

SVRI Forum 2019

21 - 25 October 2019
CTICC, Cape Town
South Africa

TIME IS NOW



SVRI Forum 2019: Chair Guidelines

How to be a great panel Chair

A Chair is the driver behind a great panel. We've all sat in sessions run by a weak, disengaged, unprepared Chair – so we know what that looks like. What are the ingredients for making sure you are a great panel Chair? A great Chair can do much to make a session go smoothly by keeping it on running on time, the audience engaged, and the speakers on target. To follow are some tips for running a great panel at SVRI Forum. Moderating a good panel is all about preparation.

In advance of the Forum

In advance of the Forum, some things you can do to help you moderate your panel, include:

- Via email introduce yourself to the speakers in your session. We will introduce you to your panelists.
- Read through the abstracts presentations to familiarize yourself with the overall theme of the panel and the focus of each presentation. These will be sent to you in advance of the Forum as well.
- Request speakers to send you short bios so you can introduce them. Maybe even practice introducing your speakers, pronouncing their names in your hotel room.
- Discuss with speakers via email how best to structure the session.
- Very importantly, agree with presenters on the presentation length and Q&A time available. Discuss if you should allow for question time at the end of each presentation or hold all questions until after all presentations have been delivered? Due to time limitations, we would suggest that for parallel sessions you should hold all questions until after the last presentation.

At the Forum

- Arrange to meet presenters in the room 10 minutes before the session starts to discuss final arrangements.
- Check with presenters on how to pronounce their names (if you have not met before and are unsure of how to pronounce their names).
- Make sure all speakers have uploaded their presentations, equipment is working, and you are all ready to go.
- To open the session, briefly introduce yourself, the speakers, the overall topic and how all the session will be structured. For example:
 - introduce yourself and welcome the audience, speakers and session topic;
 - indicate any changes in the panel from the printed programme;
 - individually introduce each speaker/presentation and hand over to the speaker;

- Q&A – invite the audience and panel members to ask questions and engage with the presenters;
 - closing – make some final remarks and give a vote of thanks to speakers and audience.
- When you introduce each speaker, give their name, institutional affiliation and the topic of their presentation. Rather than just reading the title of the presentation think about how you can introduce each presentation in your own words.
- Make sure your session starts on time. SVRI Forum is a packed programme filled with wonderful presentations that presenters have worked hard on – please ensure every presenter receives their fair time allocation.
- Presenting is stressful for many of us. Try make your panel members feel at ease. If you are calm, it will help the presenters feel calm.

Be strict with time

- Time management is the most important role of the Chair. You have all agreed in advance the length of time each speaker has for their presentation. Don't let speakers go significantly overtime, as this reduces the time available for subsequent speakers.
- Give speakers 5-, 3-, and 1-minute warnings. If falling behind schedule, shorten your introductions to subsequent speakers and ask them to supplement your comments as appropriate; they can do it faster, more accurately, and they won't be long-winded since it cuts into their presentation time. This may be easier if you remind them that it is discourteous for a speaker to take time from other presenters.
- Consider holding questions for the end of all presentation.
- Although you must carefully manage time, there may be a need for flexibility as well. Not everything runs according to schedule. Be prepared to reduce presentation length should the session start late or increase time for Q&A or presentations, should more time for the panel become available.

After the last presentation

- Thank all the speakers and open the floor for questions and answers.
- Prepare one or two questions yourself in case there are no questions from the floor.
- Be ready to intervene if either a questioner or speaker becomes long-winded or an in-depth discussion/argument erupts; politely insist they voice their question and / or take up the discussion during the break.

Closing

- Briefly summarise the main points emerging from the discussion.
- Thank all presenters once again for their contribution and thank the audience for their participation.
- And most importantly enjoy the experience!