



THE MPISCC NEWSLETTER

Scoop.

APR '26

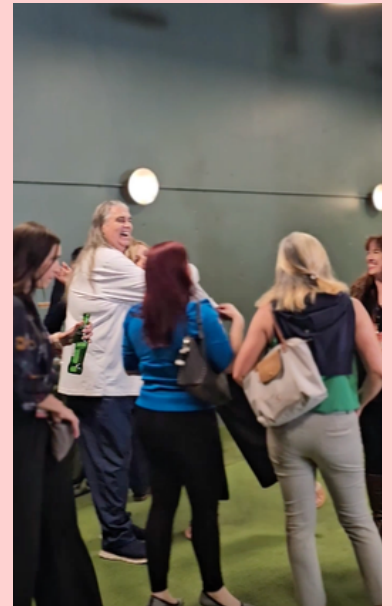
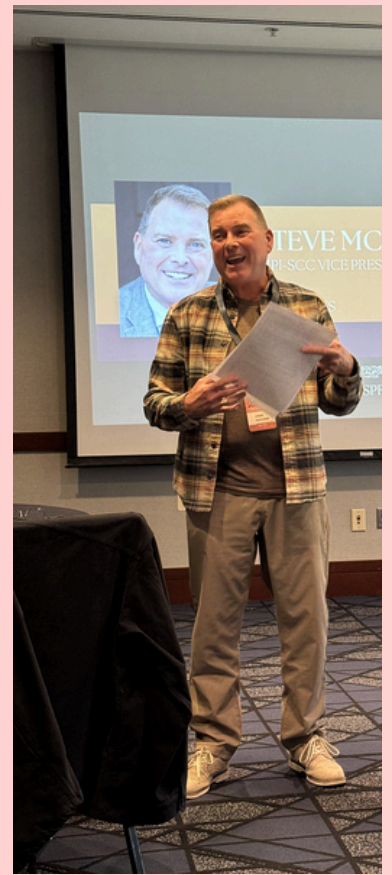
THIS ISSUE GETS INTO THE REAL STUFF

INSIDE:

Ramp-up to WE | CON

How to Be an Ally: Actionable Tips on Supporting Autistic Peers at Events and in Your Organization

Plus Food for Thought, Trends, Destination Spotlight, Member Spotlights, and more.



**ROAD SHOW
AND
AFTER 5'S
SNAPSHOTS**



OPENING VISION TALK: LARRY LONG JR

May 6 / 6pm – 8pm / The Kickoff

The opening night reception for WE | CON 2026 is at the Rose Bowl. Not near it. Not inspired by it. On the field of a National Historic Landmark that has hosted five Super Bowls, two FIFA World Cup Finals, and the 1984 Olympics. Along with other meeting professionals from across Southern California, you will gather at the place where legendary moments happen, kicking off three days that are rewriting what a conference can be. This is the room you want to be in on the night it starts. There is no replay.

May 7 + 8 / Breaks and Sessions

An agenda designed to inspire, provoke, and ground you in a new way of thinking about events and connections. Every moment intentional; every touch point memorable; every bit of information relevant to you.

Agenda | May 7

- **9am-10am / Breakfast**
- **9am-9:30am / COMMUNITY CHAT: Building the Mentorship Pipeline**
- **10am-11am / VISION TALK: JOLT! Your LinkedIn: Strengthen Relationships & Drive Business**
- **11:15am-noon / CATALYST LAB: Peak Performance for Professionals – Restoring your Energy & Resilience**
- **11:15am-noon / CATALYST LAB: Powered by ADHD: A Leadership Guide for a Neuro-Diverse Workplace**
- **11:15am-noon / CATALYST LAB: Transforming Leaders into Storytellers**
- **Noon-12:30 / COMMUNITY CHAT: Think Differently: Neurodiversity in Events**
- **12:30-1:30 / LUNCH**
- **1:30pm-2:30pm / VISION TALK: Where Creative Problem Solving Meets Meaningful Collaboration**
- **2:45pm-3:30pm / CATALYST LAB: Strategy Table Workshop**
- **6:00pm-8:00pm / RECEPTION**

Agenda | May 8

- **8am-9am / Breakfast**
- **8am-8:30am / COMMUNITY CHAT: Intentional Hospitality: Moving from Tolerance to Belonging**
- **8am-8:30am / COMMUNITY CHAT: Work Life Balance**
- **9am-10am / VISION TALK: From Invisible to In-Demand: How to Leverage the SCIENCE of Attention to Attract Clients Through Content**
- **10:15am-11am: CATALYST LAB: Break the Ice, Not the Agenda: Smarter Team Building for Better Meetings**
- **10:15am-11am: CATALYST LAB: Sleeves Up: A Live, Freestyle Coaching Session With Mandi Graziano**
- **10:15am-11am: CATALYST LAB: Your Best Sessions Are Being Forgotten: How to Turn Event Content into Real ROI**
- **11:15am-noon: CATALYST LAB: Stretch & Reset: A Mind-Body Recharge for Business Owners**
- **11:15am-noon: L.E.A.D with Purpose – Elevating Women's Voices**
- **Noon-1pm: Town Hall Lunch**

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP WITHOUT BORDERS

UNIQUE
SPEAKER
BUREAU
INTERNATIONAL



USBI'S MISSION IS CLEAR:

Curate world-class speaker experiences that challenge conventional thinking and inspire true change.

By listening deeply to client aspirations, USBI brings more than just speakers to every conference - delivering energy, insight and impact, that creates lasting value for every event.



Join USBI and set the benchmark for excellence in global events and thought leadership. The future of speaking is borderless

LET'S ELEVATE IT TOGETHER.



FUEL

EVENTS



IGNITE

AUDIENCES



ACCELERATE

ENTERPRISE

www.uniquespeakerbureauint.com

Connect with our
USA TEAM

Chris Zweigenthal: +1 518 8361547
chris@uniquespeakerbureauint.com

**CONNECT
WITH
US**



STONE
BREWING

YOUR EVENT, BREWED BETTER.

Set in a historic naval training center, Liberty Station pairs lush gardens with modern industrial design, creating a one-of-a-kind backdrop for any gathering. From intimate groups of 20 to celebrations of up to 1,300, our indoor and outdoor spaces flex to fit your vision, from banquet rooms to open-air courtyards and landscaped gardens with a fire pit and koi pond. It's an effortlessly beautiful setting that makes every event feel memorable.

If you're planning something special, Stone has the hospitality and the quality of service to bring it to life.

HENDERSON: WHERE BUSINESS MEETS ADVENTURE



Just minutes from the energy of the Las Vegas Strip, Henderson, Nevada offers a refreshing location for meeting and event planners seeking a destination that blends accessibility, natural beauty and memorable group experiences. With its small-city vibe and big-city amenities, Henderson provides an ideal setting for productive meetings paired with engaging leisure activities. With more than 300 days of sunshine each year, Henderson makes it easy to incorporate the outdoors into an event itinerary. Groups can start the day with a guided hike along the Petroglyph Canyon Trail at Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, where ancient rock art panels offer a fascinating cultural backdrop for team outings. For more active groups, tackle a portion of the River Mountains Loop Trail, a 35-mile circuit connecting the City with Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Lake Las Vegas. With more than 300 miles of trails and 77 parks, Henderson has an option for every adventure seeker.

Henderson also offers distinctive off-site venues perfect for memorable group events. Animal lovers will enjoy the Lion Habitat Ranch, home to the retired lions once part of the MGM Grand habitat, alongside other rescued animals. For a lakeside setting, The Village at Lake Las Vegas offers paddleboarding, kayaking and waterfront dining, ideal for networking receptions or relaxed group gatherings.

In the evening, planners can take groups to the Water Street District, Henderson's revitalized downtown corridor filled with restaurants, breweries and live entertainment. The walkable district creates a fun, social atmosphere for dine-arounds, receptions and post-meeting gatherings.

Attendees can also unwind with a round of golf, spa treatments or lakeside relaxation at nearby resorts. Before departing, groups can explore the shops at The District at Green Valley Ranch or visit the Ethel M Chocolates Factory and its three-acre cactus garden for a uniquely Southern Nevada experience. From scenic outdoor adventures to vibrant dining and entertainment, Henderson delivers a meeting destination for productivity and unforgettable experiences.

PLANNING A MEETING IN LAS VEGAS?

Work with the experts at the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority to make it unforgettable. Contact Claribel Gutierrez for local support.



Claribel Gutierrez
National Sales Manager
cgutierrez@lvcca.com
Serving: Greater Southern California
& MPISCC chapter members



SO MUCH. SO CLOSE.

Book your next experience in Henderson, Nevada. Just minutes from the action with resort accommodations.

- Over 4,500 hotel rooms
- Over 300 miles of scenic hiking and biking trails
- Water recreation and resort amenities at Lake Las Vegas
- 10 Championship golf courses
- Easy access to Harry Reid International Airport and the I-15



Ten Championship Golf Courses



A Variety of Outdoor Activities



Green Valley Ranch Resort



M Resort: Official Hotel of the Las Vegas Raiders

HENDERSON
VisitHenderson.com



Scenic Views



Chicken n' Pickle

BE AN MPI: MEETING PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER SERIES

Barbara Roth

Corporate Sales & Special Events Manager, Cirque du Soleil



Barbara Roth discovered MPI in 2007 while at MGM Grand Casino and quickly found both community and momentum. One of her earliest in-person memories was attending WE | CON at The Westin, an experience that sparked relationships she still values today. Since then, MPI has remained a constant source of connection, growth, and industry perspective throughout her career. She sees leadership as taking the next step and helping guide others along the way, and believes MPI plays an important role in extending that growth. A recent highlight was the 2024 Roadshow in Las Vegas, where Mai Lim invited her to volunteer for the chapter's first-ever Las Vegas stop. Her advice to newcomers: take every opportunity you can, use your time wisely, and stay connected in every city where you work. One word to describe MPI? Strong. A California native at heart and a UNLV hospitality grad, Barbara has worked with Cirque du Soleil for a decade. Outside of work, she loves the pet rescue community, concerts, festivals, and everything Las Vegas has to offer. Her career anthem? Larger Than Life.

Cherryl Brazier

President, Anchor Collection

Cherryl Brazier discovered MPI more than 25 years ago while working on property in London with a U.S. sales territory, and it quickly became an important part of her professional growth. Early on, MPI gave her a place to build confidence, practice leadership skills, and develop in an environment that felt both supportive and career-shaping. One of her most memorable experiences was attending WEC in Nashville for the first time and finding herself one of only three Brits in the room — overwhelming, unforgettable, and a reminder of just how expansive the MPI community could be. Her advice to those entering the industry is simple: participate. Joining in name only won't give you much back, but real involvement can open doors and help make the organization work for you. One word to describe MPI? Connected. A fun fact about Cherryl: she's a yacht racer. Outside of work, she loves sailing, travel, yoga, wine tasting, hiking, and watching rugby. Her career soundtrack includes "Sailing" and "I'm Still Standing" — a fitting mix of adventure and resilience.





About Brianne

Brianne Cohen is a Los Angeles based certified sommelier, wine educator, and wine journalist. Her team offers shared wine sensory experiences for groups of any size with a focus on highlighting diverse (i.e. Black, BIPOC, LGBT, and women) owned wineries.

The Event Planners Guide to Wine

How to Impress Clients and Up Your Wine Game

As an event planner you are regularly tasked to help clients with a myriad of decisions related to their events. You may know what killer craft cocktail to include on the menu, and know the “of the moment” food station that will knock it out of the park. But what about wine? Below are three simple ways to Up Your Wine Game and better serve your clients.

1. Offer More Than the Standard “White and Red” Options

The three words that make every wine person shudder: red or white? When arriving at an event or walking up to a bar, this question signifies two things. For one, the wine is not important and no attention was given to the selections. Meanwhile, the bar features top-shelf liquor and elevated signature cocktails. The other assumption is that your guests know nothing about wine. A healthy assortment of wines to delight your guests and make the wine lovers feel taken care of includes one sparkling, one white, one rosé, and two reds. Something for everyone!

2. Knock the Wine Selections Out of the Park

As most planners are not well-versed in wine, the most basic wines are generally selected, rarely going past the “Big Six” grapes listed below. These are all great grapes with the potential to make great wines, BUT they’re tired. How about offering something different to elevate the wine experience?

- ❖ Pinot Grigio is a light, easy, breezy white. Alternatives include Soave from northern Italy, Picpoul from the south of France, or Grüner Veltliner from Austria.
- ❖ Chardonnay tends to be made in a rich more full-bodied style. Alternatives include Chenin Blanc, Viura from Spain, or a white Rhône blend.
- ❖ Sauvignon Blanc is a high acid and refreshing white. Alternatives include Albariño from Spain, Chablis from Burgundy (which is actually a Chardonnay, but made in a fresher style), or Vinho Verde from Spain.
- ❖ Cabernet Sauvignon is a big assertive red wine. Alternatives include Syrah from either Santa Barbara, Washington, or the northern Rhône in France. Or a big, juicy Zinfandel made from “Old Vines” in Lodi.
- ❖ Merlot is a red-fruited, smooth, and velvety red wine. Alternatives include Malbec from Argentina or a Tempranillo from Spain, where great values are to be had.
- ❖ Pinot Noir tends to be a lighter style, low tannin red wine. Alternatives include Cinsault, a light spicy red grape. Or Gamay from a Cru Beaujolais producer.

3. Choose Wines That Align with Your Clients Values

Perhaps your client is a company with a clean energy or sustainability lean. This could mean selecting wines that are sustainable, organic, biodynamic, or certified B Corp. If the client is a woman-owned company, perhaps highlighting women-owned wines makes sense. If the client places a priority in working with Black, BIPOC, LGBT, women, or disability-owned businesses, wines of the same ownership can be selected.



Let's start here: being an ally isn't about grand gestures or perfectly worded mission statements. It's about the everyday choices we make. How we design experiences, how we communicate, and how we show up for the people around us.

Because while "inclusion" sounds great in a proposal or on a website, it only matters if people can actually feel it when they walk into a room.

"Autism is neither a deficit, disease nor disorder, but simply a different, and equally valid, way of being." – Victoria Honeybourne

That perspective shift is everything. When we stop thinking in terms of "accommodations" and start thinking in terms of "human-centered design," the entire approach changes. It's about creating environments where more people can comfortably exist, contribute, and connect. It's the difference between adding a ramp as an afterthought and designing a space where everyone can enter through the same front door.

At events, allyship starts with intentional decisions about flow, energy, and experience. Packed agendas might look impressive on paper, but back-to-back sessions with no downtime can be exhausting. Building in natural pauses—time to step outside, sit quietly, or just exist without stimulation—can make the difference between someone lasting an hour and someone fully engaging for the entire event.

The sensory environment matters more than most people realize. Lighting that's too harsh, music that's too loud, or rooms that feel overcrowded can quickly become overwhelming. Being an ally means thinking through these elements in advance and asking, "Does this feel comfortable, or just exciting?" There's a difference. Creating a calmer, more balanced atmosphere makes it more accessible and, frankly, more enjoyable for everyone. (No one has ever left an event saying, "I just wish the lighting had been more aggressive.")

Equally important is providing spaces where people can decompress without explanation. A quiet room or low-stimulation area is a signal that self-regulation is welcome and respected. When those spaces are clearly communicated and easy to access, they become part of the experience rather than a hidden workaround.

Communication is another area where allyship shows up in a big way. Clarity reduces anxiety. When attendees or team members know what to expect, where to go, what's happening next, how long something will last, it removes a layer of uncertainty that can otherwise be draining. Sharing agendas in advance, offering clear signage, and avoiding vague or last-minute changes, when possible, all contribute to a more supportive environment. And if plans do shift, communicating those changes in a straightforward, timely way goes a long way. No riddles required.

In the workplace, the same principles apply, just on a daily basis. Allyship often looks like flexibility in how work happens. Not everyone thrives in constant collaboration or spontaneous meetings. Some people do their best thinking independently, in quieter settings, or with time to process before responding. Creating a culture where different working styles are respected—and not quietly penalized—allows more people to do their best work. It also means being mindful of how communication happens. Verbal, on-the-spot responses aren't the only valid form of participation. Giving people the option to contribute in writing, to follow up after a meeting, or to prepare in advance can lead to more thoughtful, inclusive collaboration. And as a bonus, it tends to improve the quality of ideas across the board.

There's something powerful about normalizing choice. The ability to step out of a session, skip a networking event, or take a break without having to justify it should feel like a standard option. Because when people aren't using their energy to push through discomfort, they can actually engage in a way that's meaningful and sustainable.

Social dynamics are another place where allyship matters, especially at events. Traditional networking can feel like a high-speed, high-volume experience that doesn't work for everyone. Creating alternative ways to connect, whether through smaller group interactions or more structured conversations, can make networking feel more approachable. It's more about offering different entry points rather than eliminating energy.

And then there's the human element, which might be the most important piece of all. Being an ally means paying attention. It means listening without jumping to conclusions, respecting boundaries, and not putting someone on the spot or making them feel like they need to explain themselves. It means understanding that not all needs are visible, and that's okay. It also means being open to feedback. If someone shares that an environment or process isn't working for them, the goal is to learn. Small adjustments can have a significant impact, and often, they're easier to implement than expected. And, of course, none of this requires perfection. You will get things wrong sometimes. We all do. Allyship is less about getting it right every time and more about being willing to adjust, improve, and try again. Consistency matters more than perfection ever will.

"The world needs different kinds of minds to work together." – Dr. Temple Grandin

That is a very practical concept. When organizations and events embrace different ways of thinking and experiencing the world, they become more innovative, more resilient, and more effective. Inclusion is a strategy that benefits everyone involved.

At the end of the day, being an ally is about intention. It's about creating environments where people don't have to work as hard just to be comfortable, where participation doesn't come at the expense of well-being, and where differences are not just accepted, but valued. And often, it's the smallest details that make the biggest difference. The clear sign, the quiet space, the flexible option, the moment of understanding. The things that quietly say, "You belong here." **Because when people feel like they belong, everything else gets better.**

Amanda Hansen

DISCOVER EXCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES WITH CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®

Full theater buyouts, curated VIP experiences, and exclusive access designed for groups that expect more.

Inside the Las Vegas theaters of Cirque du Soleil, your group event becomes so much more than a gathering. It becomes a full-sensory experience that pulls your guests in and refuses to let go.

With access to immersive lighting, dynamic staging, and the same production capabilities behind every iconic Cirque du Soleil performance, our custom-built theaters enable your presentations, product reveals, and general sessions to unfold with cinematic scale and precision.

- Venture backstage to explore the craft behind the spectacle.
- Meet the artists and hear their stories firsthand.
- Enjoy champagne service in private lounges or on-stage settings.
- Create moments designed for meaningful, high-impact connection.

Full Theater, Full Impact

For the ultimate distinction, a full theater buyout places your group at the center of a private Cirque du Soleil performance, complete with branded moments, executive stage access, and an audience made up entirely of your guests.

With exclusive access to productions like “O” at Bellagio, KÀ at MGM Grand, Mystère at Treasure Island, and Mad Apple at New York-New York, this is where Las Vegas events are elevated beyond expectation. Let’s create something your guests can’t stop talking about. Contact Barbara Roth with Cirque du Soleil Group Sales at Barbara.Roth@cirquedusoleil.com today to design your experience.

MYSTÈRE

AT TREASURE ISLAND



AT BELLAGIO



AT MGM GRAND

Michael Jackson
ONE

AT MANDALAY BAY

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
MAD APPLE

AT NY - NY

A background image featuring several bright yellow sunflowers in the foreground. In the background, a traffic light is visible, with the green light illuminated. The sky is a clear, bright blue with some light clouds.

the feel good files

FOR THE HUMANS
BEHIND THE HUSTLE

Emotional Labor in Events - The Hidden Work No One Talks About

Behind every seamless event is a professional managing more than logistics, they're managing emotions, too.

In the meetings and events industry, success is often measured by what attendees see: smooth registration, engaging sessions, and flawless execution. But what's less visible, and just as demanding is the emotional labor required to make it all happen. From calming stressed clients to motivating exhausted teams and maintaining a composed, positive presence no matter what's happening behind the scenes, event professionals are constantly "on," and over time, that invisible workload can take a real toll on mental wellness. It's time to acknowledge it, and learn how to manage it.

So, what is Emotional Labor? It's the effort it takes to manage your own emotions while also influencing the emotions of others. In events, that often looks like staying calm when a client is overwhelmed, remaining upbeat and approachable throughout long, high-pressure days, navigating team tensions while keeping morale intact, and absorbing stress without showing it externally. It's part of the job, but that doesn't mean it's without impact.

When emotional labor goes unrecognized, it can lead to compassion fatigue, feeling drained from constantly supporting others, emotional exhaustion, struggling to stay positive or engaged, and detachment, losing connection to the work you once enjoyed. Because this type of work isn't always acknowledged, many planners push through it without realizing how much it's affecting them, but just like physical exhaustion, emotional depletion requires recovery.

You can't eliminate emotional labor, but you can manage how much of it you carry.

- **Set Internal Boundaries.** Not every problem is yours to absorb. Practice separating what you can control from what you can support.
- **Pause Before Responding.** In high-stress moments, give yourself a second to breathe before reacting. This creates space for thoughtful, rather than emotional responses.
- **Limit Overexposure to Stress.** If possible, rotate responsibilities among team members during particularly intense situations to avoid burnout.
- **Give Yourself Permission to Step Away.** Even a short break stepping outside, sitting quietly, or resetting alone can help you recharge emotionally.

If you're in a leadership role, you have an opportunity to make emotional labor visible and manageable for your team. Normalize conversations about stress and mental wellness. Encourage team members to speak up when they feel overwhelmed. Acknowledge the emotional effort, not just the logistical wins. Build in moments of relief during long event days. When teams feel supported emotionally, performance improves across the board.

After the event ends, the emotional work doesn't just disappear. Take time to reflect on challenging interactions. Release built-up tension (through movement, rest, or conversation). Mentally "close out" the event not just operationally, but emotionally. Recovery isn't optional, it's part of sustaining a long, healthy career in events.

Emotional labor may be invisible, but its impact is real. Recognizing it doesn't make you less professional, it makes you more aware, more intentional, and ultimately more effective. You are not just managing events. You are managing people, energy, and experiences, and that kind of work deserves care, acknowledgment, and support, including from yourself.

Deanna Zercher

CELEBRATING MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Erick Weiss | 20 years
Christina Domino-Philpott | 10 years
Brittney Reilly | 10 years
Leslie Peterson | 10 years
Dianne Kelly | 10 years
Pearl Ho | 5 years
and Celebrating 1 Year

Haylie Adams	Dee Lee
Grace Barraza	Shari Lucas
Aubrey Brown	Michele Marsee
Ema Camarena Martinez	Allison Moore
Vanessa Constandine	An Pham
Stacy Elder Herb	Ryan Pulawski
Bryan Flores	Megan Taguines
Grant Gordon	Zeev Weissman
Charlotte Horton	Julia Willmott
Laura Kent	Barbie Wunsche

WELCOME

Gabrielle Costales
Veronica Ecklund
Emilie Lesser
Marguerite Mohney
Victoria Nguyen
Emre Sezer
Lexa Smith
Jazmene Thomas
Craig Tolliver
Allison Torres
Jeff Webb
Stephanie Wood

NEW MEMBERS

Thank You SPONSORS



WHY EXPERIENCE WITHOUT PURPOSE FALLS FLAT

For a long time, the events business could get away with energy. A dramatic opening. A packed room. A slick environment. A moment that looked good in photos and felt busy in real time. That is no longer enough. People still want to be impressed, but they are arriving with a sharper filter. They want to know why they are there, what they are meant to get from it, and whether the experience respects the fact that their time is limited. Current industry reporting points to the same pressure from multiple angles.

Attendees are prioritizing personalized experiences, active participation, and purposeful networking, while the bar for what makes an event worth revisiting continues to rise. Freeman's latest reporting describes a perception gap between how organizers plan events and what attendees actually value. Bizzabo's recent attendee research similarly finds that people are looking for connection, clarity, and greater control over how they spend their time.

That shift matters because purpose is what helps people make sense of experience. It gives shape to the agenda, relevance to the content, and weight to the interactions around it. Without that through-line, an event can feel polished and still leave very little behind. Attendees may enjoy the production, appreciate the setting, and still walk away unable to say what the gathering was really about or why it deserved a place on their calendar. When that happens, the problem is rarely a lack of effort. It is usually a lack of intention that the attendee can feel. Skift Meetings has noted that business events are being pushed to prove clear value, not simply hit attendance goals or generate a favorable post-event vibe. That expectation now starts at the planning stage, because stakeholders and audiences alike want events to support a real objective.

Attendees also know when a program is asking too much of them without giving enough back. They are less willing to sit through content that could have been an email, a webinar, or a download. They notice when networking is left to chance. They feel it when technology is present for spectacle rather than utility. They can tell when an event has been designed from the organizer's point of view instead of their own. That is part of why purpose has become so important. It forces harder decisions. It requires organizers to think about what belongs in the room, what belongs outside it, and what an attendee should be able to do, understand, or access by the end of the experience that they could not before. Cvent's current programming on attendee expectations points to the same planning challenge. Organizers need to understand not only who is coming, but who is no longer coming, why retention is difficult, and how event goals can be aligned more directly with audience needs.

This is especially true as audiences become more mixed in age, role, familiarity, and reason for attending. One person may be looking for practical education. Another may need peer connection. Someone else may be there to solve a business problem, assess

MORE...

a partner, meet a supplier, or decide whether the event is worth returning to next year. Purpose is what keeps that range from turning into fragmentation. It gives attendees a sense that the event knows what it is trying to do and has made choices accordingly. Freeman's end-of-year analysis points directly to this issue, highlighting that attendees are looking for active participation and purposeful networking, while organizers are often focused elsewhere.

There is also a more human reason experience without purpose falls flat. People remember what felt meaningful to them. They remember a conversation that solved something. A session that gave language to a problem they had been carrying. A moment that made them feel included rather than managed. A gathering that understood the pressures they are under and gave them something useful in return for showing up. Purpose creates the conditions for that kind of memory because it organizes the event around the attendee's reality rather than around production alone. Even Bizzabo's reporting on immersive experiences makes this point in a quieter way. Yes, attendees respond well to immersive environments and expect technology to be part of the experience, but the larger takeaway is that events earn loyalty when they respect time, enable interaction, and feel personal and memorable for a reason.

The same logic applies to networking, which remains one of the clearest reasons people attend in person. Everyone says they want stronger connection, yet the industry still struggles to create it consistently. Bizzabo reports that 87% of organizers say networking is very important to event success, while 42% still report low engagement with networking features. The issue is not that people no longer value networking. It is that generic networking rarely feels worth the effort. Attendees respond when introductions are better matched, when contexts are clearer, and when the event helps make connection easier rather than simply declaring that it matters. That is another form of purpose. It is the difference between giving people a room and giving them a reason to use it.

By now, attendees have seen enough to know the difference between activity and value. They do not need every event to be profound. They do need it to be intentional. They want to feel that someone thought seriously about what they needed, what the event promised, and how the experience would deliver on that promise. A beautiful room can elevate that. Great staging can sharpen it. Technology can support it. None of those things can replace it.

In 2026, the events that hold attention are the ones that know exactly why they exist and make that answer visible from the first touchpoint to the final conversation. Everything else may still look like an experience. It just will not land like one.