



HOW TO MODERATE A GREAT PANEL PRESENTATION

A 9-point checklist to help you become a more successful moderator.

PREPARATION

1. Make sure you have clear teaching goals.

What is the purpose of your presentation? What are you trying to accomplish? What are the 8-10 (or more) key teaching points (or “takeaways”)? The more clear you are regarding your goals, the more likely you are to have a successful panel. Also, re-read your topic description as printed in the brochure to ensure that your teaching goals deliver on what has been promised.

2. Gather input from panelists.

Contact panelists to solicit their ideas for both the content and format of the presentation. Arrange a meeting or teleconference to establish and/or review the plan for the presentation. Your plan should include: content, format, goals, roles, responsibilities and timing.

3. Establish and communicate your role and those of your panelists.

Decide at the outset what your role will be. Are you participating in the discussion in addition to moderating or are you simply directing traffic? Early on, discuss with panelists how the presentation will be prepared and who will bear what responsibilities. For example, who will prepare written materials or powerpoints? (Generally, the moderator will prepare the powerpoint so as to keep the session on track with the plan and teaching goals. The moderator will also write or coordinate any written materials to be prepared for the session.)

4. Prepare a list of questions to ask panelists and share it with the panel.

After getting initial input from your panel members, it is generally best to prepare a list of questions that you will ask the panelists. Then share this list of questions with the panel for further comment and expansion. In some cases, you may want to designate which panel member will first be asked each question. In other cases, this is unnecessary.

Important: Let your panel members know that their answers to your questions are not to be long speeches. A fast-paced interesting dialogue between panelists is the goal, not a series of long-winded speeches. Therefore, it is important that you have a rather lengthy list of questions, and that you listen carefully and ask good follow-up questions.

5. Plan the pacing of the session.

Have markers of where you want to be every 10 or 15 minutes. Usually, panels have more than enough material for the allotted time. However, be prepared with extra questions should your panel move along more quickly than anticipated.

AT THE SESSION

6. Be organized and convey that organization to the audience.

At the beginning of the presentation, present an agenda to your audience explaining the goals of the presentation, including both the content you plan to cover and the format you will be using. Be sure to follow through as to both content and format.

7. Keep your session moving. Do not let panel members give long speeches.

Make sure to move your session along. Ask questions and listen carefully to the answers. Ask follow-up questions where appropriate. If one of your panelists is talking for too long, gently interrupt and summarize before moving along.

8. Allow for questions.

Panel presentations are a great time for the audience to have their questions considered and answered by several experts. Try to fit the questions into the flow of the presentation as much as possible. Repeat the question for the benefit of the audience and to allow time for panelists to prepare a response.

Warning: Watch out for highly individualized questions that have less general applicability for the audience as a whole. Such questions can be answered individually after the presentation.

9. End on time and end gracefully.

Try to get through the most critical material in the time allotted and conclude succinctly. If you cannot finish all of the planned material, wrap up smoothly at the appointed time without telling the audience that you couldn't get through all the material.