

Judge Washington's Top 10 Secrets for Moderating an Effective Panel

1. **Be authentic:** Being your best self is important. If you learned something from a recent failure, share it. The participants will respect you for your honesty and authenticity.
2. **Encourage the panelists to be authentic:** Ask the panelists to share something fun about themselves that no one knows about them, and the moderator shares that information to lighten the mood and set the tone of the panel.
3. **Know your panelists:** Watch the panelists present and find out their strengths and weaknesses. Google them and find out more about them. Ask them if you can share their personal beasts (their "secret" stories). Use that knowledge during the webinar.
4. **Give a pep talk:** Give the panelists a pep talk before the webinar (about how great they are) and during the webinar (encouragement in the chat tool).
5. **Be Collegial:** Panels are a team sport. We are all in. The collegiality comes across the computer whether you like one another or not.
6. **Create a strong opening:** Prepare the introduction. The first 5-10 seconds are key. They set the tone. Is this going to be boring or fun and engaging? Add a human element -- a story about a defendant that you've dealt with.
7. **Tell the participants what's in it for them:** How will this webinar impact them on the bench. If I'm talking about traffic court, I'm going to set the scene (the sights, the sounds, and the smells of traffic court). Judges care about three primary things: (1) Will this webinar save me from the appellate court?; (2) How would the media react to the subject matter if the judge messes up? (3) Will my colleagues think less of me?
8. **Bring your game face:** Have lots of energy. I have Gatorade or a fresh drink or before I teach. I put lots of energy into the presentation and I get the same in return from the audience.
9. **Prepare a closing:** Conclude the presentation with a wrap-around ending or end on a positive note. Give the participants references and thank them for their participation.
10. **Know your subject and have a passion for it:** You should know your subject very well and have a passion for sharing it with others.