

Outcomes for the Open Table Model

John VanDenBerg, Ph.D.



Photo: theopentable.org/operating-a-table/

An Evaluation of 20 Graduated Open Table Brothers and Sisters (VanDenBerg, 2015) interviewed twenty 2013 Open Table Brothers and Sisters about key areas of the core values and principles of the Open Table model. The study was done as part of an ongoing quality improvement process which looks at the graduated Brother's and Sister's experiences with Open Table.

The results and positive impacts are clear in the key areas of community relationships, employment and training, skills and problem solving ability, optimism, and spirituality. The entire study is available on the Open Table website, theopentable.org.

"I really wanted to change, but I needed help with direction. It was a wonderful experience; I wish I could have done it earlier in my life..."

What is Open Table?

Mission: Train congregation members, through the Open Table Model, to form communities – called Tables – that transform their vocational and life experiences into tools our Brothers and Sisters in poverty can use to develop and implement plans that create change.

Vision: A movement of servants restoring people in poverty to our communities through relationship and the investment of our own vocational and life experiences and personal networks.

Results of an Evaluation of 20 Graduated Open Table Brothers and Sisters (VanDenBerg, 2015)

Brothers and Sisters could answer “No, disagree”, “Yes, agree”, or “Prefer not to Answer.” The number answering “Yes, agree” are below for each question.

- 1) I have long term relationships with one or more of my former Table members (95%).



- 2) I now have the skill to be able to access help and ideas from other people in my community, beyond those people who were on my Table (80%).



- 3) I have the skills of being able to get through problems and crises better than I used to (85%).



- 4) I am currently taking classes that will help me get a better job, or have a better job than I used to have before Open Table (85%).



- 5) I am self-supporting at this time or am confident that I will be self-supporting in the future (95%).



- 6) Overall, I now have more optimism about my future and feel like I am headed in the right direction (100%).



- 7) Overall, my own spiritual journey is now more meaningful to me (90%).



- 8) I would like to serve on a Table to help someone else in the future (95%).



Results of an Evaluation of 20 Graduated Open Table Brothers and Sisters, continues (VanDenBerg, 2015)

Open-ended question results:

9) What is the number one reason you were able to complete Open Table?

- Most common answer (16/20): My Table gave me support. It is clear that support from the Table was the major contributor to success in graduation, backing up the major premise of the Open Table model.
- Second most common answer (4/20): I was able to “reach deep” and get motivated. This answer validates the need for internal motivation, which often comes after external motivation from the Table and community. These Brothers and Sisters developed a self-motivating drive which led them to complete the process.

10) How would you improve the Open Table experience?

- Most common answer (8/20): Table needs to listen more to the Brother/Sister and not put their own ideas first. These answers will likely improve in subsequent years of analysis of graduates, as the new Table on-line training was not in place in 2013. The new training includes a focus on Table members learning not to be judgmental and to truly listen to the needs and perspectives of the Brother and Sister.
- Second most common answer (4/20): Needed more time or more aftercare. Again, these answers should change in subsequent years as the formal aftercare part of Open Table was not in place during 2013.

11) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your Open Table experience?

- Most Common Answer (16/20): It was a life changing positive experience. These answers show us that transformation is occurring. This experience changed their lives for the better.
- Second Most Common Answer (9/20): I learned I was not alone. These answers show that poverty is isolating and that Open Table serves to push the isolation and loneliness out, replaced with support and love.

“I learned to problem solve. Relationships, good relationships, gave me a new world view. I loved them all (my Table). They helped me with balance in my life. They surrounded me with love.”