10 Proven Tips to Handle Question and Answer Sessions

1. **Keep your answers short**—Q&A is a time for audience input and participation. Short answers allow more people to participate.

2. **Anticipate questions**—Advanced planning will help. Even prepare extra visuals you could use during Q&A if necessary—but not in the body of the talk.

3. **Repeat the question**—This helps if you have a large audience or when your session is being taped.

4. **No questions?**—Be sure to allow some time to think—it may take a while. Also, you may “prime the pump” by asking your own question. Another option is to ask a colleague in advance to kick off questions.

5. **Too few questions**—If you run out of questions before you run out of time, wrap up. Audiences rarely get mad when a speaker ends early.

6. **Argumentative or tangential questions**—Use deferral. Politely let the questioner know that you appreciate his or her point and can meet after the session to talk further. Then take the next question.

7. **Don’t know the answer?**—Admit it. Volunteer to research the answer and get back to them. You may also ask if anyone in the audience knows the answer.

8. **Timing**—Include Q&A time in the total time you have. Don’t let your Q&A run into someone else’s time.

9. **Don’t end with questions**—After the last question, have a memorable close. This can be a well-delivered story, quotation or humorous bit that reiterates your core message and wraps things up on your own terms.

10. **Style**—Of course, your body language needs to express self-confidence. Remember to maintain your solid delivery style: a strong stance, excellent eye interaction, bold, descriptive gestures, use of vocal variety and pausing.