

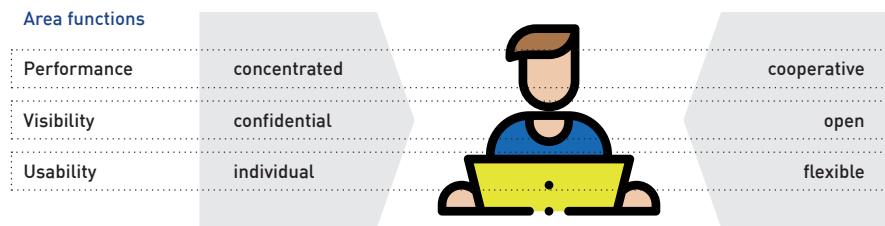


# “BALANCING ACT OPEN SPACE” WORKSHOP

How to deal effectively with typical fields of tension in open-space work environments

## Introduction and overview

The intensive empirical evidence from the PRÄGEWELT study has shown us that completely different open-space offices consistently display similar fields of tension. They are contradictions at two ends of a spectrum that cannot be achieved simultaneously – only the one or the other can be implemented optimally.



The contradictory nature of the goals means that the open-space office has advantages and disadvantages, and it is precisely this discrepancy which manifests itself particularly in three fields of tension, which employees experience as potentially burdensome and challenging.

1. The idea of the open-space office is to promote cooperation between employees, but also to enable them to work with absolute concentration.
2. The open-space office is meant to provide openness (transparency, visibility), but must also enable confidentiality.
3. The open-space office should guarantee flexibility, but also include options for individuality (method of working, choice of work space).

Employees and managers find these fields of tension to be a challenge to their ways of working. The fields of tension can seldom be eliminated – but they can be balanced out better.

This has led to the designing of the PRÄGEWELT "Balancing Act Open Space" workshop. The aims of the workshop are:

- >> to create awareness of the potential tension in the open space,
- >> to identify fields of tension in the open space and
- >> to derive possible solutions.

The workshop, which is designed for 10–20 participants, does not aim to eliminate the fields of tension; its purpose is to enable the participants to recognise the fields of tension and find suitable ways to deal with them, so that difficulties are prevented from arising and that the field of tension is, at best, brought into balance. The workshop, and the approaches that result from it, allow the users of the open space to reflect on how they mutually use the space and to consciously tackle (possible) problems. It is intended to represent a good method of implementing behaviours that will sustainably prevent health issues and promote well-being. It enables the users to gain autonomy over their work environment and to achieve a fit between their requirements as a group and the reality of their work place.

The workshop agenda is divided into the following parts:

1. Introduction
2. Explanation of the fields of tension
3. Positioning exercise
4. Group work
5. In plenary: collation of the results followed by discussion, list of action items and draft of guidelines
6. Brief feedback session: What did you think of the workshop?

A brief description of the workshop is contained in the table below, which is followed by an illustration of the moderator's handbook.


## OVERVIEW

### "BALANCING ACT OPEN SPACE" WORKSHOP

<b>When should it be held?</b>	In principal, the workshop can be carried out at any time; however, the best time for it depends on the project phase. We recommend scheduling the workshop either shortly before or shortly after the move, or to check and adapt existing open-space concepts.
<b>Size of the group?</b>	A maximum of 20 participants
<b>Who needs to be there?</b>	<p>2 moderators</p> <p>The users sharing an open-space office or a group that is representative of the staff at the premises/users of the space.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ approx. 10-20 people from             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; employee level</li> <li>&gt;&gt; middle management</li> <li>&gt;&gt; collective vs. separate workshops for employees and managers</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ 1 representative from the personnel department / HR</li> <li>✓ 1 representative from the staff council / works council</li> <li>✓ 1 representative from the building-project team</li> </ul>
<b>What resources are required?</b>	<p>Large room with multimedia projector, laptop, flipchart, visualiser (optional)</p> <p>Chairs positioned for a workshop, e.g. in a circle (not a meeting atmosphere)</p> <p>Moderator's handbook</p> <p>List of participants (if needed)</p> <p>"Fields of tension" cards (A3)</p> <p>Poster(s) of 3 fields of tension (plus one blank field)</p> <p>Floor cards (😊😐😞)</p> <p>Sticky dots</p> <p>Pre-written and blank flipchart pages</p> <p>Marker pens for flipchart and posters</p> <p>Ballpoint pens</p> <p>Task matrix poster</p> <p>Feedback sheets</p> <p>Clock / camera (smartphone)</p>
<b>What is the duration?</b>	Approx. 3 hours
<b>What is the output?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt;&gt; Photos documenting the fields of tension that have been identified</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Draft of measures for balancing out / dealing with the fields of tension</li> </ul>

MODERATOR'S HANDBOOK

"BALANCING ACT OPEN SPACE" WORKSHOP

	Duration/ Time required	Content	Person responsible	Preparation, materials and equipment
1	~ 15 mins.	<b>Introduction</b> Aim of the workshop / Reason for the workshop and current phase in the project / Background to the workplace project / Context	Moderator	PowerPoint presentation (optional)
2	~ 15 mins.	<b>Explanation of the fields of tension</b> Achievability: concentrated – cooperative Visibility: confidential – open Usability: individual – flexible	Moderator  	- Flipchart for writing the key points of the discussion as they arise - Flipchart pens
3	~ 30 mins.	<b>Positioning exercise</b> The participants' task is to position themselves between the fields of tension (between two poles: left 😊, neutral centre 😊, right 😊), optionally with help from the fields of tension cards.  Instruction: Please would you all position yourselves at the place in the room that applies to you the best. How satisfied are you with your office environment with regard to the field of tension...?  Document (roughly) the distribution of positions per field of tension on the poster: - concentrated/cooperative - confidential/open - individual/flexible - free topic  For each position, ask several participants to explain why they are standing in that place (it is best to interview participants in the centre as well as those standing at the two extremes).	Moderators / All workshop participants	- Floor cards - Fields of tension poster (A0) - marker pens - 3 Cards of tension plus 1 blank card



E.g.:

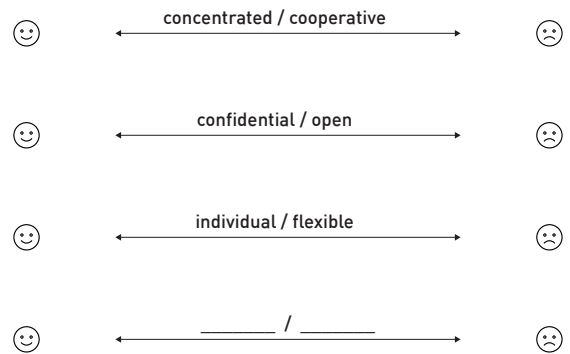
"What motivated you to position yourself here?"

"You have positioned yourself at an extreme / in the centre. Why is that?"

"What would need to happen for you to move from the one side to the other?"

Document the reasons on the poster.

At the end, select 1-2 fields of tension that have been ranked the most negatively.



4 ~ 60 mins.

#### Group task: Discuss the selected fields of tension and derive solutions

- Identify and select 1-2 key fields of tension (the most important topics)
- Divide the participants into 2 groups; each group works on just one of those fields of tension)

The following points are discussed, in numerical order, in each group:

- 1) Challenges posed by the field of tension, positive aspects of the field of tension: each participant says 1 sentence to do with what bothers them most about the field of tension ("lowlights") and what the advantages of the space situation are ("high lights"). Write these down on the 2 pre-written flipchart pages. The statements are then prioritised by assigning sticky dots to them (each participant has 3 dots).
- 2) Previous ways of dealing with the aspect of a field of tension which has received the most dots
- 3) Gathering of new ideas for how to deal with the aspects in future

Group 1: Moderator 1 - 2 pre-written flipchart pages per group:

- Group 2: Moderator 2
- 1) "Highlights"
  - 2) "Lowlights"
- Each group works on ONE field of tension.
- 3 sticky dots per participant
  - 1-2 blank flipchart pages per group for previous and new ways of dealing with aspects
  - Flipchart pens



- 5 ~ 15 mins. **Summary**, given by the moderators, of the group task (highlights, lowlights, ideas on previous ways and solutions for dealing with the fields of tension)
- Moderators

**Break** for the workshop participants

- 6 ~ 45 mins. 1) **Presentation of the summarised results** of the group task by the moderators, followed by discussion. The moderators briefly summarise the highlights and lowlights and in particular the previous and new ways of dealing with the fields of tension. This represents the transition of the workshop to:
- Moderators / All workshop participants
- Action items matrix (Poster, A0)  
- Flipchart pens

Measures	Action	Person responsible	Deadline

- 2) **The action item matrix / to-do-list:**  
Who is going to do what and by when?  
Together, the participants define the concrete measures to be implemented, and the moderators write them under "Measures", "Action", "Person responsible" and "Deadline" in the prepared action items matrix / to-do list. The moderators also provide assistance, keep an overview, and summarise at the end. The action items matrix can, for example, also include the date when the group meets again.

- 7 ~ 15 Minuten **Feedback session**  
How was the workshop?  
Brief feedback round, distribution of feedback forms, filling in, and collection.
- Moderators / All workshop participants
- Feedback forms (A4)  
- Ballpoint pens

Thanks and farewells

- Afterwards **Photo documentation**
- Moderators
- Camera / smartphone



## Notes