

## DISCUSSION LEADER

As a discussion leader, you play a crucial role both in cultivating rich conversation, and in facilitating a smooth planning and preparation process. **You've been chosen as a leader because of your comprehensive understanding of the session topic and your interpersonal skills** -- and we're confident that you will drive the discussion towards exciting new places. **This is a general document that has been created for the discussion leaders of virtual events that are being created in partnership with Matchbox Virtual Media.**

This document covers your responsibilities, outlines what you can expect, and provides you with some advice on how to execute your role as effectively as possible.

### Responsibilities

- **Planning:** To ensure the session is effectively prepared, and to facilitate a well-oiled planning process.
- **Facilitating:** To run any preparatory meetings with the rest of the speaking team.
- **Directing:** To guide the recorded discussion with questions, and to push the conversation forward.
- **Managing:** To oversee the creation of the session title and a short description of the content, and to ensure this is completed and submitted according to deadlines.

## Building blocks for a great virtual session

Recently, Amanda Kaiser – a speaker in one of our previous conferences, and a qualitative researcher – provided a thorough analysis of a highly rated session.

Her analysis included a breakdown of possible reasons why this session was popular amongst attendees, which have been compiled below:

- The discussion leader **posed the questions, and often identified the first person to offer their answer**. Each person would then answer in turn, either by jumping in when one had finished, or by handing off the question to the next member on the panel.
- **Both the leader and the other panellists** occasionally asked a follow-up question on the fly. Panellists felt free to jump in, which gave the discussion a good conversational flow.
- The space, pace, and structure of the conversation was still worked out so that **nobody talked over or interrupted anyone else**.
- Answers were quick and to the point, rotating through the panellists with roughly a minute each.
- Responses were **rich with practical examples and stories**, focusing more on application than on theory.
- There was a **collaborative and supportive vibe** among the panellists.
- There was **room for disagreement**, and the speakers worked well to make the disagreement comfortable.
- They gave the attendees a peak under the tent: they revealed the **bad and the ugly as well as the good**.

# DISCUSSION LEADER GUIDELINES

## A great session description...

- Here are some tips on writing a session title & description if you've been assigned that task. A good session description:
  - Starts off with a good **hook**.
  - Gives the reader a taste of **some of the topics covered**.
  - Refers to **all the speakers** and their contribution to the discussion.

### Example:

Do you carry items forward on your to-do list day after day? Do you sit down in the office to finish one task then find yourself quickly distracted by another? Do you struggle to set boundaries around your working time? This session about combating gaps in our productivity is for you. Four speakers - a mindfulness consultant, a burnout prevention coach, an association professional, and an education expert - put heads together to offer tips, strategies and frameworks to help you become more productive, both as individuals and organization. Topics covered include association culture and leadership expectations, how to stay present in your workspace, the power of turning off your phone, and unlearning perfectionism.

**We are delighted to have your skills as a facilitator for your upcoming session.  
Have a great time!**

The screenshot shows a virtual conference interface. At the top left, there is a "Return to Virtual Conference" button. The main area displays a video call with four participants in a 2x2 grid. The top-left participant is a woman with dark hair, the top-right is a woman with short blonde hair, the bottom-left is a man with a shaved head, and the bottom-right is a man with glasses. Below the video call, an alert box reads: "ALERT: You're currently watching Session 3 with Tom Hood CPA, CGMA, CTP, Kimberly Ellison-Taylor CPA CGMA, Jeffrey Thomson CMA, CSCA, CAE, and Tashia Batstone MBA, FCPA, FCA. Join us in the attendee chat!". On the right side, there is an "ATTENDEE CHAT" window with a list of messages from participants like Rebekah Brown, Don Tomoff, Barrett Young, Marca Gibson, and Tom Hood. The chat window also includes a "Type a message ..." input field and a smiley face emoji button.