LMC England conference

How to be heard - Guidance for Representatives
How to be heard

One of the major frustrations of conference is the fact that being called to speak is so unpredictable.

You have arrived at the hall. Long nights have been spent honing your speech to perfection, whittling it down and tightening it up so that, even with the adulation that it will induce it will still fit into 2 minutes. It expresses so clearly the arguments that you feel so powerfully and passionately about and, when the motion is called you spring to your feet and joined the massed ranks in the tense queue.

Within a few minutes the motion has been processed and you are left standing there silent, holding in your hand a polemic that would have changed the course of the profession. You slouch back to your seat crestfallen. Join the club!

We have all seen our hard work destroyed by the chair’s gavel and yet there is so much debate to get through and so many speakers who wish to be called.

How can you have your say?

This guide aims to illustrate the ways that you can take part in the great debate that is conference.

**Start with the obvious and, if you are called to speak, do so clearly and close to the microphone. There is no better way to irritate conference than by wandering away from the microphone and becoming unintelligible.**

1. Ordinary motions

The proposer is guaranteed to speak so why not make sure that your LMC submits well worded, relevant and topical motions which are more likely to get selected by the agenda committee.

**Get your slips in**

The earlier you get your speaker slip in the higher up the list it goes. It is really quite simple, the agenda committee lists the speakers on a piece of paper in the order that slips are received and, like most people, the chair is likely to start at the top of the list and work down. The earlier your slip is in the higher up the list you will be.

**Speak the other way**

By indicating that you are speaking against a popular concept or in favour of an unpopular one you are likely to be called to balance the debate. Often this is easier when there are a number of parts to a motion and you are speaking to a particular part.

This is tolerated by conference if there is a genuine point to be made or a forceful speech to be delivered but **do not abuse this system**. Those who frequently or inappropriately use this method of getting heard can quickly irritate conference.

You may not need to be devious; if your opinion is contrary to the majority of other speakers you are likely to get called to balance the debate. Be aware of this and make sure you have a speech ready.

**Highlight your special interests**

Priority is often given to representatives with a special position or interest in a subject. Educational and academic positions, governmental advisory roles, or other relevant interests will lead to a focus on what you have to say in debate.
Themed debate

Members of conference will have an opportunity to speak from the floor on the theme of partnership. This is a really broad topic, meaning speakers are invited to speak more freely than in the traditional debate style. All members of conference may take part in this debate by speaking from the microphones in the hall, rather than from the podium, when called by the Chair, with a speaker time limit of one minute per speaker.

Top Tip

Consider speaking to motions later on in the day or check with the agenda committee whether there are many or few speakers interested in speaking to a particular motion.

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They have ruined our motion!!!

Everyone is aware of the fact that there are far more motions put forward than can be covered in debate. The Agenda Committee work hard to try and bracket similar motions together so that they are debated during conference. Their aim is to be inclusive and not destroy well written motions and they will always choose a well written motion to lead the bracket.

However, there are times when the agenda committee will write a new ‘composite’ motion instead:

- where the motion may be inaccurate, restricted or open to failure on technical issues
- where the motion is incompetent - that is, may not be correct or make sense
- where the original motion is too narrow or too qualified in its proposal and where the incorporation of other motions will allow other facets of an issue to be included in a debate
- to be more inclusive and increase the topics for debate in the time available.

Where this is done the agenda committee will almost always use the actual wording of the constituent motions in creating the new composite.

The better the original motion the more likely it is to be chosen to lead a section and the less likely to be composited.

The agenda committee tries its best to balance the extra inclusiveness of bracketing motions against the dilution or weakening of any motion. Sometimes we get it spot on and sometimes we get it wrong and may bundle together too diverse a set of motions. We will always aim to do it better next time!

You have to take all or nothing!

If you are going to open a debate on an agenda committee composite motion you are proposing the whole motion. You cannot oppose any part of the motion even if it is not in your original submission. If you cannot propose the whole motion then tell the agenda committee and they will ask another LMC to open debate.

Timing of speech

It is well recognised that the maximum number of words that can be spoken is 3 per second and so when writing your speech bear this word count in mind. For a 3 minute opening speech with no interruptions, pauses or hitches the maximum written words will be 540, and for a 2 minute speech 360 words. You should write your speech to fit this time.

Use your agenda committee!

We are here to help you get the most out of conference as far as is possible. If you are not clear about an issue, speak to an agenda committee member.