

How to moderate an AI Tinkerers dinner

AI Tinkerers dinners are curated, off-the-record conversations among people with relevant expertise. The moderator's job is to make that expertise available to the whole table, keep the discussion moving, and create enough structure for people to learn from one another.

Before guests arrive

- Review the attendee brief so you know who is in the room and why they were selected.
- Review the event's Conversation Guide and choose two or three questions that fit the dinner theme.
- Confirm the sponsor representatives and how each sponsor would like to be introduced.
- Decide when the moderated discussion will end and open networking and dining will begin.

Suggested opening

Thank you for coming. You are a very special group. This is a curated event, and each of you was selected because your expertise and experience are relevant to tonight's topic.

I would like to thank our sponsors. Without their support, this dinner would not be possible. I will give them a moment to introduce themselves shortly.

We will begin with a moderated, off-the-record dinner discussion. Afterward, we will break for open networking and dining. The goal is to learn from the expertise around this table. I will pose questions, invite people to share the problems they are facing, and ask what solutions they have tried.

One-sentence introductions

Before the discussion, go around the table once. There is one rule: every introduction must be one short sentence.

Ask each person to share their name and one of the following:

- where they work or their role;
- one thing they hope to learn tonight; or
- one problem or challenge they are working through.

Set the pace with a brief example. If an introduction starts becoming a biography, thank the person and move gently to the next guest.

Recommended order

1. Welcome everyone and explain why the group was curated.
2. Thank the sponsors and invite each sponsor representative to introduce themselves briefly.

3. Return to the moderator and run one-sentence introductions around the table.
4. Introduce the off-the-record rule and the theme for the evening.
5. Begin with a problem-focused question.
6. Invite other guests to recognize, challenge, or extend what they heard.
7. Ask what solutions people have tried and what happened.
8. Transition clearly to open networking and dining.

Facilitation principles

- Start with real problems before discussing products or abstract trends.
- Draw quieter guests into the conversation without putting them on the spot.
- Keep any one person from dominating. Summarize their point, thank them, and invite another perspective.
- Ask for concrete examples: what was tried, what failed, and what changed.
- Treat sponsor representatives as participants in the discussion, not as presenters delivering a pitch.
- Remind the room that the discussion is off the record so people can speak candidly.

Closing

Thank the guests for sharing their expertise, thank the sponsors again, and invite everyone to continue the conversation during open networking and dining.