

Opening Remarks

These are the opening remarks of Patrick Jones, CEO, International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association to kick off session. These remarks are based on the content of this video accessed on July 31, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFLPO0I3I9s&t=17s>

Welcome to open space.

Our theme for this gathering is posted here. Bridging the Gap. What keeps me up at night. (Big challenges in maintenance, engineering, and roadway operations.)

During our time together we're going to develop our best thoughts around the issues and opportunities associated with our theme.

As we start, I want you to notice the empty marketplace.

This will be our agenda and is currently empty.

How many times have you been to a meeting where the agenda was completely blank in the beginning?

If you're wondering how you ever got into this or, even more, how you will ever get out, you should know that groups all over the world – some as large as 1,000 individuals – regularly create their own agendas in only a few minutes.

They then proceed to self-organize the whole affair.

To get from here to there we will use a marketplace.

In a few moments, I will ask you to identify any issue or opportunity you see around our theme, give it a short title, write it down – with your name – and then announce it in front of the group at one of these microphones.

I emphasize, give your issue a short description of 10 words or less. Say what your issue is and post it in the marketplace.

Make sure that you have some real passion for this issue and it's not just a good idea for someone else to do.

You will be expected to take personal responsibility for the discussion.

That means saying where and when the group will meet, convening the group, and adding the results to the proceedings.

You may offer as many issues as you like and if at the end of the day you don't see your issue on the wall, there is exactly one person to complain to: yourself.

Once all the issues are up, we will then open the marketplace and everybody will join as few or as many of the groups as they desire.

From there on out, you are in charge.

Even though open space is truly open, there are four principles and one law that we need to keep in mind.

The four principles are:

1. Whoever comes are the right people, a reminder that the group and configuration are also organized.
2. Whenever it starts is the right time, a reminder that ideas flow on their own schedule.
3. When it's over, it's over, a reminder to move on when the work is completed. Do the work, not the time.
4. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened, a reminder to be prepared to be surprised.

Open space also has one law, the law of mobility.

This law creates two possible new roles in open space called bumblebees and butterflies.

Bumblebees are an extension of the law of mobility.

The law of mobility provides a means for people to move from group to group as their interest changes.

The metaphor of the bumblebee is used to encourage movement which, in effect, cross pollinates the groups.

Ideas are carried from one group to the next and create new ideas.

Butterflies are also an extension of the law of mobility.

Where bumblebees cross pollinate, butterflies bring the power of observation and new ideas to the group.

Not everyone joins the groups in open space.

Some form a group of one where the person contemplates the ideas created in the marketplace and adds their thoughts to the pool of developing ideas.

Keeping the four principles in mind along with the one law, it is now time to get to work.

Along that line there is one question to start.

What are the issues and opportunities around our theme for which you have real passion and will take genuine responsibility?

And when you have identified an issue, give it a short title and write it down, legibly, in large letters, and include your name on the sheet.

As soon as you're ready announce your title and add it to the Marketplace. Don't wait to be asked; go when you're ready.

Time and space are on a first-come first-served basis.

The rest of you might take a look at the various offerings posted on the Marketplace and decide which group or groups you wish to join to learn or lend your expertise.

As you can see in the Marketplace, there are 12 spaces and two time frames for your discussions. Spaces #1 through #4 are in this room. Spaces #5 through #12 are out through that door in other rooms. There are signs clearly indicating the location of the other numbered spaces.

At 11:30am, we will reconvene in this large circle for a debrief on the experience and the discussions you've had.

It may seem a little chaotic at first, but it turns out that chaos is the way the fields of the mind are plowed so that new ideas can grow.

From here on out, you are on your own.

As soon as your group is ready to go to work, go to it.

We'll see you all back here at 11:30 am at the end of the open space in our closing circle.

The Marketplace is now open for you to announce your issue and post it in the marketplace. Go when you are ready.

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