



We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage

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Open Space Ground Rules

For leaders, participants and facilitators, the ground rules are simple, but may challenge our notions of how meetings "should be".

- **Whoever comes is the right people.** It is not how many people come, or even who comes that counts, rather it is the quality of interaction and conversation that makes the difference.
- **Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened.** Real learning and real progress only take place when we leave our original agendas and convention-bound expectations behind.
- **Whenever it starts is the right time.** Creativity and spirit are both essential and neither pay much attention to the clock.
- **When it is over, it is over.** If the useful business has been conducted, it is time to move on. Killing time only causes us to rehash what we have done to the point that it gets undone.
- **The Law of Two Feet.** If in the course of the meeting, you find yourself in a place in which you are neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet and find a more productive spot.

*Excerpted from Open Space Technology -- A User's Guide, by Harrison Owen, with permission. Abbott Publishing, 1992.
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Open Space

Unleashing Passion and Responsibility

Have you ever wondered how to practice the concepts of empowerment, diversity, and self-managed teams without spending thousands of dollars on training? *Open Space* creates this within 90 minutes of a meeting!

What is *Open Space*? It is a meeting method based on the principle that people who are passionate about something will naturally focus, manage, and hold themselves accountable for progress. It is a modern re-creation of tribal and village meetings that have occurred since the dawn of time. *Open Space* has been used successfully all over the world in governments, communities, and businesses.

Open Space uses the model of a village "marketplace" as a way to structure a meeting. Leaders call the meeting, citing the central theme to be discussed. People participate based on their passion for the theme and willingness to take personal responsibility. Participants create an agenda within 30 minutes and then self-select into groups to tackle the issues. The rest of the meeting (including the meeting report) is managed by participants, in real time, based on what occurs.

Sound intriguing? It is. I have participated in one conference and facilitated two others. What I found amazed me. In every case, people got down to business faster, were more honest in their discussions, and made more decisions and more commitments that stuck.

My experience is that people are usually shocked at the freedom that the meeting structure and the ground rules give them to conduct business. By the same token, it can generate fears and feelings of being "out-of-control" if people are used to more structured formats and are uncomfortable with self-management.

Open Space Technology may be a powerful new way for you to unleash the real potential behind a conference or a meeting. But it is not for everyone or every situation. This meeting method may be helpful when

- you have an important business problem or opportunity.
- the problem or issue itself is complex and unstructured.
- you want to solve problems across organizational functions.
- the group has a high degree of control over the outcomes.

It may not be as helpful when

- you are already committed to a solution or believe you have the answer.
- you are not committed to giving complete control to participants to manage not only the meeting, but the results.

If you are interested in exploring this approach further, give us a call. We'd love to help! ☐ *CMP*