



## Top 10 Moderator Tips

*If you are hosting a panel first think in terms of the flow of events:*

### 1. INTRO

Go over YOUR intro with whoever introduces you. His job is to tell why this panel is valuable to THIS audience, then introduce you:

- He should mention your title, track record, and insight of your character/relevance to this audience-- behind the title, etc.
  
- Explain moderator's job:
  - Audience's advocate and sometimes provocateur
  - Run interference if necessary. Cut off filibusters and grandstanders.
  - Press for further explanation if panelist did NOT nail answer
  - Be a time cop
  - Facilitate Q&A
  
- Set length expectations (40 min)
  
- Invite audience to ask questions at any time + Q&A at end
  - Underscore your desire for a transparent, free-flowing discussion
  
- Introduce panel members:
  - Pinpoint their key expertise
  - Give a provocative glimpse of the person behind the title
  
- Throw out first question. Lead with provocative and timely probe
  
- Invite audience to raise hand and microphone runner will find them

## 2. HAVE QUIET AUTHORITY

Clearly tell people why they're here, what's going to happen, what their role is, when it will end. *If it seems no one is in charge—people fear they'll be stuck in this room for the rest of their natural life.*

Yet be deferential. The panelists are the star. The audience is the star.

Be ruthless. Cut off filibusters and grandstanders.

## 3. CONDUCT YOUR ORCHESTRA

It is the moderator's job to stay in-the-moment to "go with" the best follow-up idea. Cut off interference at the knees. Promote your star thinkers. Lean on your grandstanders.

The best ideas could come from panelists or audience members at any moment.

You are conducting a willful orchestra. Know how each of them play. Direct with finesse. Don't steer every question. Let panelists and audience surprise you.

Your toughest job is acting on several things at once. Rhetorical juggling is an advanced skill and for some, a stretch goal. Your job is to listen in the moment. Respect time like a referee. Look for openings to "close the arc" in the discussions.

Again, it's their moment--not yours. Help the conversation happen then get the blazes out of the way.

## 4. PRE-SCAN AUDIENCE QUESTIONS or LET THEM RIP?

Mix it up.

## 5. ANTICIPATE TOUGHEST QUESTIONS. UNEARTH REAL QUESTIONS.

Raise them before the audience can. Ask follow up questions. It's moderator's job to ask panelist a follow-up question IF he/she doesn't nail the answer. What if you get a dumb or unintelligible question? It's the moderator's job to summarize and make sense of audience's question—even if it changes their weird or rambling question.

## 6. TOSS like a BASKETBALL PLAYER

It's panelist job to toss like a basketball player. If you don't know most complete answer best, deftly toss to either senior mgt. or technical

colleague or regional expert. Do it casually like, “*Andrew and I were just discussing this, Andrew take this one...*”

7. **PREP like a BOY-SCOUT. HOLD STAGE like a ROCK STAR.**

Don't overstuff this thing. Aim for 3-4 broad topics in any given panel.

Be prepared with possible follow up questions, media quotes, provocative statements, industry academics or pundits quotings, lines from great films, brief poetic lines, etc. That said, be ready to abandon everything if conversation takes an intriguing new turn.

Study great debaters and TV interviewers. Who impresses you? Ask short, declarative and direct questions. Plan surprises. Consider an unannounced cameo guest, short demo, video clip, ARS (live audience quiz with live response pad/button). *Next year, perhaps?*

8. **FILL IN DIPS IN ENERGY- WITH SURPRISES**

Invite drama. Find the hot buttons. Listen for differences and confront one panelist to defend or rebut. If it's taken a dull dip throw conflict into mix.

9. **INSTALL LARGE TIME CLOCKS**

Participants on either side of the stage should be able to see a countdown clock. Countdowns give panels the look & feel of well-produced debate.

Check the time in the open. Let there be no doubt that can pull this off. Let people know you only have 5...then...2 minutes left. Manage time or don't be a moderator.

10. **YOUR CLOSE:**

- You sum up 2-3 most critical takeaways
- Share what you learned *from audience*
- Give call to action (What do you want them to think about, do, or go see)
- End on uplifting note

Have great fun. Be a mix between fun provocateur and wise Voice of Reason.

Marianne@fleischercomm.com