



Top Ten Things to Do as a Conference Moderator:

1. Contact Your Speakers Prior to the Event

You can either contact each of them individually or set up a conference call, but by all means make personal contact with them 2-3 weeks prior to the conference. Discuss what areas each will cover and your overall goals for the sessions. Reiterate the timing and format of the session

2. Arrive Early to Your Session

Speakers are eager to meet you and get comfortable with the room and the other speakers, so arrive at your session about 15 minutes early.

3. Introduce Your Panelists

When introducing your panelists, be brief, but formal.

4. Position the Session Topic

Take a minute to position the topic and the points of view that each panelist will represent. This will help the audience understand where the session's headed and keep them engaged.

5. Involve All Panelists In the Discussion

Don't let anyone dominate. Begin the session with one or two questions that all panelists can weigh in on to establish their distinct points of view and get the discussion moving. Do not simply move down the line and have a long, one-on-one conversation with each speaker. The best panels create lively dialogue between speakers. Differences of opinion are welcome as long as all are treated respectfully.

6. Prepare Questions in Advance

This will ensure that you cover the key issues and save you if there's "dead air." Also feel free to ask your panelists what questions they'd like to you to ask. You don't have to ask them, but they may help you get the best information out of them.

7. Curb Sales Pitches/Interrupt Those Who Speak Too Long

Your audience will praise you for it. None of our speakers have been invited to pitch their services, so if someone should start to do so, respectfully interject with a question that brings them back to the topic of the session. Long-winded speakers should be asked to sum up so the audience has time to ask the panel questions.

8. Shape the Discussion, But Don't Monopolize It

As moderator, we're relying on your insight to lead the discussion in the direction of the interests of the audience, to challenge speakers, and to ensure that key points are addressed. Resist the temptation to tell the whole story yourself, but feel free to play devil's advocate and insert your point of view.

9. Involve the audience

As moderator it is your job to get the audience involved through the question and answer process. Remember to offer the audience the opportunity. This is often the best part of the program. If you know some of the audience members you can even call on them to offer their own opinion on the topic at hand rather than ask a question.

10. Summarize Key Lessons and End on Time

Five minutes before the conclusion of the session, summarize its key points and lessons (you may call on the panelists to offer their thoughts on this too) and offer possible next steps that attendees can take upon returning to the office the next day

11. END ON TIME.