



**Leading by Nature
by Giles Hutchins**



Open Space Technology: This is a powerful way to run self-organizing meetings for small or large groups (it has been run effectively for groups of two thousand people before). The originator of Open Space, Harrison Owen, explains that this approach works best when there are the following conditions present: complexity, diversity, conflict, and urgency.

Each meeting has a trained facilitator and a meeting sponsor, but no specific agenda. The meeting sponsor starts the meeting with an overriding 'meeting purpose'. Then the facilitator explains the Open Space process which is essentially about getting everyone to create the agenda themselves and then explore the issues in self-organizing groups. When key issues or aspects of the agenda start to form amongst the different groups, certain people passionate about particular issues come forward as sponsors for different topics. These topics get posted on the meeting bulletin board or digital 'wall' (a shared space or folder for people to access on-line), and the topic sponsors then say a few words about the topic, issue or question of inquiry and people in the wider group choose which topic group they wish to join. People post comments and explorations on the topic wall as the discussions unfold both virtually and in face-to-face groups.

People are free to move between groups cross-pollinating as they go. Each group then collates the key findings and instantly publishes them digitally so everyone can see the findings and go through them as a whole group. Over a matter of a couple of days, all the most important ideas, data, recommendations and questions for further study, along with immediate action plans, are published for all participants and for the entire organization and its wider stakeholders to see.