



Knowledge to lead

Organizing an open space event

Preparing for an Open Space session

Paying attention to the preparation process of an Open Space is crucial, as it is counterproductive trying to control the event when it has already started.

1. Select representative people to form a steering group. These people should depict the whole in a statistical sense, reproducing the different under-groups that exist among the participants.
2. Organize 2-3 preparatory meetings with this steering group.
3. Let these "representatives" of all the participants discuss the following themes: which people to involve in the event and how to formulate the topic.
4. Draft an invitation to the event, focusing on the formulation of the topic, so that people come with the right attitude.
5. Express the main question in a clear and precise way, in order to make it unequivocally understandable to all participants.
6. Formulate the main question in the appropriate language, tailored to the people to be addressed.
7. Keep in mind that there is no specific limit on the size of group, since Open Space method fits both for small groups (10 people) and for big ones (up to 2000 people).



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Running an open space event

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle or in concentric circles.
2. Re-state the topic, at the beginning of the session
3. Announce, describe and follow the Four Principles and The One Law (see below) which should guide the Open Space session in order to make it effective.
4. Invite participants to propose an issue related to the main question. Anyone who wants to initiate a discussion comes to the centre of the circle and announces it to the group. After that, he/she chooses a time and a space where the discussion on that topic will run and posts all the information on a wall.
5. Make clear to the whole group that suggesting issues is not compulsory, but if someone posts a topic, he/she is expected to really care about it.
6. Do not limit the number of issues that can be proposed.
7. Ask participants to enroll in the group they are more interested in, as soon as all the topics are posted.
8. Keep in mind that discussion-time is usually 1.5 hours, while the whole event can last from half day up to three days.
9. Make participants feel free to choose the session they prefer and to switch to another one at any time. People must be genuinely interested in the topic they are discussing about, as the session can't be effective if someone finds the theme uninteresting.
10. Let participants network online, both before and after the face-to-face meeting, so that discussions can continue also from far.



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The Four Principles and the One Law

During an Open Space session the activities should be guided by the following four principles:

1. *Whoever comes is the right person*: each participant is the “right” person simply because he/she cares about the topic the discussion is focused on.
2. *Whatever happens is the only thing that could have*: the attendees are invited to concentrate on the actual events.
3. *Whenever it starts is the right time*: the lack of any predefined schedule encourages the participants to be creative and innovative.
4. *When it is over it is over*: no one should feel bored during the session, so better move to another group when the discussion is not interesting any more.

The last principle is also emphasized by the **Law of Two Feet**:

If at any time during our time together you find yourself in any situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet. Go to some other place where you may learn and contribute.

Following the “Law of Two Feet” is crucial to put each participant in the condition to give his/her best contribution to the session.



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