

Short description of

## Open Space Conference (osc)

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## History

The Open Space Technology was "discovered" in the USA by Harrison Owen around 1985 and has spread rapidly around the world. The website of 'Open Space World Map' counts entries in 125 countries and hundreds of registered Open Space moderators.

## Goal

Open Space Technology is a facilitation format. The aim is to use (or create) an atmosphere of departure with a large number of people on a comprehensive topic in a short time and to deepen it. The objective is to discuss essential sub-themes in an innovative and solution-oriented way so that practical projects can emerge.

Thus Open Space Technology is a highly scalable and adaptable facilitation to enable all kinds of people, in any kind of organization, to create inspired meetings and events. OST relies strongly on self-organization of the group of participants. It is a purpose-driven approach, focused on a specific and important purpose or task — but beginning without any formal agenda, beyond the overall purpose or theme.

## Open Space Conference

The Open Space Technology is implemented by the means of an Open Space Conference (OSC).

In OSC the participants plan and run self-organized time boxed sessions (30min, 45min, or 60min) to topics they are interested in. Characteristic for OSC is a missing agenda or schedule at the beginning.



The participants organize it themselves in the so-called "marketplace" (big main meeting room).

## Roles / Functions of Open Space Conference

Facilitator		A person or a group of persons (often open space professionals) who make sure that the Open Space Conference goes well. They open and close the conference and work (openly and covertly) as supporters, moderators and coaches during the sessions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frames and guides the marketplace</li><li>• Supports the prioritization of agenda items</li><li>• Facilitates the closing session</li></ul>
Participant		Everybody present except organizing staff. Regardless of function, hierarchy, role in day-to-day life.

### *Roles during session time:*

Session host or Host		Are people with 'topics' (or 'issues of concern'). They might or might not have any special knowledge of the 'topic' introduced. They open 'their' session, stay at the session space for the entire length of
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		the session (even if they are alone) and bring the visualized results at the end of the session to the Shared News Wall.
Bumblebees		<p>"Bumblebees" are the people who are interested in many workshops. They flit from conversation to conversation and get involved here and there. They stay as long as they can learn or contribute to the topic. Ideas, thoughts or suggestions that have just been acquired are carried into the next group and dropped there, and again knowledge acquired is brought into a new group. They might also encourage mingling for those for whom the Law of Two Feet feels a bit rude.</p> <p>Sometimes it is just the pure presence or the flying on of a person that gives the group a new push. Thus a mutual fertilization takes place. The bumblebee flies from flower to flower, picks up pollen and sets it down again.</p>
Butterflies		<p>This term applies to persons who are somewhat undecided, i.e. who do not immediately feel the urge to go into a group. These people hang out, maybe drinking tea, and don't appear to do much.</p> <p>At first glance the butterflies seem useless. But they make an important contribution to the event. They mark a place of non-working and thus give peace to their surroundings. It can be observed that intensive conversations develop especially between butterflies and passers-by. These may lead either to the participants receiving suggestions for ongoing working groups, going into them, or to carrying out a new, unplanned workshop themselves.</p> <p>Or - who knows - Butterflies may just be involved with the most important discussions of the day.</p>

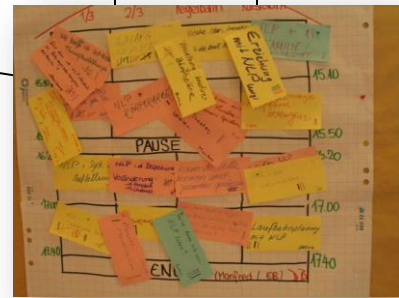
## Procedure of Open Space Conference

### *Opening Marketplace*

1. All participants sit in a circle or semi-circle. In the middle (or up front) are pin boards, post-its, index cards and markers placed.
2. The facilitator provides an overview of the process and explains how it works.
3. The facilitator invites people with 'topics' (issues of concern) to come into the circle, write the topic on a post-it or index card and announce it to the group. These people are "session hosts" or "conveners."
4. The session hosts place their 'paper of topic' on the pin board (or wall) with ample space between each topic.
5. This process continues until there are no more agenda items (topics).
6. All participants put their names onto (or next to) 'paper of topics' which they definitely want to participate in. -> Facilitator: Suggest a limited number of signatures per participant corresponding to the approx. amount of number of sessions available during the OSC.
7. The participants cluster and prioritize the agenda items on the wall and choose a time and a place to meet. Topics of high interest (many signatures) may be splitted to several session spaces.

Time/Room: All available rooms and the starting times are listed in a table. Each topic is entered into one of the fields.

Room:	A	B	C	D
Time:				
9.30				
10.15				



After the marketplace, the group then breaks up and heads to the agenda wall (board of topics), by now covered with a variety of sessions. Participants take note of the time and place for sessions they want to be involved in.

From this point on, the rules of the Open Space Conference apply.

## *Sessions (or Open Space Sessions)*

Sessions are the main working platforms of the OpenSpace Conference. A Session is a meeting that happens at a defined time and place (see above) where the 'topics' are being discussed and worked upon.

At the given time and place, hosts open their session by writing their topic (title) onto the middle of a flip chart (mind map visualization) and explaining their intention / interest with the topic raised. During the session, the host (or a recorder) takes notes and capture the important points of the session. The host does not have to take on any leadership role during the session. She/he may also simply retreat into the group action.

In modification to the standard OSC procedure, we recommend the following: The host remains on session site for the entire duration of the session. At the end of each session, the host publishes the notes (flipchart) on the shared news wall. After this action each host becomes a 'normal' participant again.

## *Closing of Open Space Conference*

At the end of all the sessions, the participants finish the open space meeting with a closing circle where people are invited to share comments, insights, and commitments arising from the process.

If you (or the group) are deciding to distribute tasks, be aware that such tasks are not (automatically) assigned to the topic contributors (hosts). This would set a negative preframe for the next conference: "Whoever dares to raise an issue of concern (topic) has to do the work afterwards."

## Rules of Open Space Conference

### *Marketplace Rules*

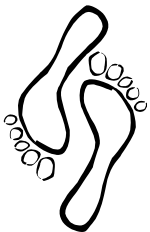
- Every single topic (issue of concern) that anybody cares about enough to raise will be "on the table".
- All topics will receive as much discussion as people care to give them.
- All discussions will be captured in a document and made available to the participants.
- All topics will be prioritized.
- Related topics might be converged.
- Responsibility will be taken for next step actions.

### *Sessions Rules*

Open Space operates under **four principles and one law**. The four principles are:

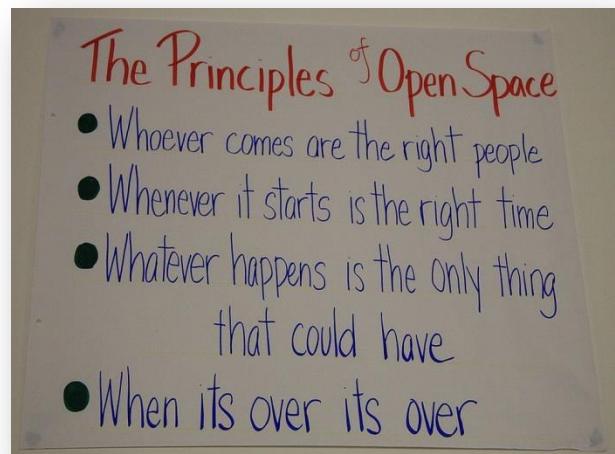
1. **Whoever comes are the right people**
2. **Whatever happens is the only thing that could have**
3. **Whenever it starts is the right time**
4. **When it's over it's over**

The Law is known as the **Law of Two Feet**:



*"If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, move somewhere where you can."*

The four principles and the law work to create a powerful event motivated by the passion and bounded by the responsibility of the participants.



## When to use of Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology is useful in almost any context including strategic direction setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.

Use it if

- There is a real issue of concern with a need for a quick decision.
- Diversity of players matters.
- Complexity of elements matters.
- There is passion (including conflict).

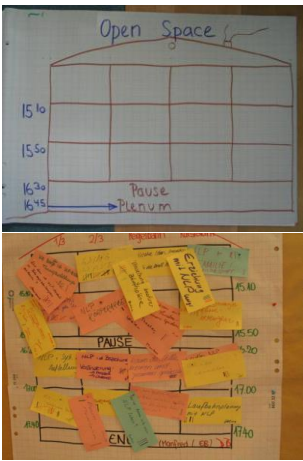
Open Space will work under all of these circumstances. It is only inappropriate when the outcome of the meeting is predetermined or if sponsors are not prepared to change as a result of the meeting.

*Inspired by <http://www.chriscorrigan.com> and <https://www.nlp.ch>*

## Glossary and Abbreviations

Bumblebees	<p>"Bumblebees" are the people who are interested in many workshops. They flit from conversation to conversation and get involved here and there. They stay as long as they can learn or contribute to the topic. Ideas, thoughts or suggestions that have just been acquired are carried into the next group and dropped there, and again knowledge acquired is brought into a new group.</p> <p>They might also encourage mingling for those for whom the Law of Two Feet feels a bit rude. Sometimes it is just the pure presence or the flying on of a person that gives the group a new push. Thus a mutual fertilization takes place. The bumblebee flies from flower to flower, picks up pollen and sets it down again.</p>
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Facilitator	<p>A person or a group of persons (often open space professionals) who make sure that the Open Space Conference goes well. They open and close the conference and work (openly and covertly) as supporters, moderators and coaches during the sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frames and guides the marketplace</li> <li>• Supports the prioritization of agenda items</li> <li>• Facilitates the closing session</li> </ul>
Issues of Concern	<p>see 'Topic'</p> <p>In standard Open Space Conference format 'Issue of Concern' is the technical term for any topic that is being raised by a participant.</p>
Marketplace	Main meeting room
OSC	Open Space Conference (or short: Open Space)
Participant	Everybody present except organizing staff. Regardless of function, hierarchy, role in day-to-day life.
Session	<p>or <i>Open Space Session</i></p> <p>Sessions are the main working platforms of the OpenSpace Conference. At a defined time and place a meeting happens where the 'issues of concern' are being discussed and worked upon.</p>
Session Host or Host	<p>Are people with 'topics' (or 'issues of concern'). They might or might not have any special knowledge of the 'topic' introduced.</p> <p>They open 'their' session, stay at the session space for the entire length of the session (even if they are alone) and bring the visualized results at the end of the session to the Shared News Wall.</p>
Shared News Wall	That is the place where all the visualized (flip charts) results of the single Open Space sessions are being displayed to be looked at and discussed by the big group.
Topic	Topics are 'issues of concern' or just themes anybody present (→ Participant) would like to talk and/or share and/or discuss and/or learn more about.

Moderation Cards (index cards)	
Masking Tape (painters tape)	
Scotch removable stick (removable glue stick)	
Flip chart marker	

Time/Room matrix 'House of Open Space'	
PowerPoint Open Space 'Participants'	