



Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts*

Workshop Practice: Techniques for Problem-solving with Open-space Technology

Courtesy of Paul Sutton, Artistic Director, C&T; <http://www.candt.org>

1. Design your 'invitation:' the brief or issue that you want to explore in your Open Space event. Frame the invitation carefully: make sure it is open, genuine and inclusive.
2. On the day of your event set out your space with
 - a) locations in which the subgroups are going to meet;
 - b) chairs, pens, paper and digital resources;
 - c) a place for the 'Marketplace' – where you are going to post the timetable for the event.
3. At the session outset, draw participants' attention to the invitation. Ask them to propose sub-groups to discuss questions, issues or themes that cascade from the invitation.
4. As each group is proposed timetable at the 'marketplace' on a wall.
5. The 'marketplace' is a simple grid of timeslots and locations in the room: when and where to meet. Make sure you have calculated your timetable and groupings carefully. Too many groups and you won't have enough participants to discuss things, too few and people will feel frustrated at a lack of choice.
6. Remind 'convenors' of these groups they must record the discussion and conclusions of their groups.
7. Set out the 'Law of Two Feet': don't stay in a group discussion when you want to move on. Feel free and empowered to move on. People won't be offended.
8. Set out the conventions:

The People who come are the right people – you can make the right decision

Whenever its starts is the right time

When its over its over – overrun if you need the extra time

The outcome is the only thing that could have happened

Behaviours:

Bumblebees – cross pollinating ideas between groups is good

Butterflies – observing and looking pretty is fine

Giraffes – straining your neck to listen to other groups is ok.

9. Once the invitation and conventions are set up, invite suggestions for group discussions.
10. When you timetable is full, open the marketplace for people to choose.
11. Run according to your timetable.
12. Let groups facilitate themselves.
13. At the end, allow space and time for a plenary.
14. Collect in the report sheets.

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