

THE MPISCC NEWSLETTER

Scoop.

JUNE '25



Belonging Isn't Just a Benefit —It's the Beginning

There's something powerful about belonging. Not just to a chapter, a mailing list, or a directory—but to a community that sees you, values you, and wants you to grow. That's the heart of membership, and for us, it's more than a transaction—it's a transformation.

As we prepare to announce our 2026 Board of Directors, it's a timely reminder: membership is your first step toward leadership. Every board member—past, present, and future—started right where you are now. They joined, they showed up, and they shaped the future of this chapter. You can, too.

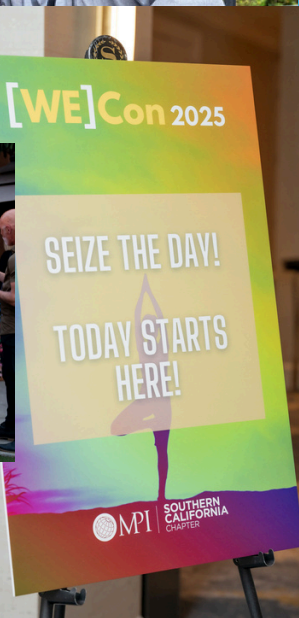
For our newest members—especially our Gen Z and millennial professionals—you've told us what matters most: connection, contribution, and a real seat at the table. We hear you. And this is your invitation to lean in. Join a committee. Raise your hand. Share your ideas. This chapter isn't just for you—it **needs** you.

Being part of MPISCC means growing your network, your voice, and your influence. And right now, more than ever, your perspective matters. Whether you're brand new to the industry or on the edge of your next big career move, we want you to know: you belong here.

And if you've been waiting for a sign to get more involved—this is it. Let's shape tomorrow today.

Braidy Lee Barnett, VP of Membership, MPISCC

TOMORROW STARTED HERE



A PICTURE IS WORTH A MILLION WORDS!

USBI Shines at MPI Southern California Chapter [WE]Con Event

UNIQUE
SPEAKER
BUREAU
INTERNATIONAL



SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
CHAPTER

[WE]Con 2025

Chris Zweigenthal and Esteemed Speakers Make a Memorable Impact

At the end of April and beginning of May 2025, the MPI Southern California Chapter [WE]Con event was held at the Sheraton Marina Resort in San Diego. Unique Speaker Bureau International (USBI) represented by Chris Zweigenthal proudly attended this prestigious event, bringing along four of their esteemed 5-star speakers, Andre Norman, Lisa Powell Graham and Sucheta Rawal.

The team received a warm welcome from the MPISCC and this set a positive tone for the days to follow. Chris had the unique opportunity to join the event planners on a delightful cruise and food tasting tour on Coronado, which was a perfect prelude to the conference. The friendly atmosphere paved the way for excellent networking opportunities and engaging working sessions.

USBI's speakers delivered inspiring presentations during the event. On the morning of May 1st, Andre Norman captivated the audience with his keynote address titled "From Prison to Harvard." In his signature style, Andre shared the compelling story of his challenging upbringing, time in jail, and remarkable rehabilitation journey that led him to Harvard. His powerful message was one of transformation, recovery, hope, and mutual care. Andre's presentation resonated deeply, leaving the attendees with valuable life lessons applicable to both personal and business contexts.

After his keynote, Andre was seen engaging with attendees, discussing issues that impacted their lives and demonstrating his commitment to community involvement by visiting a local tourism organization-sponsored group.

On Friday, May 2nd, 2025, attendees were treated to a Ted Talk trilogy presented by Lisa Powell Graham, Robin Banks, and Sucheta Rawal. Each speaker subsequently led a breakout session that delved deeper into their respective topics.

Lisa Powell Graham captivated the audience with her talk titled "Heart

of Leadership." She shared inspiring stories of how prominent leaders used their leadership qualities to inspire compassion and courage in challenging times. Her breakout session focused on the methods and processes for managing stress in chaotic situations, providing valuable tools for attendees.

Robin Banks spoke on the topic "Success is a Choice," demonstrating how mindset, coping with change, maintaining a positive attitude, creating empowering beliefs, and vibrant energy can significantly impact people's lives. His breakout session offered more detailed insights into these concepts, helping participants to harness these principles effectively.

Sucheta Rawal, a world-renowned travel writer and culinary specialist, provided practical advice for event planners who need to consider various food cultures for their events. Her talk featured captivating culinary stories from around the globe, and her breakout session expanded on this by discussing dining etiquettes from different parts of the world, enriching the attendees' understanding of global culinary practices.

Chris Zweigenthal had the privilege of participating in the Planner Partner Program, which offered him the opportunity to meet with numerous event planners. The positive feedback received from these engagements was greatly appreciated. Chris and the speakers met many wonderful people and expressed their hope to remain in contact and support them in their future endeavors.

The event was a resounding success, with USBI's participation leaving an indelible mark on all attendees. This experience solidified the participants' commitment to the industry, and they look forward to engaging in many more events and forums. The blend of professional sessions, networking opportunities, and the genuine camaraderie experienced at the conference made the MPI Southern California Chapter [WE]Con event a memorable and impactful occasion for all.

The next exciting stop for the USBI team is IMEX America 2025, where they hope to reconnect with industry colleagues including the friends and contacts made at [WE]Con and further contribute to the industry's growth and innovation.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Follow us for announcements, updates & reminders for our upcoming events!

SAVE
THE
DATE

MPI | SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Feel the Fun[draising]!

JULY 16, 2025

SLOOMOO
INSTITUTE

SAVE
THE
WEEK

GAMEON

LIGHTING THE WAY FORWARD

THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 8

AN IMMERSIVE ROADSHOW EXPERIENCE SPOTLIGHTING THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND IDEAS DRIVING OUR REGION FORWARD—BEFORE THE WORLD TAKES NOTICE.

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Blair Scott

Sales Manager | Margaritaville Lake Resort



Blair's hospitality journey started by chance at the Biltmore Hotel, but her passion took her all the way to Texas and into her current remote role with Margaritaville Resort. Now back in SoCal, she joined MPI to connect and grow her network. Her advice for industry newcomers? *"You're in the right place. Ask questions—this community wants to help."* A true people-first leader, Blair believes leadership is about caring for your team just as much as your goals. Her first MPI event, thanks to Mai Lim, was so welcoming it confirmed she was in the right place. Outside of work, Blair loves the outdoors, and spending time with her baby, rescue pup, and husband.

Danica Genners

Senior Event Manager | TomFerry

In just three years, Danica has dived headfirst into the events world—and she's already making her mark! With her CMP certification on the horizon and a heart for volunteering, she's found community and growth through MPI. Her best advice for newcomers? *"Use the resources—there's so much out there!"* Her first MPI event, the LA Roadshow at the Coliseum, inspired her to join the chapter and give back. One word to describe MPI? Supportive. Volunteering felt natural—and she was welcomed with open arms. Outside of work, Danica is a proud board game and Dungeons & Dragons fan.



Ron Havens

CEO | Meetings & Events | Accomplished!



Since 1998, this longtime MPI member has embraced the power of connection. *"MPI is the leading organization in our industry—an even playing ground for planners and suppliers."* His thoughts on leadership are to identify your weakest link and lift them up. MPI has helped shape that supportive approach. Ron's favorite MPI memories? WEC Conferences—for education and lasting relationships. Off the clock he loves beach days and traveling the world. For a career anthem he would choose: "How Great Thou Art"—a reflection of a journey full of gratitude and purpose.

ENTERTAINMENT THAT TRANSFORMS: ELEVATING EVENTS WITH INNOVATION...

In today's experience-driven landscape, entertainment is no longer a sideshow—it's a strategic driver of connection, emotion, and memorability. For any event looking to create true impact, entertainment can be the element that transforms passive attendees into active participants. From conferences to brand activations, entertainment has the power to shift energy, shape perception, and set the tone. And increasingly, the most successful events are those that treat entertainment not as a plug-and-play solution, but as a deeply integrated, creatively aligned component of the guest journey.

Innovative Entertainment has built its reputation on exactly that approach—moving beyond talent sourcing to deliver immersive, brand-forward entertainment that creates lasting impressions.

Some recent standout examples include:

The AI-Painting Portal

Part tech activation, part live art experience, this interactive moment invites guests to answer a few personal prompts before watching an artist interpret their data into a one-of-a-kind portrait. It's art, storytelling, and personalization in one fluid experience.

Silent Disco Speakeasy

Tucked behind a velvet curtain or within a transformed lounge space, this activation offers guests the choice of multiple live DJ channels via wireless headsets. It's immersive, stylish, and ideal for events with audio limitations or a desire for layered engagement.

These are just a few of the ways Innovative Entertainment is pushing the boundaries of what entertainment can be. The focus is always on designing experiences that feel fresh, meaningful, and strategically on-brand. As audience expectations evolve, so must the entertainment that engages them. For events that seek to stand out, entertain, and connect on a deeper level, innovation isn't optional—it's essential.

For more information, contact kenny@inn-entertainment.com and check out the website at www.inn-entertainment.com



ALL THE BUZZ: MGM'S WILDLY CREATIVE EXPERIENCE



I did something I never thought I'd do: I stood in the middle of thousands of bees—and absolutely loved it.

Thanks to the wildly creative team at MGM Resorts, led by the ever-clever Holly Smith (Director of Global Sales), I had the chance to take part in an unforgettable beekeeping experience at The Valley Hive in Chatsworth. This wasn't your typical "team building" activity—it was bold, immersive, educational, and honestly, kind of magical.

Let me be clear: I'm not a "bug" person; in fact, I was terrified! The idea of donning a full beekeeping suit and stepping into a buzzing hive felt way outside my comfort zone. But that's the thing about the best experiences—they push you past hesitation and into awe. Once I was in there, watching the bees work in harmony, learning about the queen, the workers, the drones—it was like nature's version of a high-performing team. There was something oddly meditative about it. The calm of the bees. The hum in the air. The way our guide shared each detail with passion and humor. I walked away not just impressed, but changed.

And let's talk about the brilliance of MGM. Holly and her team didn't just plan a fun outing—they designed a story. One that brought people together, sparked conversation, and gave us all something to remember (and post about). It was fresh. Unexpected. And exactly the kind of thinking that makes MGM stand out. Add to that an amazing curated on-theme gift bag.

We talk a lot about experiences that shift perspective. This one did exactly that. I left inspired, grateful, and still a little buzzed—in the best way possible!

Would I do it again? In a heartbeat!

Margaret Launzel-Pennes, VP, Marcomm, MPISCC | Chief Visioneer, POP | X

the feel good files

FOR THE HUMANS
BEHIND THE HUSTLE

You're the engine behind every successful event—don't forget to fuel yourself!

Meeting planners are professional multitaskers, problem-solvers, and detail-masters. But while ensuring every session runs on time and every detail is flawlessly executed, one critical priority is often overlooked: your own well-being. In an industry that thrives on precision and high-pressure performance, burnout can feel inevitable. But it doesn't have to be. Prioritizing self-care isn't selfish—it's strategic. Your clarity, focus, and resilience are just as important to a successful event as the agenda itself.

Recognize the Signs

Before we can fix burnout, we have to spot it. Chronic fatigue, irritability, forgetfulness, and lack of motivation are often written off as “just part of the job.” They're not. Your physical and emotional cues are vital signals. Don't ignore them—acknowledge them. Self-awareness is the first step toward building a healthier relationship with your work.

Build a Self-Care Routine You Can Stick To

Self-care doesn't have to mean spa days and sabbaticals (though those are nice). Small daily rituals can have a big impact:

- Morning check-ins with yourself before checking email
- Five-minute mindfulness breaks during the workday
- Stretching or walking between sessions onsite
- Digital curfews to reclaim your evening hours

Consistency is key—make your well-being a standing item on your calendar.

Set Boundaries in a 24/7 World

Event timelines may be non-stop, but you don't have to be. Establishing boundaries helps maintain your energy and protects your focus. This could look like:

- Turning off notifications after hours
- Delegating lower-priority tasks
- Communicating realistic response times to your team or clients

Remember: Saying “no” to one more task is often saying “yes” to your mental health. When you take care of yourself, you don't just survive the event—you thrive within it. You lead with clarity. You problem-solve with purpose. And you model a version of success that doesn't sacrifice sanity.

Put yourself on the agenda. You belong there.

Expanding GOCAL: Meetings, Sports, and Entertainment Hub

Ontario Convention Center

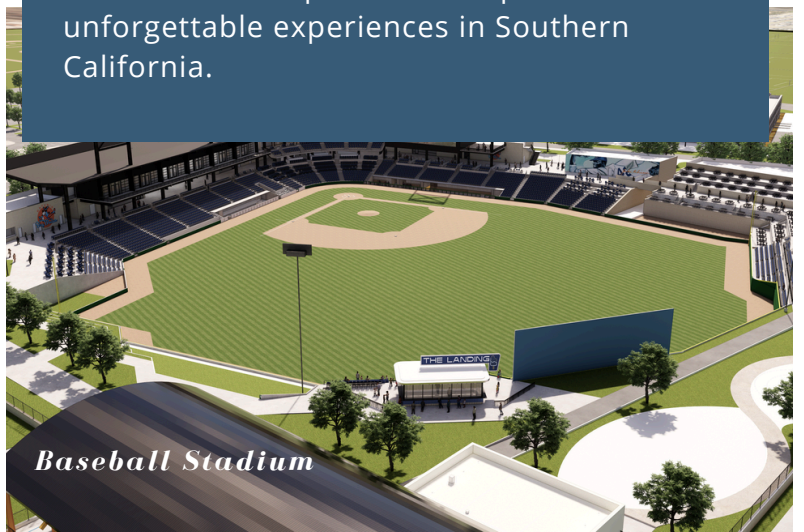


With over 6,700 hotel rooms available, GOCAL offers a variety of accommodations to suit every traveler's needs. From budget-friendly options to up-scale retreats, GOCAL provides the comfort and convenience you desire. Look forward to the highly anticipated opening of the Sanctity Hotel Rancho Cucamonga, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, and other exciting new hotels in the region, joining the already exceptional hotel options available.

Exciting new developments are transforming GOCAL's meetings landscape. The Entertainment District, centered around the 11,000-seat Toyota Arena, is expanding to include 70,000 square feet of commercial space, offering attendees convenient access to dining, shopping, and live entertainment. Just a short drive away, the new 6,500-capacity baseball stadium will become the home of the Los Angeles Dodgers Single-A affiliate team, creating another dynamic venue for team-building events and unique outings.

If you're seeking the ideal destination for your next event, Greater Ontario California (GOCAL) offers a seamless, professional, and unforgettable experience. From its convenient transportation options and a plethora of accommodations to its dedicated event partners, versatile meeting spaces, and exciting developments like the Ontario Convention Center Expansion, Entertainment District, and the new Los Angeles Dodgers Single-A affiliate stadium, GOCAL provides everything you need to make your event a resounding success.

Soar into Southern California with Ontario International Airport (ONT), your gateway to GOCAL and beyond. With over 25 direct flight locations, reaching your destination is easier than ever. Shuttle services from the airport to nearby convention center hotels make your travel experience hassle-free. GOCAL's prime location ensures easy access from major freeways, guaranteeing a smooth journey to your destination. Whether you're traveling for business or pleasure, Ontario International Airport sets the perfect tone for unforgettable experiences in Southern California.



Baseball Stadium

The Ontario Convention Center offers over 225,000 square feet of column-free exhibit space, providing flexibility for a wide range of events. With 24 separate breakout/meeting rooms, the Ontario Convention Center ensures ample space for smaller gatherings and workshops. Its contemporary style and spacious layout allow for various configurations, accommodating everything from trade shows and conferences to banquets and galas. Prepare for a new era in meetings and events as the Ontario Convention Center undergoes a major transformation, doubling in size to an impressive 430,000 square feet. This expansion not only provides more space for meetings and events but also anchors a newly defined Convention Center District, featuring a vibrant plaza for dynamic outdoor activities.



GOCAL is the perfect destination for meeting planners looking for a seamless, professional, and unforgettable event experience. With its modern amenities, unmatched accessibility, and dedicated planning team offering a single point of contact, GOCAL ensures every event detail is covered. When you think meetings, think GOCAL.



New lobby concept at the Ontario Convention Center



CELEBRATING MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Brian Stevens | 40 years
Diane Williams | 25 years
Jane DeLeon-Mato | 25 years
Sandon Brady | 10 years
Dion Wylie | 5 years

and Celebrating 1 Year

William Arevalo
Aliza Avalos
Marcus Byrd
Carissa Callaway
Kevin Coffey
Denise Collins
Amy Daniele
Jay DeJesus
Ana Duarte
Jessica Gaiden

Alicia Hinkle
William Hua
Russell Kern
Sonia Lira
Matthew Moore
Jaymie Parkkinen
Peter Sereno
Francine Slosser
Tonya Spencer
Mike Waterman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Haylie Adams	Valarie Krilowicz
Aubrey Brown	Dee Lee
Ema Camarena Martinez	Jacqueline-Rochelle Lopez
Victoria Clifford	Shari Lucas
Vanessa Constandine	Michele Marsee
Ian Corlett	Jeremy McGinnis
Janine Coughlin	Ivette Nolasco Perez
Stacy Elder Herb	An Pham
Debby Felker	Ryan Pulawski
Bryan Flores	Talia Quiocho
Peggy Ford	Capri Ruocco
Daniel Golda	Megan Taguines
Briana Hallsted	Zeev Weissman
Charlotte Horton	Stephanie Wilner
Max Ingerman	Jennifer Wilson
Michelle Julep	Barbie Wunsche
Alex Kever	

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HENDERSON



HYBRID ISN'T DEAD. IT'S JUST GETTING A MAKEOVER.

Once upon a pandemic, hybrid events were everywhere — the answer to canceled conferences, closed borders, and audiences in sweatpants. Then, like disco and QR code menus, they got overused, misused, and eventually benched in favor of the long-awaited return to “in-person everything.” But lately, something curious is happening: hybrid is quietly making a comeback. Not because it’s trendy. Not because someone wrote a white paper about it. But because — like any good comeback — it solves a very real, very right-now problem.

Travel is down.
Audience predictability is down.
Expectations? Sky high.

Between rising costs and growing uncertainty around global travel and safety, event professionals are facing a new challenge: people are being pickier about what they’ll travel for. If it’s not compelling, convenient, or aligned with their comfort level, they’re saying no. That includes attendees, speakers, partners, and even sponsors. Which means if your entire strategy still hinges on the idea that “everyone will show up”, you could find yourself with a beautifully branded venue and not enough bodies to fill the seats.

So **what now?** Bring hybrid back — and do it better.

Not as a post-COVID leftover or a streaming link you slap on the agenda. Hybrid today is smarter, more nuanced, and dare we say...cooler. It’s not about trying to duplicate your live experience online. It’s about designing a multi-access event — one that thinks about how different types of attendees want to engage and where they want to do it from.

Here’s what the modern hybrid mindset looks like:

- Not one-size-fits-all, but one-experience-multiple-pathways.
- Not just accessibility, but intentional inclusivity (hello, global teams!).
- Not more tech, but smarter content designed to work across platforms.
- Not a fallback, but a front-end strategy to expand reach and ROI.

And here’s the best part: you don’t have to do it all at once. Maybe that means offering a few high-impact sessions on-demand after the event. Or building in a satellite experience for attendees who can’t fly in. Or simply thinking about your event not as one moment in time, but as something that can stretch before, during, and after — across formats and audience. If we’re being honest, “hybrid” doesn’t even need to be the headline anymore. We don’t have to call it that. We just have to design with more intention, more flexibility, and a little less assumption that people will drop everything and fly cross-country for your general session.

Maybe it’s time to stop treating hybrid as a relic of 2020 — and start seeing it as the strategic edge it really is. Because let’s face it: some of our best attendees are still in their sweatpants. And they’re waiting to hear from us.

Laine Thelian, MPISCC Marketing Volunteer, 2025