

Hints for Moderating a Panel Discussion

1. Invite conflict
In your preparation for the panel discussion, find the hot buttons on the topic, as well as the position of each panelist. Select panelists with wide diversity and/or differences of opinion.
2. Make a wave
Pose one question and go down the line, asking each panelist to respond.
3. Counter-punch
Listen for differing positions in the panelists' responses, and confront one panelist to defend or rebut the other.
4. Gather questions in advance from the audience
You can filter only the relevant questions to avoid digressions. Pre-screening the questions will keep your panel on track.
5. Manage the time
Manage the time by strict observance of the less-is-more principle. Keep every statement or exchange by every panelist to a maximum of two minutes. Limit opening and closing statements to 90 seconds.
6. Keep it moving and mix it up
The moderator can provide CPR to the panel by maintaining a brisk pace and by bouncing the focus from one panelist to another frequently.

(Thanks to Jerry Weissman, *The Power Presenter*, John Wiley & Sons, 2009)