

Tips for Effectively Moderating an Event

Prepare in Advance

An effective moderator does their homework. They know all of the “who, what, where, when, and how” needed for a successful session or event and to help all of the pieces work together. They are familiar with the venue or virtual platform, the audience, the speakers, the desired outcomes, the technology and supplies, and the timeline. Preparation is key to their success.

Set the Stage

An effective moderator sets the tone. They are often the first one on stage serving as host, welcoming attendees, sharing expectations, orchestrating the schedule, and introducing key participants. Their role continues throughout the event, fielding questions, solving problems that arise, and graciously thanking everyone with a warm and professional demeanor.

Introduce Others to Build Authority and Anticipation

A central responsibility of a moderator or presider is introducing speakers and other key personnel. A well planned introduction establishes credibility and builds excitement for a presentation. A moderator who knows both the audience and the speaker is able to connect the audience to the speaker and the topic of the presentation in a succinct introduction.

Keep Things Running Smoothly and On Time

An effective moderator keeps a session running smoothly and within the time allotted. They start on time and provide speakers with time signals to alert them when to be finished. They monitor activities and the Q&A portion of a presentation to keep on schedule and provide ample opportunities for participation. They attend to problems efficiently and with composure.

Expect the Unexpected

As Chapter 34 states, “Regardless of the preparation or organization by the moderator, the unexpected can happen, from the absence of a speaker to full failure of the technology. How the moderator handles the situation affects how the audience will respond. Maintain composure, work with organizers to create a smooth transition, and above all, add a little humor and smile.”