



How you show up matters. Are you kicking off this year's meetings with a bang? Or just falling back into the same ole routine. Are you dressing to impress or stuck in a fashion rut? Your team is looking for you to set the pace and the tone for the year. Hopefully, these articles can help you get inspired and get started.

Kristin

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NEW YEAR TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

Try this new year team building activity inspired by my colleague, Victoria Labalme: Distribute four index cards to each team member.

On the first card, have them write the headline "GREAT" and then set the timer to 2 minutes. Explain that they have two minutes to scribble down all the things that were GREAT about work/the team during the previous year. Then start the timer and call time after 2 minutes.

On the second card, have them write the headline "CHALLENGES" and set the timer to 2 minutes. Explain that they have two minutes to scribble down all the CHALLENGES they encountered at work/on the team during the previous year. Then start the timer and call time after 2 minutes.

On the third card, have them write the headline "MORE OF/START" and set the timer to 2 minutes. Explain that they have two minutes to scribble down all the things they think they/the team should do MORE OF or START doing during the year. Then start the timer and call time after 2 minutes.

On the fourth card, have them write the headline "LESS OF/STOP" and set the timer to 2 minutes. Explain that they have two minutes to scribble down all the things they think they/the team should do LESS OF or STOP doing during the year. Then start the timer and call time after 2 minutes.

Then do four different lightning rounds (where each person shares ONE thing they wrote on the card and keep going around until they have shared all their ideas) focusing on GREATS first, then CHALLENGES, MORE OF/START, and finishing with LESS OF/STOP. (Hint: If challenged for time, you can also space this out if having a longer meeting or kick off future team meetings with a lightning round).

It's a great opportunity to celebrate the wins of the year, find out what is top of mind, and creatively set some opportunities for improvement. Give it a try and let me know how this new year's team activity goes!

WHAT TO WEAR ON A PANEL DISCUSSION

Ever wonder what to wear on a panel discussion? I do – all the time! The answer is not as simple as it may seem. Although I would love to give you a textbook answer, there are several factors you need to consider first:

Factors to Consider When Deciding What to Wear on a Panel Discussion:

- **The Event.** Is it a formal or informal event? What kind of event is it? (e.g. business, corporate, academic, community, religious etc.). The nature of the event itself may direct the choices you will make.
- **The Industry.** Some industries and/or professions are more conservative than others (e.g. engineering, finance, and law). For example, you can be more stylish with creative industries (e.g. fashion, music, advertising), and more casual with certain professions (IT, sales, entrepreneurs).
- **The Audience.** Who will be in the audience and how does the meeting organizer think they will be dressed? I always dress “one level” more professional than the audience.
- **The Stage.** Will the audience be on the same level/floor with you or will you be on a stage or riser? Perhaps they will be looking down at you in an amphitheater or all around in “fishbowl” layout. Will you be sitting behind a table or standing behind a lectern? What chairs will you be sitting on? Will there be a live video screen projection? Think about what the audience will see when directly looking at you.
- **The Background.** What is the color of the background? Logos? Images? You don't want to wear the same color as you'll look like a floating head!
- **The Microphone.** What type of microphone will be used? You don't want fabrics or jewelry clanking against the microphone – and if it is a lavalier microphone, think about where you will clip on the microphone and the microphone pack. (I use an AHA wrap when wearing a dress that doesn't have a belt or pockets. Others clip it to the back bra strap – but I'm not a big fan of having the A/V team hook the belt pack on my bra!)
- **Your Personal Style.** My colleague, Sylvie di Giusto suggests you identify your “style DNA.” (She has a complimentary style assessment that's quite informative!)
- **The Vibe.** There is a reason you said “Yes!” to the panel invitation and you have a specific objective in mind. You are also playing a specific role on the panel as you share your expertise. The answers to these questions will give you the “vibe” that you want to convey e.g. smart, approachable, knowledgeable. You want your outfit to line up with that vibe.

When you consider these factors, you'll have a better sense of what to wear on a panel discussion. You want your clothing choices to impress yet be unobtrusive as the focus of the panel must be on the content.

General Tips on What to Wear on a Panel Discussion

Feel Confident. Wear an outfit that is comfortable and makes you feel good about yourself. Now is not the time to try something new – unless it fits you perfectly! (otherwise, you'll be fussing with it!)

Be Up-to-Date. Outdated clothes may send a subliminal message to the audience that your ideas and insights might be out of date as well.

Contrast Colors. You don't want to blend in, but you also don't want to stand out like a sore thumb! The key here is to think about contrasting colors. Di Giusto says, "If you wear a navy blue jacket with a blue or a grey blouse – that is low contrast and very difficult for lighting and for cameras. Pair a navy blue jacket with a white or pink shirt that provides high contrast."

Pop of Color. Add a bit of color somewhere near your face to give your image a bit of intrigue (e.g. your shirt, tie, scarf, or pocket scarf).

Fit Right. Make sure your clothes fit properly – not too tight, not too loose. A tailored silhouette gives you instant authority. Kristina Moore, Founder of Corporate Fashionista says, "Ill-fitting clothes instantly send a message to the audience that you may not be reliably attentive to their professional needs or be able to tend to the details of their projects if you can't attend to the important details of your own professional dress."

Do a Quick Check. Look for visual distractions including loose buttons and threads, visible undergarments, wrinkle-prone fabrics, sweat stains, noisy shoes, and distracting/noisy jewelry.

Get Inspired! Watch a few news shows and see what the hosts and guests wear. You're bound to pick up some ideas – especially if you know that you are going to be live-streamed to the in-person and/or remote audience.

Tips for Men

The Default. You can't go wrong with a suit or sports coat.

Ties. Wear a tie with a pop of color – or a striped tie. Try to stay away from paisley or big patterns.

Shirts. Contrast your jacket with a colored shirt (or a white shirt – but only if it is in your color palette).

Socks. Make sure your socks cover your calves, so when you cross your legs, we still see socks and not your bare calf!

Shoes. You'd be surprised at how many people look at your shoes. Make sure they are polished/not scuffed and no holes in the soles!

Jeans. Depending on the audience and the vibe you are aiming for, dark blue, well-fitting jeans (that are not ripped or fraying at the hem) can be quite chic.

WHAT TO WEAR FOR A PANEL DISCUSSION

YOUR CLOTHING CHOICES SHOULD IMPRESS YET BE UNOBTRUSIVE

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- EVENT:** Formal or informal? Business, corporate, academic, community, religious?
- INDUSTRY:** Conservative or creative?
- AUDIENCE:** Dress "one level" more professional than the audience.
- STAGE:** What the audience will see when directly looking at you.
- BACKGROUND:** Don't wear the same color as the background.
- MICROPHONE:** Be able to clip on and not make any noise.
- PERSONAL STYLE:** Know your comfortable and confident "style DNA."
- THE VIBE:** Have your outfit to line up with your objectives.

MEN

- SHIRT:** Contrast color to jacket.
- TIE:** Striped. No wild prints.
- SUIT:** Tailored. Navy or dark gray.
- SOCKS:** Cover your calves.
- SHOES:** Clean & polished. No holes in the soles.

WOMEN

- LIPSTICK:** Red in your color palette.
- ACCESSORIES:** Wear one eye-catching accessory.
- BLOUSE:** Contrast color to jacket. No opening.
- PANTSUIT:** Navy blue, dark grey, or chestnut brown.
- SHOES:** Comfortable. Heels < 2.5"

TIPS

Do's

- Contrast Colors
- Pop a Color
- Tailor Your Outfit

Don'ts

- Show Too Much Skin
- Strain the Eyes
- Wear Transparent Fabrics

For more information on what to wear for a panel discussion, contact us at www.PowerfulPanels.com

POWERFUL PANELS

Tips for Women

The Default. You can't go wrong with a navy blue, dark grey, or chestnut brown pantsuit – especially if the audience is primarily male.

Color. Moore says, “Rich, lush and vibrant colors work best for professional speaking engagements. Blues and greens are always a hit. Plus, these energetic colors will emphasize and bring forth the passion and enthusiasm you hold for the content of your message. Dynamic colors will be inviting to your audience. I am not suggesting that you wear loud neon colors but, rather those colors that are flattering on your skin tone in a more bold tone than you might regularly wear. This way you will be appropriately noticeable in the crowd.”

Blouse. Contrast your jacket with a solid colored or subtle pattern blouse (or a white shirt – but only if it is in your color palette). Retailer M.M. LaFleur encourages you to “Frame your face. Details like pretty collars and notched necklines put the emphasis where it should be (on your mouth and the words emanating from it). While a super-low plunge is a no-no, a deep V-neck can draw eyeballs upward to your face.”

Skirt. If you don't want to wear a pantsuit, a pencil skirt slightly above the knee with a jacket that hits at hip level and a cute blouse will do the job (especially since you can clip the microphone pack to the back of your skirt!).

Dress. Some women simply prefer to wear a dress. Make sure the cut is well-tailored, hits slightly above the knee, and doesn't reveal a lot of skin. You can also top it off with a leather moto jacket or cardigan sweater in a great color.

Pantyhose. Unless you have fabulous-looking legs, wear sheer nylons or pantyhose.

Shoes. It's best to wear shoes that you can walk in, stand in, and sit comfortably without tripping, stumbling, or looking awkward. The default is to keep the heels on the low side – and watch out for the sound you make as you walk across the stage!

Accessories. Wear one eye-catching accessory, such as a necklace, bracelet, earrings, scarf, pin, hat, or even shoes can spice up an outfit.

Lipstick. Wear a red lipstick that is in your color palette – and that you actually like and feel comfortable in. Do not use pink or mauve as they provide low contrast.

Jeans. This is trickier for women. Depending on the audience and the vibe you are aiming for, you could sport dark color jeans cut like a trouser and not too form-fitting with no visible rips, trims, or stitching. (I've only worn jeans once in my entire career and that was at a JavaScript conference where my jeans were actually a notch above what everyone else was wearing!)

What NOT to Wear on a Panel Discussion

Here are a few big no-no's, so you'll want to avoid these:

- Show Too Much Skin. Avoid bare shoulders, plunging necklines and potential wardrobe malfunctions.
- Strain the Eyes. Busy patterns, floral prints, or fabrics that shine may clash with everything else going on.
- Transparency. Beware of any fabric that can become transparent under a bright beam of light. The audience may be able to see through chiffon, cashmere, knits, linen, and cotton when thin or pale enough.
- Knotty Details. Stay away from “complicated” features such buckles, wrap ties, or weird buttons that may distract or malfunction.

- Over the Top. Unless it is part of your brand, stay away from big earrings, over the top necklaces, oversized scarves, hats, dramatic eyeglass frames, or a raft of bracelets.

Remember, you want people to pay attention to what you are saying rather than be distracted by what you are wearing. Follow these tips on what to wear on a panel discussion and you'll definitely impress the audience!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: MAKING NUMBERS COUNT

I'm a HUGE fan of the Heather Brothers' work, so I jumped on Chip Heath and Karla Starr's latest book, *Making Numbers Count: The Art and Science of Communicating Numbers*.

If you ever have to communicate the story behind the numbers on paper, a spreadsheet, or a PowerPoint slide, you need to read this book. Why? Because it is more than the telling of the number or statistic. The number(s) is important, but it's the understanding of the situation, the emotion it generates, and the feeling you are left with that really matters.

As a professional speaker and panel moderator, I have instinctively known this and mentioned the importance of making numbers count, but this book shows you HOW to do that.

I love the fact that there are oodles of before/after comparative examples that are highlighted in green-colored boxes throughout the book. The intent is that read the book, then flip through it, using those boxes as a springboard to your own creativity.

So what kind of tips are we talking about?

- Use small whole numbers. The easiest thing to process is whole numbers under 10, preferably 1 to 5.
- Favor user-friendly numbers. If you have to present bigger numbers, round it out so it's easier to mentally process the information.
- Unless the audience deals in decimals all the time, convert the numbers to a whole number.
- Fractions force people to do the math. So do percentiles. Instead, try the "village of 100" or "basket of 100" and convert those percentages into whole numbers.
- Focus on the one: Use something simple with a well-understood part of the overall scene: 1 employee, citizen, or student. 1 business, marriage, or classroom. 1 dal, game, or day. Or focus on 1 concrete chunk of an experience: 1 prototypical visit, 1 day, 1 month in the quarter.
- Comparisons help the listener understand the magnitude of a number relative to something they understand and appreciate. Convert and compare it to a concrete object, recast it into time, space, distance, or money.
- Tie the number to a vivid or emotional connection.

As I was reading this book, I realized that it takes work, thoughtfulness, and creativity to express a number (or set of numbers) in a meaningful and memorable way. This book is the spark to access that creativity.

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 USA: 28150 N Alma School Parkway #103-615 | Scottsdale AZ 85262 | (480) 399-8489
 Toll Free: 1-800-589-4733