

What is Open Space Technology methodology?

Open Space Technology (OST) is a highly participatory workshop facilitation methodology developed in the late 1980s by Harrison Owen. It is a simple yet powerful method for conducting productive, engaging, and inspiring workshops, conferences, consultations, and community dialogues.

Suitable for groups ranging from as few as ten participants to several hundred, OST is built on the principles of self-organization, shared leadership, and collective responsibility. Rather than relying on a predetermined agenda, participants identify the issues that matter most to them and take ownership of the discussions, resulting in meaningful conversations, innovative ideas, and actionable outcomes.

One of OST's greatest strengths is its simplicity. Workshops are relatively easy to organize and require minimal preparation time. However, while the process appears deceptively simple, its effectiveness depends significantly on the skill of a facilitator who has been trained in the methodology and understands how to create and hold an open, participatory space.

When should OST be used for workshop facilitation?

OST is particularly effective when there is a compelling theme to explore or an important issue to address. OST is especially valuable when sponsors or organizers genuinely seek participants' ideas and insights, wish to stimulate dialogue, creativity, and innovation, and are committed to collaborative problem-solving rather than predetermined outcomes. It is also well suited to situations where timely decisions and actionable solutions are required.

By creating a space for self-organized conversations around issues that participants care about most, OST harnesses the collective wisdom of the group and often leads to faster, more creative, and more sustainable outcomes.

What is the duration of the OST workshop ?

The duration of an **OST** workshop can range from a minimum of four hours to several days, depending on the objectives of the organizers. Longer-duration OST workshops are particularly valuable when organizers wish to:

- **Prioritize** the ideas, recommendations, or outputs generated during the OST group discussions.
- **Develop action plans** by translating key insights into concrete next steps, with clear responsibilities and commitment from individuals and groups.
- **Explore selected recommendations in greater depth** and transform them into implementable projects or initiatives.

What does the OST method do?

- OST method creates conditions that allow creativity and leadership to surface naturally and for innovation, problem solving, teamwork and ownership.



- OST builds on group participation and energy in ways that few other processes do. It taps into the spirit of an organization/group like no other large or small group intervention can.

What is the output of OST workshop?

OST method provides a 'Book of Proceedings', comprising all break-out group discussion reports. It is an efficient way of producing workshop report, quickly.

What are the benefits of using OST method?

- Scope for every voice, idea, opinion to be expressed.
- Develop greater understanding and awareness of oneself, others, and the theme.
- Re-energize organization or community.
- Improves communications and teamwork.
- Generate inputs and ideas efficiently even with a large and diverse group.

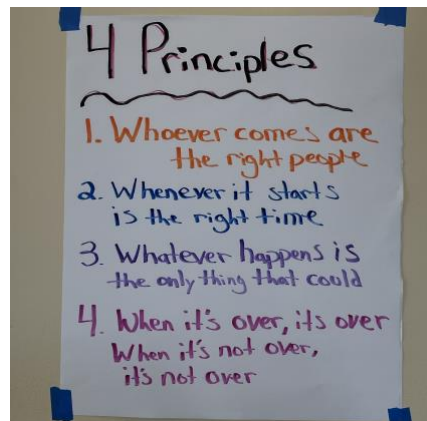
Some of the indirect benefits of OST workshop are:

- **Enhanced Ownership and Commitment:** Because participants build the agenda and discuss what they genuinely care about, they take personal responsibility for the outcomes and subsequent action plans (in case of longer duration workshop).
- **Breaking Down Silos:** The self-organizing facilitates organic interactions between diverse departments, groups, and levels of seniority. It is truly inclusive.
- **Leadership surfaces:** OST reveals hidden talent, unspoken leaders, passionate advocates, and grassroots leaders who may otherwise remain quiet in traditional, top-down corporate settings.
- **Fostering High Psychological Safety:** The guiding principles—particularly the "Law of Two Feet," which empowers individuals to leave any session table where they are not learning or contributing—eliminate guilt and cultivate a culture of mutual respect and freedom.
- **Surfacing Cross-Cutting Themes:** The collective documentation ("the harvest") often reveals unexpected patterns, deeper meanings, and holistic solutions that pre-planned agendas miss.
- Frequent use of OST drives sustainable cultural shifts like heightened personal accountability, organic cross-departmental networking, and elevated organizational agility. By stripping away rigid hierarchies, OST naturally unlocks deep systemic advantage.

What is the layout of the OST workshop space?

- **A compelling theme** prominently displayed to provide focus and inspire meaningful conversations.
- **A trained facilitator** who adopts a non-interventionist role, creating and holding the space without directing, controlling, or influencing participants' discussions or behaviour.

- **Participants seated in one large circle**, or in a few concentric circles for larger groups, to foster equality, openness, and dialogue.
- **Breakout spaces** equipped with tables, chairs, and report templates to facilitate small-group discussions and documentation.
- **An empty "Agenda Wall"**, where participants create the agenda by proposing discussion topics, within the central theme.
- **OST posters** displaying the **Four Principles**, the **Law of Two Feet**, and the roles of the **Butterfly** and the **Bumblebee**, serving as guiding concepts throughout the process.



Brief Profile of the Facilitator: Vibha is a development sector professional with more than two decades of experience, and now works at the intersection of **Facilitation, Positive Psychology, Empowerment and Well-being**. She has designed and facilitated over 400 workshops using participatory methodologies collectively known as **Liberating Structures**.

Over the past 18 years, Vibha has received advanced training in globally recognized facilitation methodologies, including **Open Space Technology (OST)**, **Whole Person Process Facilitation**, **Appreciative Inquiry**, **The Circlework Leadership**, **World Café**, the **Medicine Wheel** framework and **SEE Learning**. She applies these approaches to foster collaboration, organizational development, leadership, innovation, and holistic well-being across diverse sectors and communities.

Known for creating inclusive and engaging learning spaces, Vibha enables individuals and groups to harness collective intelligence, build meaningful dialogue, and translate ideas into purposeful action.