



The Work Consultancy: Open Space Case Study

We worked with a large metropolitan Local Authority to facilitate a leadership day. For their annual leadership event, the Council's 350 most senior leaders gathered in one space. We facilitated a second activity stream with 70 delegates from right across the Council's workforce to complement and contribute to the work of the senior leaders.

Rather than echo the format from the larger room, we used the Open Space format on the day. Designed to create space for conversation, Open Space events have minimal structure and agenda. Instead of presentations, PowerPoint and talking *at* delegates, events are facilitated to ensure an emphasis on the identification of issues, discussion and action.

For the Council event, we starting by explaining the format and approach. Delegates were encouraged, within the boundaries of the purpose of the event, to discuss and propose the major issues faced by the Council. Working through our facilitation, they set their own agenda and topics for discussion. This was turned into a number of 'tracks' (discussions on specific topics) – and delegates chose the conversations they felt they could contribute most to – or learn the most from. In an Open Space event, the "law of two feet" is applied, which means delegates are free to move around the room if they feel they are neither contributing nor learning – or even if they just want to experience other conversations.

The outcomes of the discussions were captured on a pre-designed sheet which enabled the feedback to be collated in a meaningful way. To illustrate the importance of our work, we had a live video link up with the main room and explained the work we had been doing to the full leadership team. The feedback from the session was excellent and we received personal thanks from the Chief Executive for the day.

Open Space is spontaneous and creative. It encourages delegates to participate – meaning they are more likely to take action afterwards – in a way that traditional 'tell' formats do not. Through expert facilitation your delegates can identify the key problems, discuss and develop creative solutions and feel a sense of ownership that can never come from more traditional approaches. If you want to run an event, conference or team building session with a difference, get in touch. We work with you to answer some key questions before designing your event.

- What are your aims for your event?
- What do you want to be different afterwards?
- How do you want people to think or feel following it?
- What do you want people to do?

Answering these questions (and more) will ensure that we work together to refine, agree and meet your objectives. As a result, you will identify the issues more clearly. You will get better solutions. Your teams will feel more engaged.

