



Chair's Brief

Aim of the Evening

Science Capital offers lively, interactive events that bring industry leaders, business experts and academic researchers together around a major challenge and set of opportunities for growth.

Chair's Tasks

- ✓ Keep speakers on time.
- ✓ Questions are taken during the panel discussion.
- ✓ Ask audience members to identify themselves when asking a question.
- ✓ Repeat questions that are unclear.
- ✓ Keep the discussion on track, interject when needed if someone digresses or dominates.
- ✓ Summarize key conclusions at the end of the panel discussion.

Objectives

Treat the audience like your customers, they've paid with money and time. Your job is to give them the information they need.

You'll have to set the pace, let conversations develop, exerting control as needed.

Remember to serve the audience first and panellists second.

The audience consists of a 50/50 mix of academics and business experts who work in diverse areas.

They are typically looking to identify new opportunities and explore ways to work together.

Preparation

Get to know the panellists and subject: Read the speaker biosketches beforehand. Entertaining panels debate and explore contentious issues from different angles.

Develop agenda bulletpoints to explore around. Have some back-up questions if no one asks questions. Avoid setting up overly detailed or rehearsed questions.

Have a pre-briefing meeting before the talks. This is good bonding time, speakers should be relaxed and intending to have fun. Listen to the conversation, as you'll pick up interesting points that will help you setup questions.

On Stage

Be a leader and know the impact of body language: The body language of the moderator is often echoed by the panellists (so try sit up straight and avoid fidgeting). Look at the panellist when you ask a question, then look back at the audience (the panellist will follow suit). Unless responding to another panellist, the panellist should be addressing the audience so keep your attention on the customer.

Set the stage by providing context: Give a short 1 minute overview before introducing the first speaker, giving context but avoiding low value banter about 'how this panel is going to be great'. Feel free to use a humour to loosen up the audience.

Question time: Each session is followed by a panel discussion. Ask the audience to state their name and organization before asking questions. Tee-up the crowd and the panellists by asking a broad, easy question. Ask for a clarification, or why this technology is relevant here & now.

Ask about benefits and opportunities: Avoid letting the conversation dive into the weeds too fast, focusing on ratty details, before prefacing 'why' these things are important in the first place. Guide the panellists to discuss the benefits, and why these things are great in the first place.

Ask about risks, challenge the panel: Audiences are tired of zealots, and are looking for a balanced discussion. Give an example of how it's *not* worked or overcoming pitfalls, and then ask the speakers to explore the risks.

When to Assert Control

Never let panellists pitch, this really irritates the audience. Cut them off if they do.

...**but let them tell a case study** or an example of successful discovery.

Keep the discussions on track. If necessary look for an opening to redirect by reframing the question or interject nicely if someone is hogging the spotlight, complimenting their opinion and passing a question to another panellist.

Interaction gives life to a panel

Listen in: Watch the body language of the panellists, the one who wants to get a word in will be giving you non-verbal indicators, the audience will give off vibes of attention, boredom or agitation. Little disagreements will emerge between panellists, use them to segue to the next panellists, ask them for a different point of view.

Let the panellists talk to each other: Don't over structure your panel by leading into a moderator question and response pattern alone, allow for some healthy banter between the panellists, and let them chatter, jab, and joke among each other.

Know when to move on: Don't let any particular panellists dominate the session over others, interject between their breaths and pose a question to another panellist. Success happens when good conversation starts to develop on its own, and you only need to gently guide.

Field questions from the audience: Repeat the question from the audience so everyone can hear. Summarize long winded questions. Don't let someone try to steal the show by asking too many questions, interject that some discussion can be followed up over drinks. Ensure that the questions are spread from different people, and only let a single person ask a second question once everyone has had a chance.

Wrapping things up

Ending the panel: Let the members make a closing statement, for example about what actions they plan to take in the near future. Thank the panel and audience.

Encourage the discussion move to action: The conversation between the panellists and members should be so engaging that they never want to stop discussing it. Encourage audience members to continue discussions over dinner.