Moderator Guide

10 Tips for Moderating a Session

#1: Know your job! Your job as moderator is to help the audience get their needs met via the panel's discussion. Before you begin, make sure that you know what the audience expects. Your job is to meet the audience's need for information and be ever-vigilant about keeping things relevant.

#2: Prepare the physical environment in advance. Make sure everyone has a nameplate that's visible from the audience. Make sure everyone has a full glass of water at hand. Know where the microphones are and how far they reach.

#3: Know your timing and keep to it! Plan the time for Q&A, introductions, and panel remarks. If you have a 1-hour panel with 5 panelists and 20 minutes of Q&A, each panelist can talk for roughly eight minutes. If a panelist is going off-topic for an extended period of time, gently interrupt and assure them that you can revisit that topic later in the panel and move on. And, since your job is to keep the topic, don't revisit the tangential topic.

#4: Don't read panelist bios. It takes too long and no one cares. The bios are listed in the app, and everyone has the app in hand. That's why they showed up. If you must, give one or two credibility-building points that show why the panelists know about the topic at hand. Don't mention unrelated awards, even if they're impressive. And under no circumstances should you *ever* repeat what's in the app. It makes you look foolish, like you did no preparation.

#5: Beware of stories. Stories are entertaining and memorable, and panelists love to tell them. But very few people can tell stories well. Most people ramble. Be sure stories move the discussion along. If you ask panelists to "tell their story," you're in dangerous territory. Ask panelists for their opinions about specific issues or events. Ask them to analyze a situation, or speculate on a future development, or do a role-play where they apply their brilliance real-time.

#6: Don't offer your own opinions. The audience is there to see you moderate, not be a panelist. If you offer your own opinions, you look like you're trying to grab time from the panelists. Do this only if your panel is putting people to sleep and you feel like you are losing them.

#7: Come back to the juicy bits. You may cut a panelist short so someone else can speak. Keep notes so you can go back to the person you cut off and have them finish their point if it's still relevant.

#8: Summarize. Jot notes so when you come back to a panelist, you can use your notes to summarize panelists' previous points so they needn't repeat them.

#9: Call on people. If the audience is full of raised hands, call on them! But beware panelist wannabes in the audience! They'll use Q&A to hijack the session. When you call on someone, say "The Gentleperson

in the red, please give me your question in one sentence." Then cut them off if they go beyond 3 sentences.

#10: Wrap up by thanking the panelists. "Thank you. You've been a great panel." Acknowledge the audience too. "You've been a great audience. Let's give the panelists a hand."