



# How to Conduct an Open Space Conference

At Berlineaton, we've facilitated dozens of Open Space Conferences over the past 25 years. They are fun, energizing, and elicit excellent results in a very short period. It is one of the most powerful and innovative facilitation techniques we use.

## What is an Open Space Conference?

Designed by Harrison Owen, an *Open Space Conference* is a tool used to tap into the wisdom and ideas of a group while creating networking and sharing opportunities. It works best with thirty or more people - there are no upper limits. The primary results include idea generation, dialogue, networking, systems thinking and a broad range of intelligence gathering. Use it with whole organizations, large group forums and community consultations.

The Conference is centered around a powerful theme that is phrased as a statement to challenge participants. Crafting a powerful statement is critical as it guides all subsequent activities in the Open Space Conference.

To the left are the five principles and on the following page, we describe how to set up your own an Open Space Conference!

Learn more at [www.berlineaton.com](http://www.berlineaton.com)





# How to Conduct an Open Space Conference

Below we describe the 4 parts of an open space conference and how to set it up.

## 4 Parts of an Open Space Conference

- 1. Build the Agenda** – Using the powerful question to start things off, the facilitator asks the audience to complete the powerful question with their own ideas. Each audience member stands up, states their response to the statement, and then comes to the center table to write down their idea on one of the 60 sheets. The runners post the sheet in the appropriate Session A, B, or C, using the cross reference on the sheet.
- 2. The Marketplace** – The wall marked Session A, B, C becomes the “Market Place”. Participants circulate around and decide what topics they would like to pursue further. They pick one item from Session A, B, and C and remember the reference number.
- 3. Dialogue Sessions** – This begins when the Marketplace has concluded. Each person gathers at the balloon number that is the same as their Session A selection. They meet others at the balloon and fill out a Dialogue Sheet which has a set of questions for the group to complete. After 15-20 min, another Dialogue Round occurs for Session B, and then 15 min later for Session C.
- 4. Plenary and Closing** – Everyone comes back to the large circle to discuss “where to from here”.

## Set Up

### 1. Marketplace Wall

A large wall divided into 3 equal parts, labeled:

Session A

Session B

Session C

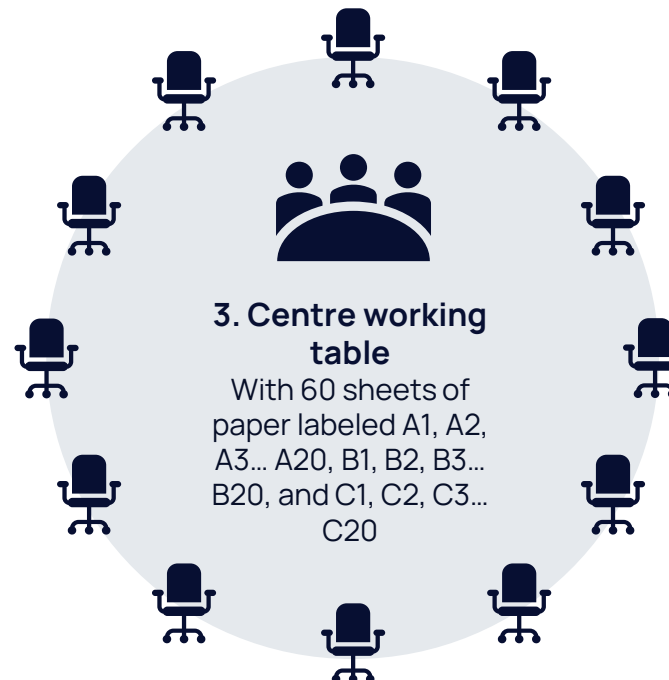


### 4. Powerful statement or question

projected on the main screen.  
“How might we... \_\_\_\_\_ ...”

### 2. Chairs in concentric circles

around a working table. 4 aisles to allow movement.



### 3. Centre working table

With 60 sheets of paper labeled A1, A2, A3... A20, B1, B2, B3... B20, and C1, C2, C3... C20



### 5. Twenty helium balloons

numbered 1 – 20 randomly tied to chairs around the room.



### 6. A facilitator and 3 – 4 Runners



### 7. Dialogue Sheets for Dialogue Sessions