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Open Space Technology: A World Story

*In the beginning there was a white paper, presented at a traditional conference, and then a not-so-traditional conference that grew into a worldwide community and practice. Eventually Harrison Owen wrote it all down and shared it in a book, called *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*. This is the opening of that book and the beginning of the Open Space World Story...*

One thing must be clear from the outset. Open Space Technology is not the proprietary product of H.H.Owen and Company. This is not a matter of altruism, or as some might suspect, pure madness. It is rather a simple acknowledgement of the truth.

Although my name is most closely associated with the approach, and its design and development, it is a fact that the creation of OST has been a collaborative project involving perhaps 1000 people on four continents over a period of eight years (as of 1993, that is!). Some were participants, some practitioners, and all were contributors.

In addition, many of the basic ideas come from a small West African village, the Native American Tradition, and the Wisdom of the East. To this should also be added the work on group dynamics done in many places, and the special contributions of many friends and colleagues. The list could go on and on, but the reality is, Open Space Technology is a World Product.

There is also the practical matter that a number of people, in a number of places, are already using Open Space Technology without my say-so or sanction — a situation in which I profoundly rejoice.

If I have a vision for Open Space Technology, it is that it become rather like accounting: something we all must do because it works, and because it is useful. My concern is that we do it well. To this end I have written this book [the original OST: A User's Guide], not so much as the definitive statement of the right way to proceed, but rather as an invitation to join the process and do it better.

So use this book [and this website!] as seems fitting, and please join me in what has been, and will continue to be, a marvelous co-creative adventure. Of course, there is one small responsibility that accompanies this invitation. Please share what you discover and we will all be the richer.

Harrison Owen
Potomac, Maryland
Winter, 1993

[Michael Herman, Webmaster]

posted by [Michael Herman](#) -

[...] We came together to talk about a particular (and very interesting) art project, Continental Harmony. But rather than following a preset agenda, the meeting's structure was flexible and inviting, based on an approach called Open Space Technology in which participants' own questions and interests drive a meeting. [...]

By [Arlene Goldbard » Blog Archive » Flash Forward](#) on 05.11.06 3:47 pm

[...] will be facilitated as an Open Space [...]

By [\(building the\) Black Rock Federal Credit Union » BarCampBankSeattle Update](#) on 06.30.07 6:17 pm

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Open Space Technology

...is a simple way to run productive meetings, with five to 2000+ people, and a powerful way to lead any kind of organization, in everyday practice and ongoing change. [About Open Space...](#)

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