Open Space - Kickstart

The inspiration behind Open Space Kickstart

Monday, 15 October 2012. I am on my way home from the 20th World Open Space on Open Space - an annual international gathering for sharing experiences and learning about Open Space Technology. Among the 140 participants in London, I met 17-year-old Kayla, who spontaneously joined the conference and enriched our learning with her thoughtful insights and great enthusiasm. I had the privilege of meeting her in two of the sessions I attended.

She told me how happy she was to be able to explore things that mattered to her, listen to others and be listened to - in such an inviting and respectful way. At the same time, she was sad and a bit angry that she had never experienced anything like it before. Her story moved me deeply.

Now, almost 14 years later, her story still resonates with me. It reminds me of all the similar stories people have shared with me, time and again, over the nearly 30 years I have worked with Open Space Technology. I realise that this is far too important not to be shared more widely!

Can it really be that simple?

For many years, I have offered advice and support to people wanting to get started with Open Space. I have trained more than a thousand people, mostly in intensive three-day courses. Such training is valuable because it provides the comprehensive understanding needed to work professionally with change processes. At the same time, I agree with Harrison Owen, who discovered Open Space Technology in the mid-1980s, that anyone with a good head and a good heart can read the book[1] and then simply do it. That is how simple the basic structure is. Open Space Technology is free for everyone to use – the only commitment Harrison asked people to make was to pass it on …

It really is this simple: Arrange chairs in a circle and place paper and pens in the center. Present the theme – the question that has brought everyone together – and let the participants create the agenda. Then, as Harrison would say, "go to work".

The Kickstart program

The Kickstart program offers a simple and flexible support structure for anyone who wants to start using Open Space. Its purpose is quite simply to contribute to a better world! I am convinced that meaningful meetings held in a democratic spirit, good conversations and wise decisions can contribute to positive changes at every level.

The idea is that you should be able to facilitate an Open Space meeting on your own as soon as the day after experiencing one for the first time. If you would like an opportunity to take part in an Open Space meeting, please get in touch.

---

[1] Harrison Owen, *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*, 3rd ed. (2008).

You then have the rest of your life to develop your ability to realize the full potential of the groups and organizations you work with. This may involve learning more about how to support organisations in preparing for and following up an Open Space meeting. It may also involve growing as a person so that you can respond in the best possible way to the situations that arise.

You can choose to embark on a lifelong journey, deepening your trust in yourself, the method and the people in the circle ...

A path to your first Open Space meeting

You do not need to complete every step before you begin. Use the support you need and proceed at your own pace. If you feel ready at any point, **do it right away!**

1. **Experience an Open Space Technology meeting**
   Ideally, take part in an Open Space meeting yourself. If that is not possible, you can begin by reading about Open Space and watching a few short videos.
2. **Reflect on your experience**
   Use the reflection questions to explore what you experienced and what you want to take away from it.
3. **Explore resources and practical support**
   Here you will find literature, links and practical tips.
4. **Connect with learning communities**
   Here you will find information about learning communities, both online and in person. This is where we support one another by sharing experiences, questions and reflections.
5. **Take part in an online exchange session**
   You may wish to explore steps 1-3 first, to whatever extent suits you. See current activities or contact Thomas.
6. **Deepen your knowledge**
   If you would like to continue developing your skills, we offer a range of trainings.



Good luck on your journey!

Thomas Herrmann
Email: thomas@openspaceconsulting.com