

Dear AIB 2004 Session Chair,

We are less than 60 days away from the beginning of our annual conference in Stockholm. Many people have worked very hard to review submissions, create exciting panels and generally deal with the hundreds of details involved with putting together an international conference. And of course you have already made a major contribution by volunteering to chair a session.

Now, we have to work to make the sessions the best they can be.

We all know and remember fantastic paper sessions and those where we had to pinch ourselves to stay awake! We also remember with pain sessions where we were dying to ask a question, but no time was left for questions from the audience; or times when as the last speaker we got shortchanged our allotted time. There are many things that each of us can do to ensure that the paper sessions, which are the core and substance of the conference, are rewarding thus ensuring a successful conference. However, the greatest responsibility lies with the session chairs, who can "make or break" a session through his/her ability (or inability) to skillfully manage the time, presenters, topic and audience. The chair is like a conductor of a symphony; a good conductor can make beautiful music, even when the piece is difficult or the players less experienced. Your role is to be that good conductor.

Other than that, you can reach the basic travel information about Stockholm in the AIB web page: <http://aib.msu.edu/events/2004/TravellInformation.asp>. As announced before, all registration and hotel details can be found on the AIB conference web page as well: <http://aib.msu.edu/events/2004/>. Also, please remember that the AIB regulations require all presenters to be members of the Academy.

Here are the suggestions first written and prepared by **Lorraine Eden** of Texas A&M University for the 2002 Program. We are sure many of you are very experienced chairing sessions, for others this will be a first time experience. In either case, we hope you find these suggestions helpful, as many have in past years. If you have comments (criticisms, additions) please email us at [aib2004@sabanciuniv.edu](mailto:aib2004@sabanciuniv.edu).

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### **1. GET ACQUAINTED AHEAD OF TIME WITH THE PEOPLE ON YOUR SESSION**

As session chair, you are expected to contact everyone on your session ahead of time - a good time to do this would be TODAY. The simplest way to determine who is on your session is to check the AIB Program on the AIB 2004 website at: <http://aib.msu.edu/events/2004/PreliminaryProgram.asp>. Please note that updates, changes, and corrections continue to be made. Please help us by reviewing your entries and sending any corrections to [aib2004@sabanciuniv.edu](mailto:aib2004@sabanciuniv.edu) or [aib@aib.msu.edu](mailto:aib@aib.msu.edu)

Please download the information for your session (you can COPY and PASTE the text into MS WORD). You can download the copies of MS's by using the manuscripts' ID numbers which are written in parenthesis in the detailed program, from <http://frontpage.cbs.dk/aib2004/getmanuscript.php>

### **2. CIRCULATING THE PAPERS AHEAD OF TIME**

Please encourage everyone on your session to read the papers ahead of time, at the very latest, on the airplane flight to Stockholm. This way, each person can attempt in their presentation to link their papers to the other presentations, making for a more cohesive and stimulating session.

I will be sending out separate instructions to the authors and discussants for all the sessions, but feel free to email your instructions as the sessions do differ in length, numbers of participants, purpose and content.

### **3. BRINGING PAPERS TO THE SESSION**

We would like to continue the tradition started in 2002 Program, with your cooperation. I am asking each paper giver to bring 30-40 copies of a summary of his/her paper to the session as a handout. Not the paper; just a summary. The handout should be no more than 2-3 pages in length, double-sided with two pages to a side (that is, four pages onto one sheet of paper). No one wants to carry dozens of papers with them when they return home, but having a 2-3 page summary during the session can be very helpful to the audience in terms of understanding the paper.

On the handout, I would like to see the key points of the paper. This might be the overheads if the presenter is using overheads, or the Abstract, Hypotheses and Tables of Results. The paper title, author(s) and their addresses should be at the top, along with the session date and time.

These handouts should be distributed by the chair and/or the authors before the session starts, with the extras left at the entry doors so that people coming in to the sessions can pick up the papers. Any leftover handouts, once the session is over, should be collected by the session chair (yourself) or authors and returned to the AIB Registration Desk. We will have a table where people can browse through leftover summaries, if they missed the session.

#### **4. ORDER OF PRESENTERS**

Unless there is a problem, please keep to the order of papers, as outlined in the Final Program distributed at the conference. People often "hop" from one session to another, to listen to a particular paper, based on the order shown in the program. While I don't condone such movements, we all know there are often two, or even three, sessions we would really like to attend but that are running concurrently so that the only way to hear particular papers may be to move from session to session.

#### **5. HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE THE SESSION TIME**

All sessions are one and one-half hours (90 minutes) long. To figure out how much time should be allocated to each presentation, divide the number of presenters plus 2 (1 for the time used by the discussant and chair and 1 for the time for Q&A) into the total number of minutes. For example, if there are three presentations,  $90/5 = 18$  minutes each. Tell each presenter they have 15 minutes, so you have a bit of "wiggle room" for people who drag over. If there are four presentations,  $90/6 = 25$  minutes each; tell each presenter they have 12 minutes. Therefore, the rule of thumb is:

- Three papers: 15 minutes each paper
- Four papers: 12 minutes each paper
- Five papers: 10 minutes each paper

Would you please keep to this timetable as closely as possible? That is, do not let a speaker run on and take time away from the speakers that follow. (Some time ago, I was faced with a situation of being the last speaker on a panel. The first person took double the allotted time, the second ran over, and by the time it got to me, the choice was either me or Q&A (thankfully, there was no discussant!). There were several audience members clearly straining to get into the conversation so I took the safest way out and gave my time to the floor.) Please do not put your speakers in that untenable situation -- watch the clock to see that everyone gets their fair share of the time.

You might find this helpful: When I chair a session, I carry a small clock or stop watch with me and three single sheets of paper. One sheet of paper has on it (in big black ink) the number 5, the second says (in orange ink) 2, and the third says (in red ink) STOP. I tell the speakers ahead of time to watch for the three sheets and that I expect them to stop when the STOP sign is held up. It has been very effective for me. I hope it works for you!

When in doubt about the time, I tend to err in favor of (1) the discussant (as long as he/she really is discussing the paper and not talking about his/her own work, and (2) Q&A from the audience.

#### **6. HOW TO START A SESSION**

As chair, it is up to you to start the session. The first thing is to start on time. This is often hard to do, especially first thing in the morning when people can straggle in, but it is important to start on time. The second thing is to simply introduce the topic and the speakers. Your whole introduction should take no more than 2-3 minutes.

#### **7. AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT**

We will have OVERHEAD PROJECTORS. Unfortunately, we do not yet know whether all conference rooms will be equipped with computer projectors.

#### **8. OTHER SUGGESTIONS**

When I have chaired a session, I have found it helpful to ask the participants in my session to meet 10 minutes BEFORE the session starts so that everyone can be introduced, the equipment can be checked, handouts can be distributed, and so on.

It also helps to give your session members your room number in the hotel, or a telephone number where you can be reached should an emergency occur. If that unwelcome emergency does occur (e.g., a discussant can't make it), please let your session members know as soon as possible, and make other plans. As chair, you may have to "pinch hit" and take over the discussant role. Please be prepared for the unexpected!

The Academy of Management, at its 1999 conference, had a workshop on improving the effectiveness of AOM sessions. I attach below the specific suggestions for session chairs, which you may also find useful.

### **9. SESSION CHAIRS MEETING**

We will have a quick meeting (20 minutes) on Saturday afternoon, July 10, 2004, from 16:10 - 16:30. I will distribute these same (or updated) instructions and any other handouts at the session, and answer your questions. Please do come to the session. I will not hold you for long, but would like to see you.

Please don't delay registering for the conference or making your hotel reservations.

I look forward to seeing you all in Stockholm.

All the best from *Istanbul*,

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AIB Vice President and 2004 Program Chair

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### ***The Role of the Session Chair* \***

\* Abstracted with permission from "Making AOM Sessions Exciting!" by Jing Zhou (Texas A&M) and Russ Coff (Emory). The report was based on an AOM workshop, August 8, 1999, Chicago, IL, where the panel members were the two co-authors of the report, Sally Blount-Lyon (Chicago), Michael H. Lubatkin (Connecticut), Karl Weick (Michigan) and Edward J. Zajac (Northwestern).

*Session Chair:* Chairs must balance the needs of presenters (wishing time to get their ideas across) and the audience to design and execute an interesting session. This goes well beyond being a mere timekeeper.

Chairs are not just timekeepers. How can they organize and facilitate sessions to bring out audience participation?

### **In Preparation for the Session**

- Create expectations for how the session will be run. Do not try to establish these in the session once authors have developed their presentations.
- Make sure everyone gets copies of the papers (authors should also get copies of other papers if possible to promote a panel discussion).
- Get slides from the presenters and serve as a mentor to inexperienced authors. This is an opportunity to alert the author that the presentation is too long before he/she is in front of an audience.
- Work with discussants to set up debates, themes, puzzles -- that could be addressed and carried through the session.

- Discuss innovations in session structure and time usage with presenters well in advance. Here are a few variations on the usual theme:
  - *Shuffle presenters.* This involves asking presenters to make brief presentations about other papers on the panel. The idea is to spur discussion within the panel by forcing them to become experts on the other papers.
  - *Small Group Breakout.* 1) Each presenter gives a 3 minute overview of their paper (15 minutes) 2) authors run discussion groups on their papers (40 minutes), 3) large group reconvenes to bring it together (20 minutes).
  - *Poster Breakout.* Have presenters prepare poster presentations around the room. 1) presenters give a brief overview (10 minutes), 2) individuals walk around the room talking to authors (40 minutes), 3) group comes together to discuss (20 minutes)
  - *Discussant overview.* Have the discussant start with an overview and introduction to the papers
  - *Web-based discussion of papers before the meetings.* It might be possible to set up a bulletin board or discussion list around sessions before the meetings. This capability might be integrated with a web-based personal scheduling function offered by the Academy.

### **During the Session**

- DO NOT give the standard boilerplate about time, and take up too much time doing it. Tell the presenters the “rules” before the session.
- DO start out with a few words about the subject matter of the session and how each paper will contribute toward exploring that research domain.
- Session chairs must shut down inexperienced or unprepared presenters who do not conform to the prescribed time limits.
- Create an informal “first-name” atmosphere in the session to encourage discussion.
- *Power Dilemma:* Often session chairs are relatively inexperienced. There may be significant power/status differences between the chair and the authors. This makes enforcement difficult and may make it hard to implement innovations as well.