

Open Space Technology

Participants Call the Conversation

Open Space Technology is a process or facilitation practice that creates time and space for organizations, groups, and communities to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The process is designed to be highly participatory, inclusive, and collaborative and can be successful with groups ranging in size from 5 to 1000.

4 Principles of Open Space

*Whoever comes are
the right people*

*Whenever it starts is
the right time*

*Whatever happens is
the only thing that
could have*

*When it's over, it's
over*

The Law of 2 Feet

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

Open Space Roles

Host: The host proposes the discussion topic and convenes the conversation.

Scribe: The scribe notes key discussion themes and questions on the open space worksheet.

Bumble bees: Bumble bees are participants who take the Law of Two Feet very seriously and constantly hop from conversation to conversation. Like their counterparts in nature, these people help to cross-pollinate the groups with new ideas and insights. They often help to bridge topics and also lead to more variety in the discussions.

Butterflies: Butterflies are participants that decide not to join a particular conversation because none of the topics sparked their interest. Butterflies create centers for non-action and may move and listen to different conversations or create space to converse with fellow butterflies.

Participants: Participants are those that choose to participate in one of proposed discussion topics.



Process and Flow of Open Space Technology

- The facilitator provides an overview of Open Space Technology and how it works.
- The facilitator invites people with issues of concern or interest to write the issue on a paper or sticky note and announce it to the group. These people are the “hosts” for that topic. Once announced, the topics are then placed on the wall.
- The group reviews the topics posted on the wall and individuals select a topic of interest and go to the selected area of the room to engage in dialogue around the topic.



- In each group a “scribe” is selected to capture the important points of the discussion on the open space worksheet.
- Upon completion of the allotted discussion time, the group comes back together to share elements from their discussion with the larger group.
- Worksheets may be collected by the facilitator to review and commemorate the discussions.

If you have questions or would like additional information on Open Space Technology and other convening and facilitation practices, please contact info@pophealthinnovationlab.org.

