



Open Space

#workhack

Open Space is actually a method for large groups to work out topics in a self-organized way at conferences. We have “hacked” the method a bit and find it quite wonderful for teams and departments as well.

And it works like this: The team meets for 60 minutes every two weeks, for example. At the beginning, they ask if anyone has brought a topic. This can be:

- a question on which someone needs opinions,
- a project that someone would like to present,
- a task that someone needs help with or,
- a personal skill that someone would like to share.

Depending on the size of the group, two to three topic providers are selected, write their topic on a piece of paper and briefly introduce the topic. At this point, the other colleagues can freely choose the topic that interests them. If no topic provider can be found, the event should be ended immediately. Also, no one should be forced to choose one of the topics offered – if there is nothing interesting, everyone can go back to work. Voluntary participation is a particularly important aspect of Open Space!

If, however, topic providers and interested parties have been found, they now withdraw for the next 50 minutes and work on the topic. After 50 minutes, everyone comes together, and each topic provider briefly presents what was discussed during the time.

The prerequisite is an openness to content and a willingness to share knowledge. The basic idea here is that the members themselves act as protagonists and contribute topics that are important to them. Those who attend voluntarily have the motivation and interest to deal intensively with the topic. As a rule of thumb, with a team size of 10 people, up to three topics are offered.

HELPS WITH

- internal knowledge transfer: transfer of know-how and mutual learning.
- change of perspective: team members as initiators take on a new role and are perceived differently by their colleagues.
- using resources: services that are sometimes carelessly outsourced can be performed within the organization.
- Increased motivation and creative, innovative solutions through the direct participation of a large number of employees

TO BE CONSIDERED

- Everybody can bring in a contribution, and introduce it briefly, so that the others can allocate themselves to it. The person providing the input is responsible for the course of his or her “session”. A loose circle of chairs is recommended so that a working atmosphere develops.
- The participants can switch between the offered topics, which can sometimes be quite fruitful.
- At the beginning, it is helpful to have an experienced facilitator moderate the Open Space.

TOOLS

- In the case of large groups, a poster announcing the initiatives is helpful: what, who, where, etc.
- Some initiators use a flipchart with the most important points or use a presentation or document to serve as examples.