

**WEC 2012**  
**St. Louis, Missouri**  
***“Architects of the Authentic”***

**Maile Akana, DMCP**  
**WEC Scholarship Winner**

Performance poet Sonya Renee Taylor proclaimed WEC attendees to be “Architects of the Authentic” in the opening General Session, with a resounding message to build real experience on the foundation of connectivity. Taylor also posited that meeting professionals are “the door from Idea to *I do.*” Taylor’s comments invigorate as poignant reminders that why and what we do matter, especially in an age of rapid change and perceived disconnection.

Keynote Speaker Jonah Lehrer pointed out that the global reach of technology actually opens more doors for in-person connections. The dull glow of smart phones and iPads seen throughout the convention hall served evidence to his intriguing point.

The WEC Tweet Up event I attended offered additional evidence of Lehrer’s thesis. Here a large number of industry colleagues who engage on Twitter met in real life. Technology truly was the introductory platform enabling live in-person connections at this event.

The message of connectivity continued throughout the educational sessions -- be it a class on Mobile Apps, to an Idea Forum, to a Hotel panel, discussing top trends and industry-wide issues with colleagues from around the world proved invaluable. WEC offered opportunities to learn new skills, stay relevant, gain insight, and cultivate inspiration. Nothing can replace the value of a meeting, as the jam-packed schedule and non-stop engagement at WEC attested.

At the end of the day, planners love a good party and who knows more about that than WEC’s amazing hospitality partners? St. Louis turned down the temperature, but turned up the heat on Welcome Night, where enthusiastic networking took place on the field of Busch Stadium. The Closing Reception in the Botanical Gardens adorned with vibrant Chinese Lanterns was the final hurrah of an amazing WEC experience.

Ultimately, connectivity is the gateway to success, and WEC 2012 in the Gateway City was a resounding success. Both here at MPINCC and at MPI chapters around the world, cheers to the Architects of the Authentic!