

Open Space

In this approach, the participants create the content of the breakout sessions when they propose topics for the “Market Place”. Of course, prior to the meeting the facilitator must help the sponsor - perhaps a team leader or executives - be very clear about the Call To Action. So with that common frame of reference, participants offer to “hold the space” or in other words, facilitate a breakout session to explore topics related to that theme. These sessions are attended by as many or as few people that share an interest, an opinion, a concern, question or idea as related to a particular issue.

This is a self-organizing system fueled by passion and a commitment to change things for the better. All ideas get recorded and the participants focus on both developing a shared understanding of the issues and dynamics at play, as well as proposing potential courses of action. This may be followed by further planning however, the key is generating possibilities to report back to the larger community.

We have facilitated an entire 2.5 day conference that broadly explored the future of an industry, ranging through to a half-day session on how to between use the internet to service a particular segment of a technology company’s client base.

(Harrison Owen, president of H.H. Owen and Co., a consulting company in Potomac, MD created the idea of Open Space Technology (visit www.openspaceworld.org).

