



You are ready to try it! \o/

You've attended an UnConference, BarCamp or other Open Space self-organising event, and would love to bring it to your own business or community. And you wonder...

*Can it really be as simple as it looks?*

This workbook helps you answer this question for your own context, in greater depth. Discover how simple and complex Open Space is, and prepare to do it well!

Hello! I really look forward to working with you toward Opening Space in your business or group!

Before we meet, I'm asking you to:  
A) envision the scenario you'll use in our class, to identify where your challenges lie. B) review the basics, so we can skip over them and get right to your own unique puzzles.

Please be specific, honest, and true to yourself. Pick a real scenario you want to facilitate, or a future dream, but based on a real situation with real people, places and politics.

Welcome to your journey toward holding space for vital, generative conversations – and prepare to be surprised!

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several loops and flourishes, positioned in the bottom right corner of the page.

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# Preparing for this workshop:

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The basics of Open Space Technology have been in use and available to all for 25 years now. And yet, we continue to see "improved" versions of OST that fall flat, failing to leverage what truly makes it work: people power.

And so, I propose to go back to the original sources, and to interact with them privately, reflectively, in the pre-course-work, and interactively, in a real-time workshop setting.

To do the reflections, you'll need:

- Harrison Owen's classic "Open Space Technology" book,
- some place to take notes,
- 3 to 6 hours for the pre-work,
- a quiet place to reflect.

(In fact, you do not have to have the book, but I find that without it people tend to imagine the method as they have seen it, and not as Owen thoughtfully designed it. )

In any case, you need to choose a core resource. Please choose one from the next page that suits you.

Set aside time for the 4 reflections, 30, or better 60, minutes for each. The 4th one might take longer, and it requires index cards – it is the most practical one.

Tip: the times between reflections are actually part of the process, so it's better not to do them all on the last day.

# Reading List

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## Core References:

**Open Space User's Guide.** By Harrison Owen, originator of Open Space Technology

*The original reference guide to Open Space Technology*

**Wave Rider. Leadership for High Performance in a Self-Organising World.** By Harrison Owen

*Applying Open Space to the workplace.*

**A Brief User's Guide to Open Space Technology**

[http://www.openspaceworld.com/users\\_guide.htm](http://www.openspaceworld.com/users_guide.htm)

*An online Open Space guide from Harrison Owen, the creator of the method.*

**Open Space Technology: a User's NON-guide** edited by Chris Corrigan and Michael Herman

<http://www.chriscorrigan.com/openspace/nonguide5.pdf>

## Helpful supplementary reading

### Open Space Inviting Guide - by Michael Herman

[http://www.michaelherman.com/publications/inviting\\_guide.pdf](http://www.michaelherman.com/publications/inviting_guide.pdf)

*An online guide to preparing to Open Space for a group, up to making the invitation.*

### The Tao of Holding Space. 81 short chapters on facilitating Open Space. By Chris Corrigan. *Free e-book in multiple formats.*

<http://archive.org/details/TheTaoOfHoldingSpace>

*As a deck of cards (allow 2-3 weeks for delivery)*  
<http://bit.ly/DebsPrintShop>

### The Art of Convening. Authentic engagement in meetings, gatherings and conversations. By Craig and Patricia Neal

*An approach to planning, inviting and facilitating: complementary to Open Space.*

### The Art of Powerful Questions. By Juanita Brown, et al. [bit.ly/aopqenglish](http://bit.ly/aopqenglish)

*Learn to formulate questions that spark newness, passion, innovation and change.*

## Generously helpful websites

Chris Corrigan (english website) -

[http://chriscorrigan.com/parkinglot/?page\\_id=957](http://chriscorrigan.com/parkinglot/?page_id=957)

Michael Herman (english site) -

<http://www.michaelherman.com/cgi/wiki.cgi?OpenSpaceTechnology>

Lisa Heft (english website) -

<http://www.openingspace.net/>

Micheal M. Pannwitz (german website) -

<http://www.michaelmpannwitz.de/>

OpenSpaceWorld Portal (multilingual) -

<http://www.openspaceworld.org/>

*Specifically for Facilitators:*

<http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?FacilitatorResources>

... and my own online resource list:

Deborah Hartmann Preuss (resources,

blog) - <http://abiggerga.me/blog/open-space-resources/>

# Day 1:

## Start from where you are

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Open Space is not about you. And yet, here you are, and it is you who will stand in the circle to bring this approach to your people. And still: it's not about you! What a challenge!

Open Space looks like a facilitation method (and it is... and...). It is a significant shift in how we view leadership. It is a strange way of leading by inviting; of leading by letting go... so that it becomes about whatever is important to the participants, and driven by their wisdom.

To do this easily, it helps to be clear on who we are; to be in touch with our own values and goals, so we can distinguish them from those of the group. This can help us to remain centered and balanced when approaching this event.

So: let's not start with an issue, or the people, or the technique. Let's start where our actions always really start anyway: with what's important. So: What do you care about?

We'll talk about "opening space" & "holding space" ... about the Doing and Being of Open Space. This reflection looks at Being.

Read one or more of these passages:

1. pp 60-64 of of Open Space Technology:  
“Being authentically present”
1. Chapter VIII of Wave Rider:  
“A Spanner in the Works,” on the illusion of control
2. The Tao of Holding Space,  
pp 15-20 (verses 13: *Let Go of Self* to 20: *Be Yourself*)

Do one of these, or make one up:

- Your Personal Values  
a free exercise download on my  
website <http://bit.ly/yourvalues>
- Online Personal Values  
Assessment (it's free, part of a  
Tony Robbins DISC profile)  
[tonyrobbins.com/ue/disc-profile.php](http://tonyrobbins.com/ue/disc-profile.php)
- Read Michael Bungay Stanier's  
article on values, and do the  
exercise described there:  
[99u.com/articles/7282/are-you-out-of-sync-with-your-values](http://99u.com/articles/7282/are-you-out-of-sync-with-your-values)
- Do one of the exercises at the  
end of Chapter 1 of *The Art of  
Convening*

## Day 1 Reflection:

What do you want to  
be  
or  
make happen  
in the world?

*Take your time!*

*Take a walk; draw a mind map:  
turn it over in your mind  
on the beach or in the bath...*

*Then write down your answer  
in your journal.*

*It doesn't have to be perfect,  
expect it to shift and grow  
as you continue to learn!*

*One last thing:*

Take a moment to appreciate this mission of yours: it empowers your choices and makes you magnetic!

Say it *out loud*. And say it again!

Celebrate it! \o/

And now, because *Open Space is not about you*, commit to putting this agenda aside. Sounds odd, doesn't it? It may, in fact, be what drives you to want to Open Space ... but it can also close the space.

To Open Space and Hold Space you must serve the Big Agenda of your invited community.

And that's where we're headed next...

## Day 2: Taking care of what's important

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Opening Space is an act of servant leadership. As such, it requires energy and commitment.

It's worth taking some time to make sure your energy is invested to take care of an important agenda. Doing so early on reduces frustration, energises your planning and makes it easier. It gives coherence to what you do, and helps you to keep it simple.

In fact, there may be different agendas among different related groups. To begin, let's focus just

on the people you have imagined inviting to your unconference.

Do *this exercise in writing:*

1. Name the Big Agenda you yourself hope to serve with this event. State it in the *biggest, most positive* way you can. “World Peace,” “Customers brag about us,” “100% employee retention” are not too big!
2. The group of people you care to help is ... ?
3. The thing *they themselves* really care about is ... ?
4. What stimulating theme or Big Agenda might *they* come up

with? Phrase it as a question or opportunity, to keep it open. “Winning the market in China” or “How can we...?”

Note: If you are uncertain about the theme, or have none, how will those invited know whether they want to join? Your theme is right when people on all sides of an issue will want to come to shape the result!

Stick with this exercise, it is very important. And involve your sponsor, if you can.

Once it is done, there is one last step...

## Day 2 Reflections:

Q1:

Having done the previous exercise: how confident are you of the Big Agenda driving this event?

Q2:

What do you need to do to next, to find (not fabricate!) the theme that is real, open, and resonant to many?

*Please write your answers in your journal.*

*Perhaps also in your to-do list?*

## Day 3: The Right People

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At one event, someone took a marker and corrected my poster “Whoever comes ~~is~~ are the right people.” The next day, someone had changed it back! In fact, both forms are accurate: the individual people who come ARE the right people... and together they become “a people” – and this IS the right people, to deal with the issue that drew them there.

That is... if they really are there for *that* theme. And if they really *are present*, and not just going through the motions. And if they *all* are there.

This reflection is about Invitation.

This reflection may, in fact, reveal that you are not quite sure who you want to invite.

Experts use this practice: let people self-select to join... by making the event openly, and clearly, and widely known.

*Read:* a guide for preparing and inviting for Open Space events: Michael Herman's online *Inviting Guide*.

[michaelherman.com/openspacetechnology/publications/downloads/inviting\\_guide.pdf](http://michaelherman.com/openspacetechnology/publications/downloads/inviting_guide.pdf)

*Do:* a personal brainstorming session (perhaps involving your sponsor?) on the questions that follow:

1. Where will you find the people you care about, for this theme?
2. Who stands to win (or lose) if the group you care about succeeds (or fails to engage) in addressing this theme? Where will you reach them?
3. What person or group has first-hand information about obstacles, frustrations and puzzles in this discourse? How can you get them here?

(Tip: these people often show in conversation as “they” and “them”. Get them in the room so all can say “we” & get effective.)

## Day 3 Reflections:

Q1:

What stands in the way of your getting these people eagerly into the room?

Q2:

What would make this event more inviting and accessible for all of them?

Q3:

In your dreams: Who would attend to make this an amazing event? (Why not invite them?!)

*Please write your answers in your journal.*

Want more input on inviting? Here is some reading for you

*From the Reading List:*

The Art of Convening,

The Art of Powerful Questions,

Wave Rider pp 145-156.

*and...*

Inviting Organization, by Michael Herman

<http://www.michaelherman.com/cgi/wiki.cgi?action=browse&id=InvitingOrganization&oldid=InvitingOrganization>

# Day 4: How does Open Space support new thinking/doing?

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Now we come back to you! You're the one who's helped the group or organisation to be open to the event, orchestrated a compelling invitation, and now: you will "Open the Space".

The sponsor will say a few words to introduce you... and, as you walk the circle, what do you want to remember to be / do / say?

In this exercise you'll study the elements of Open Space, and consider how they help move your group toward their Big Agenda.

Read one or more: Harrison

Owen on how to Open Space:

1. Open Space Technology, Chapter VI “Creating Time and Space”
2. the sample script excerpted from that same book  
<http://www.michaelherman.com/cgi/wiki.cgi?OpenSpaceTechnology/SampleOpeningScript>
3. A Brief User’s Guide to Open Space Technology (in the reading list)
4. Wave Rider, pp 157-180:  
“Come to the Circle,”  
“Welcome Passion, Responsibility and Authentic Leadership,”  
“Remember the Four Principles,”  
and  
“Observe the Law of 2 Feet”.

5. Bonus: ask Google for “Open Space Technology script” and be inspired by what others are doing.

It is tempting to use everything you read, and everything you’ve seen and even to improve on it! So, when you’re done reading, this last step challenges you to simplify...

Read this provocative story about a minimalist Opening:  
[michaelherman.com/cgi/wiki.cgi?OpeningSpaceFast](http://michaelherman.com/cgi/wiki.cgi?OpeningSpaceFast)

Do: go back over what you've read & make your own script on index cards, of things to be / do / say.

Write just one reminder per card.  
(We'll use these in class.)

## Day 4 Reflection:

This new way of behaving will seem strange to some, even threatening! Stop and notice:

Q1:

What have you noticed, in Open Space, that's different from how your people usually act / interact?

Q2

Review your cards, and make some notes: how do the simple Open Space practices "hold the space open" for the group's Big Agenda to emerge?

*Please write your answers in your journal.*

## Next Steps:

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It's easy to think Opening Space is done "in the circle." But it starts long before this, and I find it challenging to transmit this to you in a relevant way, in a workshop.

So I invite you to meet with me for an hour of mentoring when you *start* to think about a new event. Before the venue, date, sponsors are set. Because, as the facilitator, you have a lot of influence on the openness and the spirit of the event during those early organizer conversations. And of course, I'm happy to give you tips, too!

Get off to a good start: book your free hour at [abiggergame.today](http://abiggergame.today)

*About the Author:*

Deborah  
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I believe that soulful work is critical to building a better world.

The most effective way I've found to do this is to encourage individuals who share this passion - people who bring their whole selves to their work and play. I want to collaborate with those who itch to create more joy in their own and others' lives. If you feel this itch, I believe you're on your way to making a much bigger difference than you may imagine!

I'm a Canadian, living in Germany with my husband, Ilja Preuß, working internationally in English, French and German. As a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach, my own soulful work is to support change-makers, with unConference facilitation and training, and one-on-one phone coaching.

*Reconnect with your strengths  
in a complimentary  
Personal Vision  
phone coaching session*

*it's time to design  
a bigger game*

Deborah Hartmann Preuss, CPCC  
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# Create your UnConference with Open Space workbook

self-coaching exercises  
for facilitators ready to share  
the vibrant, creative, culture-shifting  
gift of self-organization  
with communities they care about.

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