

BRAIN INJURY COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY
(NIAGARA) INC.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

OCTOBER 2016



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Disclaimer:

Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc. acknowledges funding support for many of our programs and services from the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN) and the government of Ontario.

The views expressed in this publication are the views of Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc. and do not necessarily reflect those of the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN) or the government of Ontario.

Brain Injury Community Re-Entry (Niagara) Inc.
STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM 2016

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Mission Statement

Brain Injury Community Re-entry will provide support and leadership to individuals, their families and/or caregivers within the Niagara Region living with the effects of an acquired brain injury. We promote self-direction, facilitate opportunities for meaningful adaptation, and contribute to the development of the agency and its people. We participate in advancements in the field of rehabilitation, and participate in partnerships that foster ongoing dialogue with the individual and their support network.

Vision Statement

To lead in the field of acquired brain injury rehabilitation, providing advocacy for successful re-entry into the community.

Statement of Philosophy

The provision of support services is based on the following beliefs:

- Each individual is a unique adult and is deserving of respect and dignity.
- Support should be flexible, individualized and reflective of choices, abilities and existing support networks.
- Choice often involves some elements of risk. Where possible, individuals will be permitted to experience the result of their choices to the extent that they are able.
- Independence is a dynamic process of accessing people and services as challenges and successes change.

We rigorously promote the rights of the individual and promote recognition of acquired brain injury and how it affects individuals and families through ongoing advocacy and public education.

Executive Summary

Since 1988, Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc. (BICR) has provided dedicated services to individuals and their families living with the effects of an acquired brain injury. Participants, family members, staff and other professionals work as an integrated team in order to provide a holistic approach to rehabilitation and support services.

BICR is again embarking upon a planning process that will map out future service and organizational objectives for the next four years. The invaluable input derived from the community in 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013 were instrumental in establishing future visions and strategic directions. Frank Greco, Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors have once again sought input from the community for BICR's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. Community agencies, families of persons with acquired brain injury, participants in the services of BICR, and staff members were invited to attend a community consultation process.

The Strategic Planning Forum was held at the Holiday Inn and Suites Parkway Conference Centre, St. Catharines, Ontario on Monday, October 17, 2016. The facilitators chosen for this community meeting were Margo VanHonsberger and Erica LaPlante of Brain Injury Community Re-entry (Niagara) Inc. Following the introductions the attendees were invited to participate in sessions from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm.

A total of 74 individuals registered for the Strategic Planning Forum with 10 Community Partners, 4 BICR Board of Directors, 21 Participants, 17 Family Members and 22 BICR Staff.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS

Fifteen topics were identified and discussed throughout the morning. A representative of the discussion group entered a report for each topic into a computer. These reports, unedited, are included in this Book of Proceedings.

During the closing circle attendees were given ‘four votes’ each and asked to indicate with their votes which of the topics generated during their session time they individually had the most energy for. A person could use all four votes on one topic or spread the voting amongst topics. The facilitators mentioned that although all topics were noteworthy for the fact that each one directly mattered to an attendee, the voting would give additional data to the Board for their strategic planning day.

The topics are listed in the table below, along with a column of the number of votes given to that topic. Please note also that this data is still in relatively unprocessed form. Common themes are not yet combined and key areas are not yet discerned from amongst the possibilities. This will be done by the Board using the input from these meetings during a Board Strategic Planning Day in the near future.

TOPIC	VOTES	%
Apparent Shortage of Staff to Look After Client Needs	4	4%
Assisted Living	12	12%
Better Communication between Hospitals/Community Centers (Help)	7	7%
BIAN Clubhouse – Strengthening Partnerships	7	7%
Education – Health Conditions Affecting Participants	3	3%
Enhancing Professional Services at BICR	2	2%
Increase Education Programs and Rehab	7	7%
Long-Term Employment for Participants	14	14%
Mindfulness/Yoga	4	4%
Open Relationships with Staff and Participants	4	4%
Phone Communication and Phone System	6	6%
Poverty Effects Everything	8	8%
Sensitivity Training for Service Providers	4	4%
Staff within Different Departments	4	4%
Transportation	14	14%
(60 ATTENDED) 25 PEOPLE VOTED	100	100%

The topics with the highest number of votes will be considered. They are as follows:

- Assisted Living
- Long-term Employment for Participants
- Transportation

A standing Strategic Direction directed by Accreditation Canada is: Patient Safety

Next Steps

The Board of Directors will meet to develop the Strategic Plan for BICR. The Board will use this Book of Proceedings as the database from which to develop the Strategic Plan, along with data from the past achievements of BICR.

This Book of Proceedings will be available by contacting our office at 905-687-6788 or on our website at www.bicr.org. The strategic plan, once developed and approved, will also be circulated to participants in order for them to see how their input was incorporated into the plan.

Community partners who have interest in the topics identified at the Forum on October 17, 2016 are encouraged to keep the lines of communication open in order to see what can be done to move opportunities forward.

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OPEN SPACE MEETING REPORTS

TOPIC: Apparent shortage of staff to look after client needs, lack of domestic inspections, costs of transportation to events

CONVENER: Geoff Takach

PARTICIPANTS: Roger, Bev, Geoff, George, Kiersten, Dale, Maria, Ray, Shelby, LeeAnn

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

Lack of domestic inspections, failure to note client needs

DISCUSSION:

- More routine and working more inside of their houses
- More prompting, friendly reminders
- More insight on the needs of our individuals

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Have a Case Facilitator talk about standards of positions.
- Talk to participants about living arrangements
- Outsource cleaning & supports

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- More support with charts
- Weekly discussions
- Friendly reminders

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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OPEN SPACE MEETING REPORTS

TOPIC: Assisted Living

CONVENER: Dale Clowater

PARTICIPANTS: Dale Clowater, Irene Jilderda, George Kurzawa, Catherine Livingston, Ben Deignan, Linda Dunda, Ray Barfoot

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

Dale described his living environment, living in a basement apartment in a private home.

DISCUSSION:

- How to survive on limited income
- Often people do not work or have employment or only work part-time
- Difficult to cover costs such as rent, cable, car, transportation, etc.
- Often income does not go up as cost of living goes up
- Those on ODSP are left living in poverty and cannot get ahead with the amount provided by ODSP
- Even when you work your ODSP total amount may be adjusted
- The Niagara Regional affordable housing waitlist is very long and can be 13 years
- It costs a lot of money to house people in shelters
- People are using hospitals more and these services are much more costly
- BICR has opened Bowden in FE which provides supports

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Having the organization involved in working with apartment owners to facilitate any problems damage etc.
- Buckley transitional program –it's hard to move some clients due to long affordable housing geared to income waitlists
- Support Niagara Regional Housing to expand services and housing options.
- Advocacy to increase housing stock with region
- Can develop goal relationship with landlords
- Need to consider support with the client for dealing with clients
- Increase social awareness

- Need to partnerships to develop better housing

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

- MOH
- Municipal

COMMENTS:

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OPEN SPACE MEETING REPORTS

TOPIC: Better Communication between hospitals/community centers (help)

CONVENER: Linda Dunda

PARTICIPANTS: Linda Dunda, Ben Deignan, Lorraine Armstrong

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

DISCUSSION:

- Getting further communication between survivors and organizations – follow up

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Incentive system – flow with participant care post trauma
- Stroke program – with brain injury connect – advocate give them a voice
- Brain injury – social worker – follow up 1 to 2 months – 6 months later (home visit)

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Home visits – to see how survivors are doing post brain injury
- Follow up care – people are alone
 - Rehab coordinator in community
 - Post hospital discharge – make sure they have the right resources

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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OPEN SPACE MEETING REPORTS

TOPIC: BIAN Clubhouse – Strengthening Partnerships

CONVENER: Sherri Bieman-Copland

PARTICIPANTS: Gary Hemphill, Lorraine Armstrong, Maria, Sandra Harding, Gillian Pagnotta, Brandon Pearson

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

BIAN Clubhouse/BICR partnership – Strengthening partnerships (staffing/ resources). The current program is based on time limited funding and dependent on partnerships with organizations who donate professional volunteers to support the one full time staff.

DISCUSSION:

- Can BICR be more involved in areas such as collaborative grant writing to LHIN
- More staff hours donated
- Tuesday is the only day that actually runs the way a clubhouse is supposed to run
- Staffing at clubhouse is too thin – need more support

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- If staff are bringing participants to clubhouse can we make use of staff to provide volunteer
- Cross train those staff
- Include BIAN Vocational Program (expand this)
- Better use of space – rent clubhouse for some BICR programming
- Solidify the volunteer / member role

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Working out the mechanics of increased BICR involvement at clubhouse
- BICR promote more (start getting more participants involved)
- BICR outreach use clubhouse to promote this to hopefully assist participants transition towards independence
- Sherri – fundraising – ask for \$

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

- Money
- BICR – support with staffing
- More hours, possibly more staff
- Discussion with BICR about partnering with VOC/Rec

COMMENTS:

- Start-up grant, 167,000 (part time/operations/staff/site) – no government funding yet
- At Dale House – they have 5 full time staff
- Can volunteers run the group (staff it)
- Long term viability
- Cross training
- Using BIAN clubhouse space for other activities
- Bring BICR programs into clubhouse
- Schedule meeting between BIAN and stakeholders at BICR – outreach director , executive director, vocational services

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TOPIC: Education – Health Conditions affecting participants

CONVENER: Rob Williams

PARTICIPANTS: Scott Farraway, Rob Williams, Peggy Jackson, Justine McMillan, Lucia Pawlik, Celcia Pawlik, Dr. Pailing, Ray Barfoot, Jonathan Williams, Tracy Maddalena

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

- Education for staff/participants regarding medical conditions
- Education for caregivers/access to treatments

DISCUSSION:

- Provide family/caregivers about information.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Resources and access to funding/information within the community
- Participants to talk and plan topics of discussion
- Education Committee – representing participants and caregivers
- Rotating topics – participants and caregivers could plan after each session what to talk about next
- Accessing community partners to present at information sessions
- Understanding challenges of brain injury and how to support

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Two separate groups
 - Caregiver education
 - Participant education
- Brainwaves to identify groups
- Learning & Leisure Guide to list available groups

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Enhancing Professional Services at BICR.

CONVENER: Sherrie Bieman- Copland

PARTICIPANTS: Maria Duric, Sandra Harding, LeeAnn Therrien, Ray Barfoot, Gillian Pagnotta, Jeff Spelier, Snezana Jevtic.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

Professional services that are integrated with the overall BICR model benefit the participants as seen with the Neuropsychology and Social work services offered.

DISCUSSION:

Other professional services need to be accessed through CCAC but the providers are not necessarily ABI –trained nor are they integrated with the BICR service delivery. CCAC is also not mandated to support long-term survivors who are capable of growth. There will be a greater need for such services as third party is also tied to lack of discharge planning from hospital to the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Partner with OT/PT/S, SLP, companies for cross training
- Funding of other professional services – OT, PT, SLP Behavioural Therapy that operates in a similar model to social work
- Addressing the continuum care, by having regular communication between intake coordinator at BICR and hospital discharge planner
- Getting permission/consent from hospital system to receive names of individuals being discharged for intake follow-up 3-6 months after discharge – addresses the problem that when information is given at the time of discharge for individuals

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Increase Education Programs and Rehab

CONVENER: Peggy and Scott

PARTICIPANTS: Irene, Suzy, Tina, Muriel, Peg, Doug, Jackie

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

Increase education, more rehab programs, programs to increase independence.

DISCUSSION:

- Discussed some of the opportunities at BICR
- Aphasia program, getting grade 12 – difficulty with exams
- Need ABI support for testing

Recommendations

- BICR to support educational goals
- Use retired teachers – accessing this group to partner for education
- Learning to play an instrument

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Go out to retired teachers and see if we can recruit volunteers
- Put together knowledge base

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Long-term employment for participants

CONVENER: Michael Larmour

PARTICIPANTS: Michael Larmour, Ray Barfoot, Snezana, Justine McMillan, Ben Short, Peggy Jackson, Peggy Stevenson, Sheila Cocroft, Tina Horton, Shelby Banas, Sandra Harding, Jeff Spelier, Mark Johnston, Brandon Pearson

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

- Focusing on more employment opportunities, beyond seasonal
- Adding to WRAP, Gardening Angels

DISCUSSION:

- Vocational – what it is, offers, seasonal opportunities to access skills, fatigue level, physical abilities, attendance record
- Community gardens, horticulture program
- How do we turn our passions and interests into paid employment
- Manpower resources

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Peer support groups/mentors (paid position)
- Wellness recovery action plan training
- Focus on waitlist for vocational
- Odd Job Task Force (raking leaves, painting, shoveling snow, etc.) paid positions

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Promote and create “Odd Job Task Force”

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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OPEN SPACE MEETING REPORTS

TOPIC: Mindfulness/Yoga

CONVENER: Linda Dunda

PARTICIPANTS: Dave Horton, Rob Williams, Ben Short, Snezana, Dr. Pailing, Sherri Bieman-Copland, Sandra Harding, Gillian Pagnotta

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

Focus on mind therapies, have the potential to assist/aid other therapies

DISCUSSION:

- Would like to see mindfulness implemented within the hospital setting (coping skills, learn how to meditate)
- NHS does offer some programs – people are able to self- refer to it
- These practices are growing and have proven benefits not only with ABI but general population

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- BICR participants begin to access the groups offered at NHS
- Open meditation groups to staff, family and participants
- Implement a mindfulness program at BICR – weekly – need to educate what mindfulness is and what are the practices...breathing exercises - progressing to meditation

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Educate (Information sessions)
- Support Group (weekly practicing, learning)
- Facilitator
- People really respond well to having the opportunity to participate in mindfulness

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

- Develop an ongoing session
- Location

- Facilitator
- Education - ongoing

COMMENTS:

- Wellness Committee could put something

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TOPIC: More open relationships with staff and clients

CONVENER: Geoffrey

PARTICIPANTS: Geoffrey, Bev, George, Lorraine, Ben, Peg

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

- More contact with staff regarding what's happening at BICR (i.e. events)
- More time with staff for needs

DISCUSSION:

- More staff needed – more communication
- Face and telephone time with staff
- Develop a peer support system – buddy system
- More staff intervention and contact

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Learning and Leisure Guide – events listed
- Peer support to fill gaps
- Encourage use of website for info
- Staff to spend time to review L and L and events

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Participants need to know who they can call if they feel needs are not being met – specific person above case staff
- More staff time needed to address individual needs
- Develop peer support/buddy systems
- Clear path for voicing concerns, needs and feedback about individual cases
- Staff need to communicate better to clients i.e. voicemail updated with vacations, 'dial 0 if can't reach case worker' needs to be included in voicemail

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Phone Communication and Phone System

CONVENER: Sheila Cocroft

PARTICIPANTS: Lucia Pawlik, Cecilia Pawlik, Sandra Harding, Dave Horton

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

- Difficulty getting the person
- Confusion
- Have no idea

DISCUSSION:

- Put on hold then hung up
- Press zero to get reception (this is not clear)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Should get a call back
- On the workers machine should record who is covering for staff away that I'm away from my desk, today's date, when they will be returning

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- If on vacation the recording should clearly indicate who the caller can call. Also when their return date will be
- Clear and concise slow voicemail message
- Include second contact
- Include press 0 to reach front desk
- Date of returning
- Leave following info on message name, date, time of call
- ***mandate voice mail training and accountability!!!

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Poverty Effects Everything
CONVENER: Cathy Livingston
PARTICIPANTS: Bev, Roger, Dale, Cathy, Gill, Brandon, Chelsie, Doug, Leeann

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:
Poverty Effects Everything

DISCUSSION:

- Cost of food too expensive
- Not enough \$ to live off for a month
- Clothing for weather
- Big adjustment when first starting out
- Affordable housing not easy to find
- Food banks
- Needing to find other supports for \$
- Living without to gain increased rehab due to transportation cost
- Advocating for ODSP to get more support, then only giving to a few. Equal support along the board
- More availability for food bank, not needing to wait every three months

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Check free fresh fruit at food banks
- Have Brain Injury at tables for housing. First more education. NPRN – Niagara Poverty Network
- Advocating for the change and rent subsidies

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Home movement for Provincial Income. Already in the works
- Look at the system and how it supports
- Look at different rent subsidies
- Age in which you can be on Niagara Housing

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

- BICR advocating

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Sensitivity Training for Service Providers

CONVENER: Lorraine Armstrong

PARTICIPANTS: Lorraine, Peggy J., Nick O, Justine M, Jonathan, Cathy

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY: Service providers need better training for communication disorders, cognitive disabilities- the invisible disabilities.

DISCUSSION:

- Lorraine had called ODSP- the worker was impatient and ending up calling police when not necessary
- More sensitivity training for other/invisible disabilities – Aphasia, speech impediments, ABI, cognitive disabilities

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Service providers need refreshers with emphasis on being patient, providing information and help to clients with respect
- Use the ‘mystery shopper’ approach to monitor various services.
- Agency need phone services monitored for Quality assurance – i.e. sensitivity -this is where BICR can help advocate for sensitivity awareness with ABI and related disorders

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- More public education about ABI and Aphasia

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Staff within different departments go and work at each site according to position

CONVENER: Suzy Hastings

PARTICIPANTS: Suzy Hastings, Jackie Lynch, Tina Horton, Sheila Cocroft, Shelby Banas, Kiersten Hendsbee, Jen McLean

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

- Staff try all different positions so they can get an idea of the job responsibilities in that department

DISCUSSION:

- Some staff can rotate so they are familiar with different positions
- Not enough cross training among staff – this would help during staff scheduling
- When staff are sick for an extended period of time, this would be easier to fill
- Assist with staff burnout
- With program growth – staff that are cross trained can assist
- This may assist with job posting – lack of applicants with specific jobs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Rehab workers/staff trained in all areas in your division

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

- Staff can request to spend a day in another department

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

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TOPIC: Transportation

CONVENER: Lorraine Nadeau, Geoffrey Takach, Lucia Pawlick

PARTICIPANTS: Doug, Lucia, Cecelia, Muriel, Ben, Dave, Geoff, Lorraine, Rob

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC/ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY:

- Outlying areas have limited access to regional services. Current specialized services have limitations
- BICR Vans- offer subsidized but limited capacity

DISCUSSION:

- Go trains are accessible- need to be used
- BICR vans – need to be utilized during down times- easier booking – access to keys
- On weekends- Access to keys
- Prioritizing use of BICR vans- i.e.- groups vs individuals, accessible vs able body participants
- Coordination staff traveling to areas needed by clients

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Advocate to regional council a need for one accessible transit system
- Better communication among staff about prioritizing use of vans
- Event schedules need to be given out before 2 week window for participants to make paratransit bookings
- Easier access on weekends to vans not in use

FUTURE ACTION/NEXT STEPS:

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

COMMENTS:

Open Space Technology

APPENDIX A

A Process That Achieves Results and when used frequently, fosters an Interconnected Learning Organization.

"Open Space Technology" is the name given to a meeting without a predetermined agenda. Developed in the late eighties by Harrison Owen of Maryland, U.S.A., this meeting methodology is now used around the world as an effective process for facilitating change in both organizational and community settings.

Open Space Technology meetings are simple to organize, require very little lead time, are effective for any sized group from five to six hundred, are effective for established groups such as corporations, private sector and public sector organizations, government and non-government organizations, coalitions, teams or communities. They enable the building of energy and participation in ways that few other processes do. Open Space Technology meetings create the conditions for interactive processes that allow leadership to surface naturally.

Open Space Technology is best used when there is an important issue to be addressed; there is a diversity of people involved; there is complexity; and when decisions need to be made quickly.

Open Space Technology operates on four principles and one law:

Those principles are:

1. Whoever comes are the right people. This reinforces that the wisdom to achieve solutions is present in the room and the group is not to worry about who is not present nor to panic about who is.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have. This keeps the attention on the best possible effort in the present, not worrying about "what we should have done".
3. Whenever it starts is the right time. This reminds people that creativity cannot be controlled.
4. When its over, its over. This encourages people to continue their discussion so long as there is energy for it. Some sessions will finish well within the anticipated time. Others will run longer than the time allotted.

The one law or rule is called The Law of Mobility, also known as The Law of Two Feet. This indicates that people can enter or leave an open space session as they choose. If the session you are in is not meeting your needs for either contributing or learning, go to another one.

So how does it work?

An Open Space meeting is announced. Duration is most commonly between one and three days, though they can be shorter.

The venue is a large conference room with lots of "break-out" or session rooms or areas adjacent. When people arrive for the Open Space Technology meeting, they initially come to the plenary room and find a venue in which there is an empty room, except for a large circle of chairs. The circle is an invitation to communication with no barriers.

Open Space Technology Continued

The workshop begins with a welcome by the sponsor that is brief, highlighting the theme and the “givens” and then a facilitator who explains how the Open Space Technology workshop will operate. The broad purpose of the workshop is stated again, as are the “givens” or constraints. An example of a broader theme might be "Issues and Opportunities for the Future of the Organization". Sometimes the broad purpose is quite focused such as "Issues and Opportunities for reworking the assembly line". In the middle of the circle is a collection of newsprint paper, masking tape, and felt pens. Participants are then invited to create the agenda for the workshop. It works like this.

- (i) Anyone who has any ideas at all that relate to this broad topic are invited to take a sheet of butcher's paper and along the top write their topic of interest or passion. People are asked for ideas for which they have passion and for which they are prepared to take the responsibility of leading a discussion group on that idea (they do not need to have had previous experience in leading a discussion group but simply to get their topic started and to be sure that everyone who comes to their discussion has a chance to speak), and to make sure a record of the discussion is recorded (report forms are provided). The sheets announcing each of the ideas, along with the name of the person who put up the idea and a note of when the topic will be addressed and which breakout area it will be in) are affixed to a blank wall. Participants can put up ideas for which they have a lot of information including having handouts that they have brought to the meeting for the purpose of sharing the information, or they might know nothing more about the idea than to have a question.
- (ii) The next step involves a "market-place". All workshop participants go to the market wall to look at the ideas outlined on each sheet. When they find the topic of most interest to them, they sign up, by writing their name on the sheet beneath the topic.
- (iii) The next step involves participants going to the break out spaces to participate in the topics of their choice. As far as possible, each session is defined by a circle of chairs and no other furniture, though it may have flip charts, post-its, felt pens, etc. The person who posted the idea is responsible for leading the session in whatever way s/he chooses. The facilitator has no involvement whatsoever. The only requirement is that, at the end of the session, the session leader brings back to a central point a summary of session ideas, and who has agreed to do what. This is to be provided in a somewhat standardized format, usually noted on a pro-forma given to the session leader at the start of their session. It is important to record the highlights of the discussion in such a way that they can be understood by people who were not part of the discussion.
- (iv) A bank of computers is available and session leaders or a representative from the group enters the report into a computer. As soon as a report is entered, the facilitator prints a copy of it for a newswall and posts it so that all participants of the broader meeting can read about what has happened in each session. As well, a copy of the report is made to be entered into a “book of proceedings”, a book that is comprised of all of the reports and contact information of the participants so that they can reach each other for further networking. This book is available to each participant of the meeting. In a multi-day meeting, the “book of proceedings” is handed to each person prior to a time of converging the various topics and getting further input from the collective about next step actions. In a meeting that is one day or less, the “book of proceedings” is available to participant within the week, either through a pick up or mailing. Often, the “book of proceedings” is available electronically as well on a website or by e-mail.

Open Space Technology Continued

- (v) In meetings where the intention is to move topics to action steps, the facilitator conducts a summarizing session for convergence, prioritizing and action
- (vi) Planning, including seeking input on next steps and follow-up. This is a feature of Open Space Technology meetings that are longer than one day.

Open Space Technology has one outstanding characteristic - the generation of energy and commitment. It also has one outstanding enemy - control. It will not work where the energy and commitment generated are not permitted to bear fruit. This is not to suggest that OST is an invitation to anarchy. Far from it. Provided the constraints - economic, political, legislative - are recognized and spelt out very clearly at the start, and the areas where discretion and freedom to be creative ('defining the space') are also made clear, Open Space Technology is proving itself to be a powerful tool for harnessing commitment and responsibility. Several organization-wide Open Space Technology meetings within a short time frame will start to shift an organizational culture from something that might be de-energized into a more vibrant organic networked community that is effectively producing results.