



## TOOL | OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Open Space Technology is a management tool which helps to overcome the difficulties of conventional approaches to decision-making. The event usually lasts 1-3 days and can accommodate a large number of people.

### OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY STAGES

It is comprised of the following stages:

- **'opening circle'**: everyone sits informally in a circle with a facilitator opening proceedings;
- **'choosing the program'**: people are asked to suggest and agree on themes for workshop discussions;
- **'the market place'**: participants choose the workshop they wish to attend and can move between workshops;
- **'having your say'**: members participate in discussions and comments are recorded;
- **'closing circle'**: this is the plenary or feedback session where issues and points raised during the discussions are reported; and,
- **'report of the proceedings'**: all feedback comments are collated into a report for distribution to participants.

### STRENGTHS

- Can be organized quickly, with little cost and minimal preparation
- Good for addressing difficult issues, involving large numbers, particularly where there are conflicting views
- Breaks down traditional 'us and them' barriers
- No experts or fixed agenda – 'molded' by participants – ownership of process
- Motivation and commitment can emerge in a way not usually achievable in traditional meetings
- Leadership can emerge from people not necessarily seen to be leaders in the community

### WEAKNESSES

- Only likely to get small percentage of the 'whole system' to attend
- Unlikely to attract people who traditionally avoid open meetings
- Because they are usually 'one-off' events, potential participants may miss out
- Meeting could be viewed as an end in itself

## LEVEL OF APPROPRIATENESS

This is a useful method where large groups of participants are involved and where the program or agenda needs to be flexible or capable of being shaped by the participants themselves.

## USEFUL LINKS:

- Open Space Technology - <http://openspaceworld.org/wp2/>