

Congratulations and thank you for your acceptance to moderate a session!

This is an excellent opportunity for you to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information with your colleagues. A moderator's role is more than just introducing the speakers. You are the facilitator of the discussion; it is your role to stimulate discussion by taking questions from the audience and creating topics of your own. The intent is to engage the speakers and the audience into a lively discussion and/or debate.

Your goal is to be a group of smart, funny people on-stage having a dynamic conversation.

Pre-Conference Preparation:

1. Take an active role and contact all of your panelists. Introduce yourself as the moderator and become familiar with their areas of expertise on the assigned topic. Get to know them!
2. Prepare a series of leading questions designed with the current perspective and new light on the topic. Decide upon questions you will ask each panelist that pertains specifically to that panelist's area of expertise.
3. Once all panel members are confirmed and you are familiar with everyone, arrange a brief conference call to discuss overall session plan and goals and "introduce" all speakers.

During the Session:

1. Avoid over structuring the panel by using a question and response pattern alone. Allow for some healthy banter between the panelists and let them chatter and joke with each other.
2. You'll find little disagreements between panelists, be sure to pick up on those to segue to the next panelists, ask them for a contradictory point of view.
3. Panels will often get off-track to new discussions or speak too long on a topic. While that's certainly normal, your job is to gently bring it back into context: "Bill, those are fascinating examples; now let's get Janet's take on this topic."
4. Follow-up a panelist's remarks such comments such as; "Do you agree with your colleague?" "Give us an example." "What do you mean by that?" These will often elicit a more candid, spontaneous response.

At the Close of the Session:

1. Don't ask panelists for one final thought. Use the time instead for something forward-looking like: "What important new trend will we be talking about at next year's conference?"
2. Remember, you need to be as firm with the audience and speakers in terms of time limits. Warn the audience when a session is drawing to a close and close the session promptly.
3. Invite the audience to follow up with additional questions for the panelists after the session.