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Keep an eye out for the Open Space events at PyCon this year!

Posted by Ewa Jodlowska · April 25, 2018

These meetup-like events are a great way to learn something new or connect with others who share similar interests. Due to their self-organized nature and the breadth of topics, there is bound to be an Open Space event that can enrich your conference experience. In the past, Open Spaces have included a wide range of topics such as natural language processing, web

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frameworks, yoga, and playing board games. Any topic that two or more attendees are interested in could be a good candidate for an Open Space.

Open Spaces are held during the three main conference days in meeting rooms reserved for these events. Any attendee can create an Open Space event and reserve a room by adding a card to the Open Spaces boards found near the registration desk. Checking these boards regularly during the conference, subscribing to the hashtag #PyConOpenSpace, and following @openspacesbot on Twitter are ways to keep informed about upcoming Open Spaces.

Promoting your Open Space

If you decide to host your own Open Space event there are a number of ways to promote it. The primary way to promote your Open Space by filling out an index card and pinning your event in an available slot on the Open Spaces boards near the registration desk.

We're encouraging the use of the

hashtag #PyConOpenSpace this year. If you would like the help of @openspacesbot in promoting your event, send a tweet about your Open Space including the room, time, and #PyConOpenSpace hashtag, and the bot will retweet a reminder about your event 15 minutes before its scheduled time.

Ideas for Open Spaces

If you're interested in hosting an Open Space but are struggling to come up with a topic please refer to the Open Spaces site:

<https://us.pycon.org/2018/events/open-spaces/> for more information about topics that have worked well in the past.

Tips on running a successful Open Space

Once you've picked a topic for your Open Space it can be helpful to keep a few things in mind regarding how to structure and organize your event.

- **Set expectations:** Folks attending your open space will often expect someone to take lead. If you put the index card on the board, you'll

probably want to take a few notes before the event starts on things folks might like to discuss.

- **Know your audience:** Try to gauge participants' knowledge of the topic and be prepared to shift the way you discuss topics to accommodate those who show up.
- **Help foster communication:** Consider leading a short opening activity like an ice breaker or a round of introductions and think of ways to continue the discussion after your Open Space (a spreadsheet to share contact information, exchanging Twitter handles, starting a mailing list, etc.).
- **Encourage questions:** Welcome questions and ask them yourself to help gauge the interest/understanding of the group.
- **Have a plan:** Prepare necessary materials ahead of time, provide structure and direction for the group's time together. When planning, account for setup time and possible delays.

- **Be spontaneous:** Planning ahead isn't always necessary or possible. If you see an opportunity to lead an Open Space on a topic you're passionate about put it on the Open Spaces board!.
- **Engage participants:** Plan activities that encourage engagement from the whole group, and make shy members feel welcome. Also consider taking notes or encouraging others to do so.

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