

THE MPISCC NEWSLETTER

Scoop.

FEB '26

**reset.
reframe.
reimagine.**

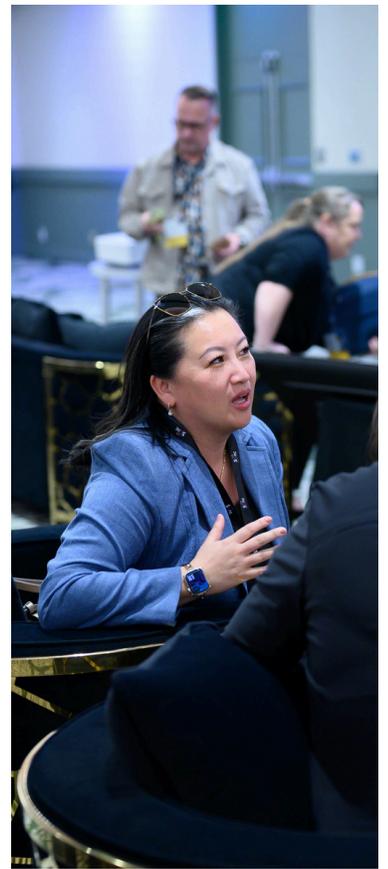
**The industry is not standing still.
Planning cycles are shorter.
Attendee expectations are higher.
The people making decisions
have changed.
And the professionals who are
winning right now aren't waiting
for things to settle down.
They're moving.**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**The New Rules of Engagement,
what's shifted in our industry
and what still holds.**

**Something Different Is Coming,
the first look at WE | CON 2026,
May 6-8 at The Langham
Pasadena.**

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



STATE OF THE INDUSTRY PHOTO ALBUM

Maximize *Every* Meeting Moment at Sheraton San Diego Resort



LA'S MOST UNEXPECTED EVENT SPACE

Click here to host a
#satisfying slimey event

SLOOMOO
INSTITUTE

Sloomoo.com



SOMETHING DIFFERENT IS COMING

Let's be direct.

Most conferences follow the same blueprint. General session. Breakout. Lunch. Panel. Repeat. You leave with a tote bag, a few business cards, and a vague sense that you should have stayed home and caught up on email.

**WE | CON 2026
is not that conference.**



WE | CON 2026 is built on a different premise entirely.

This year, MPISCC is using its own annual conference as a living proof of concept, not just talking about what the future of events should look like, but actually building it and inviting you inside. The format has been torn apart and rebuilt from the ground up. The programming is structured around seven content zones, each designed around a state of mind rather than a job title: The Spark, The Shift, The Build, The Flow, The Craft, The Firepit, and The Recharge. You choose based on where you are, not where your business card says you should be.

The experience unfolds across three days. Day one is about arrival and ignition, an immersive welcome that starts the conversation before anyone has found their seat. Day two is a full day of programming designed to keep people moving, talking, and genuinely connecting. Day three is about integration, leaving with something concrete rather than just a memory of something good.

Every element, from how the day breathes to how the space feels, is designed to demonstrate what becomes possible when this community moves through an experience together. Sessions are shorter and more interactive. Formats vary by design. And the connections you make are built into the structure of the day, not squeezed into a scheduled networking block.

Break the Mold. Reimagine What's Next. May 6-8, The Langham Pasadena.

REGISTER TODAY!

Start with getting there!

For Southern California planners, the airlift story just got significantly better. Alaska Airlines is launching a daily seasonal route between Hollywood-Burbank and Honolulu starting May 2026, the first direct flight linking those two airports in over two decades. Southwest is following with new routes from both Ontario and Burbank to Honolulu later in the summer. Fewer connections, less friction, happier attendees before they even land.



Moana Surfrider

Oahu

The iconic **Moana Surfrider** is wrapping up a major renovation, with the lobby and tower wing already transformed, completing in time for its 125th anniversary. The **Ala Moana Hotel by Mantra** is mid-renovation on all 1,176 guest rooms with completion expected by year end. On the food front, legendary Hawaii Regional Cuisine chef **Alan Wong** is returning with a new restaurant at the Kahala Hotel and Resort in early 2026, bringing back beloved dishes with locally sourced ingredients. If you know Hawaii food culture, you know this is a very big deal. For group experiences, **Cirque du Soleil's 'Auana** production at the **Outrigger Waikiki Beachcomber Hotel** is available for private groups through end of 2026. Hawaii's first resident Cirque production fuses acrobatics, hula, music, and storytelling into something genuinely unlike anything else you can offer an incentive group.



Cirque du Soleil



THIS MONTH: HAWAII

Let's be honest.

When Hawaii comes up as a meeting destination, nobody in the room pushes back.

The harder conversation is usually justifying it to finance.

Good news: 2026 is giving you a lot of ammunition and it comes from every island in the chain.



Mele: The Hawaiian Music Experience

The Big Island



Auberge Mauna Lani

For groups that want seclusion and scale, the Big Island continues to deliver. **Mauna Kea Resort** is completing the final phase of its \$200 million renovation with the spa opening in April 2026, while neighboring **Mauna Lani, Auberge Collection** has debuted new ocean-front two-bedroom suites with private lanais and floor-to-ceiling windows. **Kohala Zipline** is now welcoming incentive and corporate groups, offering team-building adventures with complimentary group photo packages and a strong sustainability commitment. The island's volcanic landscapes, coffee country, and **stargazing at Mauna Kea** remain among the most distinctive attendee experiences anywhere in the world.

Maui

The island is rebuilding with intention following the 2023 Lahaina fires, and choosing Maui in 2026 is an act of genuine community support. The **Fairmont Kea Lani**, consistently one of the top-ranked properties on the island, recently added a new lobby and cultural center offering Hawaiian language classes, lei-making, and hula. The **Four Seasons Maui at Wailea**, which gained considerable attention as the filming location for *White Lotus*, continues to deliver exceptional group experiences on the shores of Wailea Beach. For something immersive, Maui Ocean Center's Sphere Theater has launched "Mele: The Hawaiian Music Experience," perfect for evening group programming. And **Royal Lahaina Resort** recently reopened its reimagined **Hale Pi'ilani** event space.

Kauai

The Garden Isle is having a moment. Voted Best Island in Hawaii Magazine's 2025 Readers' Choice Awards, Kauai is delivering on both the natural wonder and the new. Tihati Productions debuted the **Wailua Nui Luau** in December 2025 at the Hilton Garden Inn Kauai Wailua Bay, a 17-course evening of cultural storytelling, Hawaiian and Polynesian dance, and locally inspired cuisine that takes guests through the history of an area once frequented by Hawaiian royalty.



Outrigger Kauai

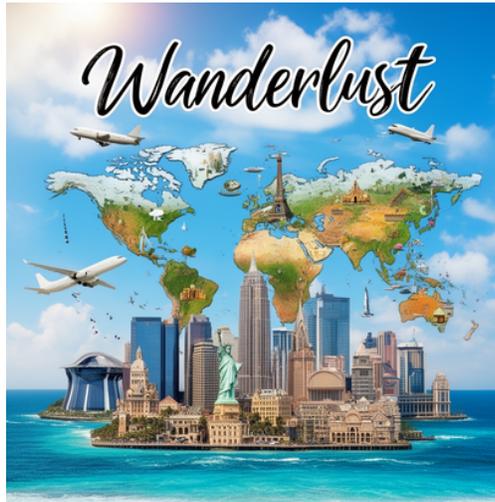
The **Outrigger Kauai Beach Resort** and Spa offers over 25,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor event space across a 25-acre oceanfront property, with a culinary team ready to tailor everything from sit-down dinners to casual luau experiences.

Lanai

For the ultimate incentive play, **Four Seasons Resort Lanai** sits above the shimmering waters of Hulopoe Bay, offering 11 indoor and outdoor event venues and full property buyouts for groups wanting complete privacy. The activity programming runs deep: horseback riding through the uplands, sporting clays, sunset sails, stargazing at the Lanai Observatory, and cultural experiences with the resort's Love Lanai team.



Fukurou



The **Hawanawana Spa's** new year-round Embody Gratitude wellness program, gives planners a built-in wellness narrative for the entire program. Logistics are seamless: complimentary Lanai Air flights from Honolulu are included through December 2026, with arrivals processed through a private hangar at HNL.



Four Seasons Lanai

Beyond the Resort: Hawaii's Best Kept Secrets

The big properties get the headlines, but some of the most memorable Hawaii experiences happen at a much smaller scale. A few worth knowing:

For dining, **Fukurou** in Waikiki is a hidden omakase bar tucked behind a concealed door inside a rooftop bar, twelve courses from Chef Tsukasa Okino for \$100 per person, two seatings a night. **Bar Leather Apron** in Downtown Honolulu, winner of the James Beard Award for Outstanding Bar in 2023, is an intimate cocktail bar on a mezzanine in an office building lobby, minutes from Waikiki, completely off the tourist circuit.

On Maui, the restaurant at **Pukalani Country Club** in up-country Maui is a genuine local secret, open-air deck, sweeping island views, and a prime rib Friday that regulars book weeks out.

For golf, the **Manele Course at Four Seasons Lanai** is one of the most dramatic and uncrowded rounds you can play anywhere in the world, three holes built into seaside cliffs above Hulopoe Bay, tee shots over ravines with the Pacific crashing below. On Kauai, **Kiahuna Golf Club** in Poipu consistently earns praise for its layout, ocean and mountain views on nearly every hole, genuinely friendly staff, and the kind of pace of play that has disappeared from most resort courses. On Maui, **Pukalani Country Club's** upcountry course offers cooler temperatures, lush elevation views, and green fees that will make you feel like you've found something the brochures missed.

For experiences, the **Toa Luau at Waimea Valley** on Oahu's North Shore is small, family-run, and genuinely unlike any resort luau, built around Samoan tradition with a kava ceremony and hands-on cooking. On Kauai, the **Waipa Foundation on the North Shore** runs farm and food tours on a 1,600-acre ahupuaa, with a farmers market on Tuesdays that draws more locals than visitors. On the Big Island, the **manta ray night snorkel** off the Kona Coast remains one of the most quietly extraordinary natural experiences in all of Hawaii, best done through a small operator rather than a large tour boat.



Toa Luau

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 Las Vegas Strip

HENDERSON
VisitHenderson.com



Ten Championship Golf Courses



A Variety of Outdoor Activities



Green Valley Ranch Resort



M Resort: Official Hotel of the Las Vegas Raiders



Scenic Views



Chicken n' Pickle



Ideas are bolder in
**THE BRIGHTEST CITY
ON EARTH.**

LAS
Vegas

VEGASMEANSBUSINESS.COM

BE AN MPI: MEETING PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER SERIES

Robb Thornsberry Owner & President, Infinity Events



Robb was introduced to MPI in the late '90s while working at an event company where several colleagues were members. When he launched his own company in 2001, joining MPI felt like a natural next step. Over the years, the relationships, education, and leadership opportunities have played a meaningful role in shaping his career and perspective. Robb believes leadership is about working toward a common good, recognizing the strengths of others, and building something better together. Serving as MPIOC President in 2014–2015 reinforced that collaboration drives impact. A favorite MPI memory was being installed as Chapter President with his two daughters present — a moment that made the professional deeply personal. His advice to those starting out: be resilient. The events industry isn't always glamorous, but passion and perseverance matter. One word to describe MPI? Resilient. Fun fact: Robb grew up in Kansas as a theater enthusiast and spent 20 years as a DJ. Outside of work, he loves music — especially '80s and EDM — and enjoys concerts with his daughters. His career anthem? You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet.

AnaLaura Becerra Director of Sales, Travel Santa Ana

AnaLaura first heard about MPI “last century,” drawn to the idea of connecting with others doing the same work she was passionate about. Joining MPI opened doors — not just to education, but to opportunity. It gave her a broader view of the industry and helped shape the trajectory of her career. She defines leadership as setting an example through expertise, generosity, and a willingness to coach others. For AnaLaura, leadership isn't about title — it's about influence. MPI reinforced that mindset, showing her that we can all lead from wherever we are. A memorable MPI experience was attending a Board meeting and seeing firsthand how the committees collaborate behind the scenes. Her advice to newcomers: volunteer as much as your schedule allows. You truly get what you invest. One word to describe MPI? Tight. The community has each other's backs. Fun fact: she has interviewed for The Amazing Race — twice. Outside of work, AnaLaura is an excellent cook and happiest in her kitchen. Her career anthem? This Little Light of Mine.



Pull up your calendar. Look at everything you have booked or in progress for the next six months. Now ask yourself one honest question: are you planning these events for the organization you work for right now, or the one you worked for two years ago?

Because they are not the same organization.

The people approving your budget today may have never approved an event budget before. Finance teams, procurement departments, and committee structures have moved into spaces that used to belong to a single decision maker with institutional knowledge and a long history with the events team. Which means the proposal that always worked is now landing in front of people who need more context, more education, and more lead time than you're currently building in. Start treating stakeholder education as part of your planning process. Walk your approvers through what things actually cost and why. Explain what the difference is between a venue that can hold 400 people and one that can hold them well. The planners doing this consistently are spending far less time defending budgets mid-process.

Go find your last three event timelines and look at when leadership actually committed versus when the event happened. Then look at when you needed that commitment in order to do your best work. Organizations are holding budgets longer and making decisions later, which means your vendor relationships, your contingency protocols, and your site selection conversations all need to start earlier than the commitment does. Call your top vendors now, before you have a signed contract to show them. Have a real conversation about their availability, their capacity, and where they have flexibility. The planners navigating compressed timelines well are the ones who built those relationships during the quiet periods.

Think about your contingency planning too. Most event professionals have covered audiovisual failures and weather. Fewer have worked through what happens when a keynote cancels 48 hours out, a hotel changes ownership mid-contract, or a budget reduction lands two weeks before the event. Spend an afternoon with your most complex upcoming program and actually think through the scenarios that keep you up at night. You will either feel better for having done it or find the gap that needed your attention.

Then walk into your next site visit and try to see it the way your attendees will. Sit in the chairs. Eat the food. Stand in the prefunction space at the end of a long afternoon and ask whether the experience you've designed actually serves the people inside it. Think about what your attendees did last weekend, what they ate, where they stayed, what made them feel taken care of. Then look at your run of show with that in mind.

Attendee expectations have moved and the events that land well in 2026 are the ones where someone asked that question early enough to do something about it.

The beginning of the year is the best time to find the things that need fixing. Before the calendar gets away from you.



the feel good files

FOR THE HUMANS
BEHIND THE HUSTLE

The Pressure to be Perfect: Letting Go of It

Excellence drives our industry. Perfectionism drains it.

In the world of meetings and events, details matter. Timelines are tight. Expectations are high. And somewhere along the way, "doing great work" can quietly morph into "nothing less than flawless is acceptable." It happens gradually, almost imperceptibly, until the standard you're holding yourself to has nothing to do with quality and everything to do with control.

But perfectionism isn't the same as professionalism. And for many planners, the constant pressure to deliver a perfect event is one of the biggest contributors to stress, anxiety, and burnout. It's time to redefine what success really looks like.

Striving for excellence means being prepared, thoughtful, and committed to quality. Perfectionism, however, sounds more like: "If this goes wrong, it's my fault." "I should have anticipated everything." "One mistake will ruin the entire experience." The difference is that excellence allows room for humanity. Events are dynamic, living environments. Weather shifts. Technology fails. Speakers run long. A perfectly executed plan is important, but adaptability and grace under pressure are what truly define a great planner.

Perfectionism can show up as overworking instead of delegating, rechecking details long after they're finalized, difficulty disconnecting after hours, and feeling personally responsible for things outside your control. Over time, this mindset doesn't just affect productivity, it impacts sleep, confidence, relationships, and overall mental wellness. When every minor hiccup feels catastrophic, your nervous system stays in a constant state of alert. That's not sustainable, and it's not a badge of honor either.

When something goes sideways, ask yourself: did attendees notice the issue, or only you? Did the outcome still meet the event's overall objective? What did this challenge teach you for next time? Many "disasters" become stories of resourcefulness and resilience. Often, attendees remember how smoothly a problem was handled, not that it happened at all. Progress, not perfection, builds long-term credibility and the kind of reputation that sustains a career.

A successful event is not one without imperfections. It's one where attendees felt valued, objectives were met, challenges were handled with professionalism, and the team crossed the finish line intact, not depleted. When we let go of perfection, we make room for creativity, collaboration, and calm leadership. And perhaps most importantly, we protect our mental health in an industry that already demands so much from us every single day.

You are not your event. A delayed shuttle, a missing badge, or a last-minute AV issue does not define your worth or your competence. Strive for excellence. Prepare with intention. Lead with flexibility.

And give yourself permission to be human.

by deanna zercher

CELEBRATING MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Haley Powers | 45 years
Gaetan Mousseau | 20 years
Charina De La Cruz | 5 years
Kerrie Wilkie | 5 years

and Celebrating 1 Year

Wayne Baruch
Jenni Benson
Debbie Holmes
Dave Leong
Michelle Liberto
Angelique Stephens
Dianna Sutton Brown
Tuyen Nguyen-Valenzuela
Ashley Verzijl

WELCOME

Kristen Carlson
Anne Chu
Ted Frisbee
Jen Jacko
Aaron Jacobs
Blake Keyes
Matthew Lillie
Martha Luyo
Alexxis Maae
Darik Malone
Jason Marcus

Jessica McGath
Marguerite Mohny
Diana Montes De Oca
Allison O'Dell
Christine Olivo
Frank Plaice
Estefani Saravia
Casey Shields
Morgan Smith
Caroline Whitelow

NEW MEMBERS

Thank You SPONSORS



WHY BACK TO NORMAL IS THE WRONG GOAL

There is a particular kind of exhaustion that comes from waiting. Waiting for leadership to commit to a budget. Waiting for stakeholders to align on objectives. Waiting for the calendar to open up enough to plan the way you were trained to plan. And underneath all of it, a quiet hope that eventually things will feel manageable again.

That hope is worth examining.

The meeting and event professionals finding their footing right now are the ones who got curious about the new conditions rather than impatient with them. Who found ways to deliver meaningful experiences inside compressed timelines. Who started having more strategic conversations with their stakeholders earlier in the process. Who recognized that the room, the agenda, and the experience itself all need to work harder than they used to because the people sitting in them expect more.

And it's not just the logistics that have shifted. The entire value conversation has changed. Stakeholders who once trusted the process are now asking sharper questions about return on investment, about what attendees actually walked away with, about whether the gathering justified the spend. Meeting professionals are being asked to demonstrate impact in ways that go well beyond headcount and post-event surveys. That requires a different kind of preparation, a different kind of storytelling, and a fundamentally different relationship with the people who sign off on the budget.

The workforce itself is part of the equation too. The colleagues and clients entering this industry now bring different expectations around how they learn, how they engage, and what they consider a valuable use of their time. Designing for a room full of people with varying levels of experience, attention, and appetite for the traditional conference format is one of the defining challenges of this moment. The professionals navigating it well are the ones who stopped assuming they knew what the room needed and started asking.

This is a moment that rewards people willing to ask harder questions about their own practice. What assumptions are you carrying into every event design that nobody has actually validated recently? Where are you still doing things a certain way simply because that's how they've always been done? What would you do differently if you were designing your approach from scratch with everything you know right now?

Those are not comfortable questions. But they are the right ones for 2026.

The opportunity ahead belongs to the people willing to pursue it with intention.