identifying priorities, and developing these into steps for action.

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY IS APPROPRIATE WHEN:

- An existing organisation needs re-energising
- Creative planning needs to be done quickly
- An organisation faces challenges that need immediate action
- Communication needs to improve
- A wide variety of issues need to be dealt with
- Opportunities for the future need to be explored
- An organisation is in its embryonic stage, to enable it to develop its vision and structure quickly
- Individual interests with a group appear to be quite diverse
- A merger is required
- Public input is desired.

OPEN SPACE IS NOT APPROPRIATE WHEN:

- Specific outcomes are predetermined
- Existing leadership is not willing to make changes as a result of an event.