Keys to Holding a Successful Session

Contents

Early Preparation, 1 month – 1 week out

At the Conference

> *A Session Chair can make the difference between a successful session and one that appears pointless and disorganized.*
>
> *Session Chair's Role*
> - *Form a coherent theme for the session*
> - *Set a positive tone and maintain momentum*
> - *Encourage audience participation and lively discussion*
> - *Assist and support the presenters*

You've graciously volunteered to be an AIAA Session Chair.
THANK YOU!

- **Develop a session overview**
  - o Find a unifying theme.
  - o Develop focused questions to stimulate discussion.
  - o Formulate session rules.

- **Prepare a session agenda slide that can be projected prior to the start of the session or during gaps.**
  - o Provides a professional feeling to the session.
  - o Provides a good visual for session gaps.

- **Invite audience members who could enhance the quality of the session.**
- **Maintain contact with your presenters**
  - o Contact details will be provided by AIAA through your Session Chair invitation.
  - o Motivate them to prepare early and well
  - o Review the biographical information from presenters.
  - o Offer to review their papers/presentations.
    - ➢ Verify that presentations will project well (colors, font sized, content).
    - ➢ Ensure the material can be covered comfortably in 20 minutes
    - ➢ Ensure papers are submitted prior to the deadline. No Paper, No Podium
  - o Tie separate contributions to a main theme
    - ➢ Guide presenters on their contribution relative to the theme
    - ➢ Inform each presenter of other contributions to the session
  - o Remind authors to attend the Speakers' Prep Session at the conference.

Your diligent preparations will help get the best out of your presenters and minimize last minute withdrawals and no-shows.

- **Speakers' Prep Session**
  - Meet with your presenters in your session room at the specified time the day of your session. Check the program for times.
  - Review biographical information (will be provided to you by AIAA through your Chair invitation). Verify pronunciations.
  - Establish time-keeping rules
    - Signaling procedures
    - Ensure presenters understand the importance of keeping the session on track.
  - Review and agree on session protocol—Q&A format.
  - Have presenters load their presentations on the session room laptop and check that the files run on the laptop software.
  - Check the session room sign for changes (i.e. last-minute withdrawals).
  - Familiarize yourself with the room. Do you have any IT issues: Sound? Equipment?

- **Run the Session**
  - Open
    - Welcome audience and invite participation.
    - Remind all attendees of time limits.
    - Involve the audience from the start. Invite them to note and ask questions during the designated Q&A time.
  - Manage Presentations
    - Help with technical issues and emergencies
    - Introduce each presenter in turn.
  - Control Q&A
    - Invite questions at the proper time.
    - Repeat questions or rephrase for clarity, if necessary.
    - Exclude or parry off-topic questions.
    - Stimulate discussion.
    - Manage hostile or off-topic questions.
      - You are in charge – protect the presenter. Be gracious but firm with the questioner.
  - Enforce timing rules
    - Signal presenters on the time remaining.
    - Politely bring a talk to an end, if it's running long
  - Close
    - Allow enough time for a closing statement.
    - Thank the presenters for all their good work.
    - Thank the audience for listening and contributing.
    - Complete the session chair report and submit it electronically.