



It has been a year since I have been providing play-by-play analysis on the debate moderator's performances using real-time statistics and data - and I'm delighted to share my final analysis with you. Not sure where I am going to with this newfound knowledge (maybe interview all the debate moderators to get a behind-the-scenes perspective?) - would love to know where *you* think I should go with it!

Big news! My latest book, "123 Ways to Add Pizazz to a Panel Discussion," is due to launch on January 7th, 2021. Yep, I'm dishing a whopping 123 ways to provide a little inspiration for your live, face-to-face, virtual, and hybrid panel discussions.

In these wild and crazy times, don't forget to keep your team engaged, involved, and inspired.

Kristin

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PIQUE YOUR TEAM'S INTEREST IN VOLUNTEERING: DOOR METAPHOR

Putting together a volunteer team for an association, charity, church or other non-profit organization is always a fine balance. You want to make sure your potential prospects hit the trifecta: 1) able to do the job, 2) willing to do the job and 3) you can trust them to do a good job.

The typical tendency is to reach out to the usual suspects: those dependable stalwarts within the organization who have repeatedly demonstrated their ability and trustworthiness. Unfortunately, that's a recipe for obsolescence. Newer members will just throw up their hands and quietly leave *because we haven't asked them to get involved*.

When given a leadership position, dig deep within the organization to find diverse talent – people of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, race, and creed. And don't let yourself off the hook too easily – there are *always* options.

Once you have identified a potential volunteer, I always like to offer options to get involved. Even though *you* have the perfect "task" in mind, they might say "no" to that one idea and then the conversation stops cold. Instead, pitch your offer as "I'd love for you to get involved. I have two or three different ideas that I would like to share with you."

Once you have piqued their interest, pre-empt their objections by saying, "I hope you will like at least one of these ideas, but if none of them interest you, that's okay. We'll still remain friends and I'll be 100% okay with whatever you decide. Sound good? Want to hear

what's behind door #1?" And now they are *really* interested!

I then share each of the options in enough detail that they get the gist of what it will entail and why it will benefit them, their business, and the organization. Pause and answer their questions about the first option (door #1) before you move on to door #2.

Door #1 is what I really want them to pick, door #2 is another option that they are equally qualified to do, and door #3 is always a lesser-involved, bite-sized task that can be easily done.

For some reason, the “door #1, door #2, door #3” metaphor seems to resonate with people. Perhaps it is because they feel like they have options and aren't being told what to do? I don't know why. I just know that it works. 99% of the time, they pick one of the doors!

It's a win-win. They feel good about volunteering and you have identified the best fit for the job on your team!

FINAL 2020 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE: BETTER THAN EXPECTED!

If I were Chris Wallace, I'd be annoyed. This final debate between the two 2020 Presidential candidates was a stark difference from the first (only other) debate of the election.

Was it because the microphones were muted for the first two minutes of each topic segment? Perhaps.

The fact that moderator Kristen Welker pleaded with the candidates to speak one at a time? Perhaps.

Or because both candidates' debate performances were skewed in the press? Perhaps.

Or was it because there are only 12 days to go and the race is up for grabs? Perhaps.

For this last debate, it was this confluence of events that enabled a solid discussion of the six topics she selected – as well as some decent moderating skills. She asked a balanced number of questions between the two candidates (Trump was asked 15 questions; Biden 14).

She tried to keep the amount of airtime rather balanced (40:31 / 37:43) – having to interrupt Trump more (16 / 2), and yielded the floor to Trump more (7 / 0). She gave time limits to talk (“You have 30 seconds” or “You have 10 seconds” – not that they paid too much attention to the deadline!) or deftly included the other candidate into the conversation (“Let me bring you into the conversation...”).

Candidate	Time to 1st?	# of ?s	Responses	Candidate Interrupted	Interrupted by Candidate	Interrupted by Moderator	Speaking Time	Avg Question Response
Joe Biden	4:15	14	31		4	5	37:43	1:11
Donald Trump	2:04	15	30		17	2	40:31	1:07
				Total Interruptions:	Interruptions by Candidates		21	
					Interruptions by Moderator		18	
				Total Time Candidates			1:18:14	
Moderators	Questions by Mods	Was Interrupted	Interrupted Biden	Interrupted Trump	Speaking Time			
Kristen Welker	29		14	2	16	13:42		

She asked more pointed, closed questions (“Can you name the specific companies that are manufacturing a vaccine?”) and “plan” questions about how they intended to accomplish a stated goal. She pointed out when there was new information and tried to probe further. So I think we got more clarity around the candidates' positions. Yay!

And when the discussion on race in America took a detour into corruption allegations, she firmly reinforced, “Let's stay on the issue of race.” Nicely done!

Yet when the candidates were asked to discuss matters of national security (What they would do in the next term to end the threat of Russia and Iran influencing the election), we somehow started talking about tax returns and Chinese bank accounts. Whaaaat? Welker

deftly picked up on the China comment and pivoted to Biden asking him to “talk about China more broadly,” which still didn’t go anywhere.

Unfortunately, when she wanted to move on to the next question, she was often stymied by each candidate wanting one more comment – and she would let them! Guess it is hard to tell a current president and former vice president to “shut up!”

One final comment – the timing of each segment was a bit lopsided. The Commission on Presidential Debates mandates the format to “be divided into six segments of approximately 15 minutes each on major topics to be selected by the moderator.” The first segment (Fighting COVID-19) lasted 25 minutes; National Security was 19 minutes; American Families was 17 minutes; Immigration was five minutes (that wasn’t even a topic...but maybe that was part of American Families?); Race in America was 15 minutes and one question on Leadership that lasted three minutes. 96 minutes total.

Needless to say, Welker did not follow the prescribed format, but I don’t think anyone minded too much. She did a decent job and I am so thankful it wasn’t a reprise of the first debate!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: 123 WAYS TO ADD PIZAZZ TO A PANEL DISCUSSION

Add some pizzazz to the traditional panel discussion format with these tips and techniques. In [my new book](#), I’m providing 123 different ways to transform a traditional panel discussion into the hit of your conference!

In this 200+ page reference guide, you will discover myriad ideas to punch up your panels including how to:

- Design an inspiring panel format
- Find and prepare your panelists
- Curate fabulous questions
- Set the stage and A/V tips
- Open with pizzazz!
- Inspire spontaneous and informative conversations
- Intervene firmly but tactfully
- Finish with panache
- Keep the audience at the edge of their seats
- Shift gears periodically
- Engage & involve the audience
- Moderate lively audience Q&A
- PLUS tons of tips on how to adapt these techniques to the virtual environment!

Just pull out this quick reference guide to provide a little inspiration for your live, face-to-face, virtual, and hybrid panel discussions!