

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY SESSION

Open Space Technology (OST) enables groups of any size to address complex, important issues and achieve meaningful results quickly. "Technology" in this case means 'tool' - a process; a method. The aim of OST is to offer an alternative to the set-talk approach to a conference programme, by offering a subtle but clear-cut structure that invites dialogues, ideas exchanges, buzz groups, brain storms to take place fairly spontaneously, according to where the energy is at the time. Delegates are invited to generate the meeting agenda as well as participate by leading small group break-out sessions during the meeting time.

OST was developed by Harrison Owen in the 90's. There is plenty about it on the web.

OST works like this:

- 1) All participants start by meeting together in the plenary room, for a chaired introduction to the OST session.
- 2) Anyone who wants to convene a topic, initiate a conversation, exchange views, try out or explore ideas, or sound off on something that is important to them (within the broad parameters of the purpose of the conference) writes a short descriptive title on a post-it.
- 3) The post-its are gathered, read out, and arranged on a board according to the time slots and rooms available. Some grouping and merging of post-its topics may take place at this stage.
- 4) Each participant chooses the session that most attracts them, there is a brief show of hands so that any nonstarter session can be removed (they can reappear in the second round) and people immediately adjourn to their chosen first session. The session takes place with whoever is there including the proposer. If a lot of people turn up they can agree to split in smaller groups, and if only two people come, that's enough. If just one person, then s/he will go to another session.
- 5) During each session the convener ensures that someone fills in a standard report form which says who was there, the topic, and key points / action points. These are all displayed on a public notice board immediately after the session, so that everyone can immediately see what happened each of the other sessions.
- 6) In one version of OST a participant from each session types the main points of the session onto disc during the break, and the complete set from the day's OS at the end of the day. In this way everyone has 'attended' all the sessions.

There is one rule: **The Law of Two Feet** which expresses the core idea of taking responsibility for what you feel passionately about. In practical terms, the law says that if you're neither contributing nor getting value in the session you are in, then use your two feet and go to another session that may be better for you. It is also a reminder to stand up for your passion. From this law flow the four principles of OST:

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

The convener hosts the session, but is not 'the speaker'. How the session will be run is quickly agreed by participants as soon as they gather. For example, the host might outline her/his reason for proposing the topic, followed by a quick round of what has attracted the others to this session, followed by focusing-in on selected issues. You do not come 'prepared' to an OST session. You come with yourself, your experience, and your passion for what is important at that time.

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY SESSION
MEETING REPORT



Title of session		
Host's name		
Participant names	1	
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MEETING REPORT



Key points that came up	
What follow up is needed? Tick one or more options	Members of this group will discuss by email
	Individuals will follow this up in their own way
	Others might want to discuss this (state who, where, who will communicate with them)
	No follow up at this point
	Other; Please specify: