



# A Taste of Open Space

## Open Space Technology (OST)

Open Space Technology (OST) is a process through which small or large groups can invest themselves in discussing common concerns, seeking solutions, and creating new opportunities. OST is a simple, powerful way to get communities moving -- when and where it's needed most.

OST 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.



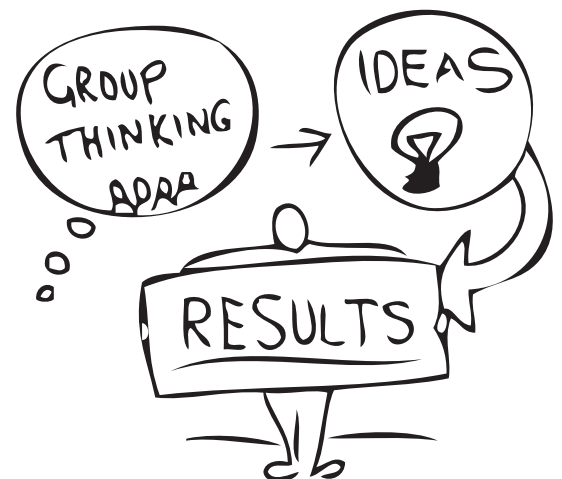
### Features of Open Space:

- Open Space conferences have no keynote speakers, no pre-announced schedules of workshops, no panel discussions, no months of preparations and preparatory committees. Instead, sitting in a large circle, participants create the agenda in the moment and willingly volunteer to convene discussions groups that capture the interest of those present. Almost before they realize it, they become each other's teachers and leaders
- There is no predetermined agenda, there is instead creation of a powerful theme. The theme must have the capacity to inspire participation by being specific enough to indicate the direction, while possessing sufficient openness to allow for the imagination of the group to take over
- The energy, interest and enthusiasm of the group members fuel the event. The group participants are free to explore and experiment while taking responsibility to ensure that they take up their task rigorously
- The space required is critical, but need not be elaborate or elegant - comfort is more important and moveable chairs are essential!
- A facilitator opens the space, sets the tone and intention for the event and then works under the radar while the group gets on with it. This facilitation style instils ownership and participation by the participants



### Potential Uses for OST

- Large community events
- Organisational problem solving
- Team building and strategic planning between Councillors and Council Leadership
- Regional gatherings





## Four principles and one Law of OST

OST events are underpinned by 4 Principles and 1 Law

### **(1) Whoever comes are the right people**

Rather than wait for the 'expert' on a given issue, participant's realize that whoever is moved to come to their discussion group has been moved by their passion for the issue, not just their community role. The best and brightest are convening to discuss something they really care about – surely that is what matters most!

### **(2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have**

In OST it is vital to let go of control - if the discussion goes off on a tangent -- that may be exactly the direction for the breakthrough of new ideas. Participant's follow the energy of the group. By the way, the only time that OST does not work is when somebody in charge feels they must control the outcome of the discussion or the event

### **(3) Whenever it starts is the right time**

Participant's don't wait for some specific person to arrive; they begin with who ever is drawn to the discussion. The balance to this is...

### **(4) When it's over, it's over**

Group's may settle the problems of the world in twenty minutes; on the other hand, they may wish to continue their discussion for longer than the allotted time. Creativity and intuitive thinking do not happen according to a schedule – participants take it where it wants to go. If the group discussion is done early participant's can join another group. If the discussion takes longer, group members just move their discussion elsewhere to make way for the next group scheduled

### **The Law of Two Feet:**

Forget the usual social graces - If participants find themselves in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they use their two feet and quietly go to another discussion where they can be more productive



For more on-information  
on OST visit  
[www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org)



**Contact us today to discuss how we can bring Open Space  
Technology to your next community or Council event**

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