

WEC Review from Scholarship Winner Perspective By Kathleen Maier, CMP

I've been a member of MPI since 2006. The first MPI event I attended was the Professional Education Congress (PEC) in New Orleans in 2007. It was there that I met the people that would become life-long industry friends. It was there that I was convinced that getting involved was the right thing. PEC was the first of many MPI and MPINCC events.

Flash forward 9 years, I was laid off after 15+ years at a company I thought I'd never leave. I knew I wanted to attend WEC because, in my experience, you can't beat the networking. And now, more than ever, I needed my network. I decided to apply for the MPINCC scholarship. Maybe it was my turn, all those years I didn't apply because I was lucky enough to be employed by a company that believed in education and was willing to pay for it. At the very least, it doesn't hurt to apply. Of the 3 scholarships available, I won MPI WEC registration. This was made available through MPINCC and I am grateful for this opportunity to continue to my professional development.

Having grown up on the East Coast, I was excited to go back to Atlantic City. Atlantic City and Caesars did not disappoint. It's always fun to see how host cities will show off their strengths. Atlantic City surpassed my expectations with the opening night event at the beach. The setting was perfect for connecting with friends I haven't seen since last year and enjoying local food & beverage.



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Tonight's decor brought to you by Mother Nature.
[#wec16](#)



After a spectacular evening at the beach, it was time to get down to business. MPI, AC & Caesars put together a great show starting with the general session room set. The rules were rewritten by including couches, bars with seating, low cocktail tables and standard rounds and rectangular sets. Stages were in all four corners of the room and the middle. I was impressed with how it all worked.

Dena Blizzard, comedian and One Funny Mother, acted as Mistress of Ceremonies for the whole conference and she didn't disappoint. Highlights included The Water Coolers and Sekou Andrews, a poetic voice. Again, the idea of throwing out the rules was emphasized right from the start.

The theme of the Flash Point sessions was poignant and insightful. Phil Hansen delivered his presentation entitled Embrace Your Shake demonstrated the ability to find creativity within limitations

with live interactive art that had the entire room enthralled. Shiza Shahid told the story of her work with Malala Yousafzai to create the Malala Fund to help the girls of the world become educated. The title of her presentation, "There are no Superheroes, Just Us", clearly establishes that as ordinary people, we do have the power to help the world change.

Newly motivated and ready to take on the world, I chose my education sessions with my need for employment in mind and took advantage of the 1:1 career coaching that was available. This was highly valuable to me as it provided some new ideas for my search.

Networking and education are the two significant reasons for me to attend WEC. But it's also exciting and entertaining. At WEC16, attendees rocked with Train at Rendezvous, screamed and danced with Rick Springfield at the WEC17 MGM/Las Vegas preview lunch and partied with Redfoo of LMFAO at Harrah's Pool After Dark during the closing event.

I am incredibly thankful to MPINCC for the opportunity to attend WEC16 in Atlantic City when my circumstances may have prevented my participation. My experience with MPI since 2006 has been nothing but good. I've been told many times "you get out of it what you put into it" and I'm proud to say that this year, after many years on the fringes, I am serving on the MPINCC Board for the first time as the Director of Marketing. Furthermore, I've started a new job so you could say MPI WEC16 was start of a new life adventure. Thanks, MPINCC!