

**MPI World Education Congress 2017
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As I reflect upon my experience at the 2017 World Education Congress, I am struck by how powerful our chapter is. Let me break it down for you:

- We are the largest chapter in the WORLD!
- We had nearly 120 chapter members attend WEC!
- We were nominated for 3 RISE awards and we won 2!
- Our president was honored for her head-banging skills! (there's video out there somewhere if you'd like proof)

Our chapter is more than a global powerhouse, though. During my time at WEC I came to realize how generous, outgoing, thoughtful, and inclusive our chapter and its members can be. I had honestly expected to spend a few nights dining alone and roaming the city, especially on the evenings with the social events. But our delightful, caring, outgoing members made sure that I always had someone to eat with if I wanted company. They also didn't push when my introverted side needed some quiet time. Our chapter set up a group chat app so that everyone could find "our" section at general sessions. At WEC, I realized that you need only to extend a hand and our members will do everything they can to make you feel welcome and included.

But WEC isn't just about our chapter (delightful as we may be.) It's about the international community that is brought together by our industry to learn from one another. As someone that's been in the industry for 10+ years, I can be a bit jaded when it comes to educational content. One can only listen to so many F&B trend presentations and lectures on contract clauses. The sessions at WEC were different from any I have seen in the past. I attended a session on how to engage introverts. (Major take away: create ways for introverts to have interactions with others that don't require them to insert themselves into meaningless conversations. Help them find topics of common ground with other attendees.) My mind was blown by a session on personal branding. (Major take away: Update your LinkedIn with a dynamic personal statement! Use something like: I am a {insert your expertise} who helps {insert target audience} understand or do {insert unique solution/feature} so they can {insert transformation/benefit.}) My drive to break into the C-level was reaffirmed by a session that strove to evaluate my "CEO readiness." (Major take away: Find what you enjoy doing, look for work/life flexibility instead of balance, knowing yourself and your skills is a major part of setting yourself up for success.)

Finally, WEC is a safe space to try new things and to make mistakes. So often there is no room for error in our industry. We have one chance to get everything 100% right, and anything less than perfection is failure. The WEC planners wanted to change things up and to push themselves and the attendees out of their comfort zone, so they took a few risks. Some worked, some didn't. When the opening general session ran past 9pm, there were more than a few grumbles. Rather than trying to gloss over what happened, the organizers acknowledged the mistake and promised to learn from it. When the keynote speaker at lunch cancelled last minute, the organizers pulled together new entertainment - which any of us would have done. What they did next was true on-the-fly innovation: they set up an optional Q&A with the

organizers to discuss the last minute cancellation and what best practices industry leaders use to deal with problems like these. In my opinion, this was a true stroke of genius. Our industry understands last minute cancellations better than anyone, and the organizers transformed a cancellation into an opportunity for dialogue and sharing.

In the opening general session, the outgoing chairman of MPI, Brian Stevens, shared a quote that really summed up the overall feeling of innovation, encouragement, and community that I felt at WEC:

“Go and make interesting mistakes, make amazing mistakes, make glorious and fantastic mistakes. Break rules. Leave the world more interesting for your being here.”
-Neil Gaiman, Make Good Art

I hope that you get to attend WEC one year. But until then, I hope that you take advantage of the generous, outgoing, thoughtful, powerhouse chapter in your backyard. I hope that you seek education that expands and invigorates you. And I hope that you find interesting mistakes to make and rules to break, and are forgiving of others’ mistakes.

