



**What Keeps You Up at Night?  
An Experiment in  
Open Space Technology  
NABE Annual Meeting  
August 7, 2003  
11:55 a.m.-12:55 p.m.  
Golden Gate Salon C3, B2 Level**

**Q.** What is "open space technology"?

**A.** It is a facilitation technique designed to formalize the informal learning and sharing such as that which Annual and Midyear meeting attendees often identify as the most valuable part of the program. It is a way of capturing coffee break chitchat that contributes value and learning.

**Q.** What are the principles?

**A.** There are four principles for the successful use of "open technology":

- ❖ Whoever comes are the right people.
- ❖ What happens is the only thing that could have happened.
- ❖ Whenever it starts is the right time, whenever it is over, it's over.
- ❖ The "Law of Two Feet," it is the participant's responsibility to go where they can learn or contribute.

**Q.** What are the logistics?

**A.**

- ❖ Participants begin in a circle.
- ❖ The principles are enunciated by the facilitator.
- ❖ A list of assumptions or "givens" is shared.
- ❖ Participants develop the agenda around the stated theme, problem or question by writing individual questions, topics or issues on flipchart paper.
- ❖ Participants gravitate to those topics, questions that interest them using the "Law of Two Feet." If nothing is compelling or stirs your passion, you should leave.
- ❖ The person who wrote down the topic is the facilitator of that discussion group.
- ❖ Participants should move freely among the groups. You should be either contributing or learning in your group, if you aren't move on.
- ❖ Notes are taken on the flip chart paper so that they can be shared with others.

- Q.** Is there a specific group size that is recommended?  
**A.** No, this technique can be used with small groups of 10 and with groups as large as 1,000.
- Q.** Is there a set time frame for a meeting using "Open Space"?  
**A.** Depends on the issue or question. However, for the "big stuff," at least one full day is recommended.
- Q.** What are the elements that make an open space format successful?  
**A.** Passion of the participants and their commitment to take responsibility as a self-organizing group.
- Q.** What are the barriers to having an effective "open space" event?  
**A.** Trying to control the outcome. It is about framing the questions and the theme so that everyone is free to learn and to contribute.
- Q.** Where can I get more information?  
**A.** On the Internet of course! Here are some links:

<http://www.globalchicago.net/wiki/wiki.cgi?OpenSpaceTech>

<http://www.openspacetechnology.com/osmeeting.html>

<http://www.openspaceworld.org>

By reading more:

<http://www.bkpub.com/products/productshow.adp?code=46>

<http://www.asaenet.org/research/detail/1,2237,51830,00.html>

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