

Tech·Ed U.S. 2008 Birds-of-a-Feather

Moderator Notes/Suggestions/Instructions

Check in. Please check in at the Birds-of-a-Feather room 10 minutes before your scheduled session start.

Equipment. There will be a few flipcharts in each room. Microphones may be available in each room based on the size of the room. There will be no projector available – this is a community discussion, not a presentation, demo, or breakout session.

Session hosts. We will have volunteer hosts for as many sessions as we can. The host can help by introducing you, being a runner if something is missing, and helping pass the microphone between participants, if available. The idea is to let you remain focused on the discussion.

Start promptly, know how long you have. For evening sessions you only have one hour, so don't wait for the last people to show up before getting started. Check the schedule for daytime session length. Most daytime sessions are 75 minutes, though lunchtime sessions are 45-60 minutes long.

Prepare in Advance. Have several 4-6 discussion sub-topics written down. Have 12 questions ready to go to stimulate the conversation that are increasingly more in depth.

Decide on some way to continue the discussion after the session such as meeting somewhere after the session, a table at lunch the next day, or an online forum or blog to meet up again. Write your name, contact info, and follow-up location on the whiteboard.

Introduce yourself and your topic. If you have a session host, she or he can start the session and introduce you. Otherwise, say a bit about yourself — keep it short and sweet, like 30 to 60 seconds. Introduce the topic, possibly touching on why it interests you, which provides context and direction for participants. If there's something you hope to get out of the conversation, say what it is. Keep the opening statement brief, under three or four minutes.

Remember the prime directive. Your goals are to get participants to engage in the discussion and to keep the conversation going. The objective is for people with a common interest to meet and discuss. You want to foster a high quality of experience, with wide participation and interaction.

End promptly.

Summarize and conclude. Ask everyone to fill out the online survey for your session and empty the room for the next session.

This is very important: please thank the participants for attending and joining in the discussion.

Please fill out your moderator evaluation and give it to the host.

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Moderator Notes/Suggestions/Instructions (continued)

Conversation strategies. Here are some ideas to help start the discussion and keep it going.

Build rapport by disclosing something about yourself.

Try to get everyone involved within the first 5 minutes. They are there because they have a question. Try to predict and guide the conversations toward them.

If you need a way to get started, ask a handful of people to tell their story about the session topic, or perhaps say why they're at the session.

Complement monopolizers (for their passion or depth of knowledge) and ask others if they agree with them.

Mix questions types (survey, open, closed, opinions and solutions.).

Try to generate controversy without creating conflict. Controversial statements help get people talking, but this is not a debate. Diffuse conflict by asking when to choose one thing over another, or if there is a third option, or if there's a way to combine the two opposing viewpoints.

Try to be impartial and be factual with your own experiences

Everyone needs Attention, Understanding and Acceptance.

Don't interrupt anyone; define acronyms; relate to their worlds; speak slowly; pause for reflection; always face the audience; don't fake knowledge; and be very interested in everyone.

Thank you for volunteering to moderate a Birds-of-a-Feather session. Have a great session!

Moderator Evaluation — Birds-of-a-Feather

Session name

Moderator's name

Email address

Did something come up in the conversation that would be a great Birds-of-a-Feather topic next time?

What could have made this session better? What would you do differently next time?

Why did you do a BOF? Did you get out it what you wanted?

Your other candid comments: