



THE MPISCC NEWSLETTER

Scoop.

JUNE '26

THIS ISSUE IS RUNNING HOT.

We are six months in. The calendar has turned, the conferences have landed, the handshakes have happened. And now comes the part that separates the planners who will finish 2026 strong from everyone else: what you do with what you know.

This issue of Scoop is built for exactly that moment. Not the scramble of Q1, not the sprint of conference season — the stretch where you get to be strategic. Where you can look at what's working, cut what isn't, and build the kind of momentum that doesn't depend on the next big event to keep it going.

We're coming in this month with a vintage beach state of mind — top down, sun high, eyes on the road ahead. And we've packed this issue accordingly. The road is long. But right now? Conditions are perfect.



BREAKING THE MOLD, BEAUTIFULLY



The theme was Break the Mold. Reimagine What's Next. And WE | CON 2026 did exactly that.

From the first welcome moments of the Planner Partner Experience at Santa Anita Park to the final hugs, selfies, auction wins, and “how did that go so fast?” goodbyes, this year’s WE | CON had the kind of energy you cannot fake. It was smart, social, generous, delicious, creative, a little glamorous, and deeply connected to the people who make this industry what it is.

And yes, if you missed it, you missed a good one.

WE | CONnect, The Planner Partner Experience set the tone early with an unforgettable opening at Santa Anita Park...

...giving planners and partners the chance to connect in a setting that felt distinctly Southern California: scenic, storied, and full of conversation. It was the kind of start that reminded everyone why curated in-person time still matters. The best connections rarely happen by accident. They happen when the setting, the timing, and the people all line up.



This year's education format also broke from convention with the introduction of Vision Talks and Catalyst Labs.

The result was more than a sit-and-listen experience. It created room for big ideas, practical takeaways, real discussion, and fresh thinking around where our industry is going. The Vision Talks delivered perspective and inspiration, while the Catalyst Labs gave attendees a chance to dig in, explore, and actively shape the conversation. That is what reimagining what's next looks like in practice: less passive programming, more participation.



Back on property, the salon reception brought its own kind of magic.



Stylish, lively, and full of personality, it became one of those beautifully layered gatherings where people could sip, snack, talk, wander, laugh, and discover something unexpected around every corner. Between the spectacular outdoor venues, the food, the design moments, and the ease of moving from one experience to the next, the entire program had a rhythm that felt effortless, even though every planner knows effortless takes work.



And then there was the Rose Bowl

The reception takeover of one of Southern California's most iconic venues was a true WE | CON moment. Big venue. Big energy. Big "only here" feeling. There are places that instantly change the mood of a gathering, and the Rose Bowl did exactly that. It gave guests the chance to experience a legendary space through the lens of connection, celebration, and community.



The food deserves its own applause.

From abundant reception bites to memorable moments throughout the program, WE | CON reminded us that great food is still one of the fastest ways to make people happy. Add in flavored water stations, creative refreshments, thoughtful service, and a steady flow of delicious surprises, and it was clear that hospitality was doing exactly what hospitality should do: making people feel taken care of.



The networking was, simply put, unparalleled.

This was not the awkward badge-scan-and-bolt version of networking. This was real conversation. Old friends finding each other. New contacts turning into actual connections. Partners and planners spending meaningful time together. Students meeting industry leaders. Suppliers discovering new opportunities. Attendees leaving with names, ideas, follow-ups, and probably a few new favorite people.

One of the most meaningful ways WE | CON reimaged what's next was through the inclusion of students who graduated from the Youth Business Alliance of Los Angeles program in May 2026 and interned with us during the event.



Their presence added something special to the experience. They were not tucked away on the sidelines. They were part of the event, part of the energy, and part of the future of this industry. Seeing emerging talent step into a professional environment with curiosity, confidence, and support from the MPI Southern California community was a reminder that breaking the mold also means opening the door wider.

There were also the moments people kept talking about between sessions and long after the receptions ended:

Vanity Portrait photos, the make-your-own scent station, playful photo opportunities, fun activations, and giveaways that people actually wanted to take home. The auction brought its own excitement, with fantastic items won by many lucky attendees and a strong sense of shared support for the chapter and its programs. Everywhere you looked, there was something to experience. A conversation happening in the sunshine. A group posing for a photo. A planner discovering a new venue idea. A partner reconnecting with a client. A student taking it all in. A dog stealing the show. A tray of something delicious appearing at exactly the right moment. A giveaway bag getting a little fuller. A scent being blended. A portrait being snapped. A new idea being scribbled down.

That is what made WE | CON work so beautifully this year.

Dozens of small, thoughtful, high-impact moments layered together into something that felt generous, relevant, and genuinely fun. WE | CON 2026 reminded us that breaking the mold does not always mean being louder, flashier, or more complicated. Sometimes it means creating new formats, using iconic spaces in fresh ways, inviting new voices in, giving people room to connect, and designing experiences that feel human, memorable, and full of life.

That is how we reimagine what's next.

To everyone who attended, partnered, presented, volunteered, hosted, sponsored, donated, mentored, bid, laughed, learned, shared, and showed up: thank you for making WE | CON what it was.

To everyone who missed it: we say this with love:

You really should have been there.





SLOOMOO

INSTITUTE

“There is a famous quote by George Bernard Shaw that Sloomoo Institute lives by: “We don’t stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.”

Adults spend so much time working, managing schedules, and balancing responsibilities that play often falls to the bottom of the list. But play is essential... not just for joy, but for connection, creativity, and mental well-being.

At Sloomoo Institute, adults transform within minutes. Phones go down, laughter takes over, and teams begin engaging with each other in a totally different way. Many guests leave saying, “I needed this more than my kids did.”

And they’re right.

Research from The National Institute for Play shows that employees who play together are often more creative, collaborative, and connected. Slime creates a low-pressure way to break down walls and build trust through shared sensory experiences.

The breakthrough happens from engaging multiple senses at once. Touch, smell, sight, and sound all work together to spark curiosity and keep people present in the moment. From crunchy textures and nostalgic scents to colorful swirls and satisfying pops, slime creates a hands-on experience that naturally encourages conversation, laughter, and teamwork. At Sloomoo Institute, play becomes more than fun... it becomes a way for teams to reconnect and recharge.

BOOK YOUR NEXT CORPORATE EVENT AT SLOOMOO





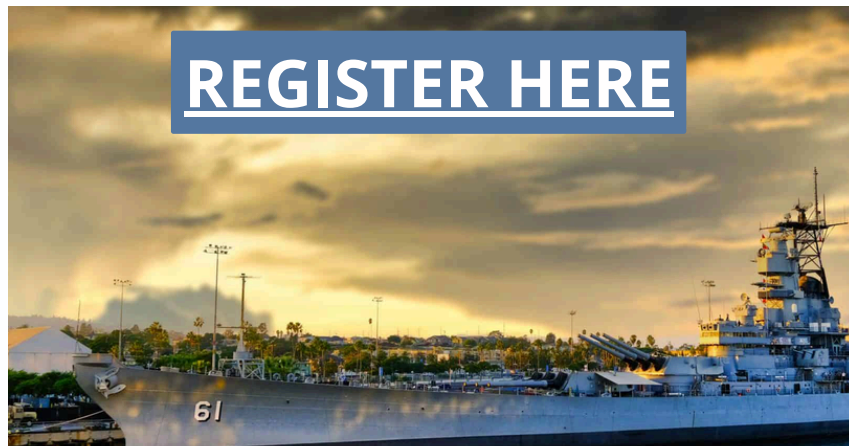
Chloe's Speakeasy

National Museum of the Surface Navy at the Battleship IOWA | For planners looking for a venue with real gravitas, the National Museum of the Surface Navy aboard Battleship IOWA delivers a setting unlike anything else in Los Angeles. Docked on the San Pedro waterfront, the experience brings guests onto a historic ship with six accessible decks, immersive exhibits, and striking views throughout. It is part museum, part landmark, and all presence. For receptions, dinners, or programs that benefit from a strong sense of place, this is a venue that leaves an impression before the first word is spoken. | **JUNE 23; 5-7PM**

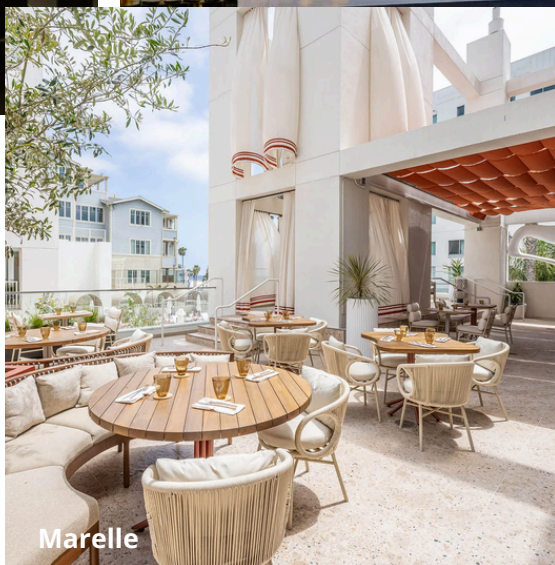
Chloe's Speakeasy at Golden Road Brewing, Atwater Village | Tucked behind Golden Road's Atwater Village brewpub, Chloe's has the kind of hidden-door charm that instantly shifts the mood. The British-inspired speakeasy pairs intimacy with personality, with a fireplace, pool table, full 12-tap bar, and an upstairs area that gives the space flexibility. It feels warm, relaxed, and a little unexpected, which makes it a smart pick for gatherings that want energy without losing character. Great for celebrations, social events, and anything that benefits from a more tucked-away point of view. | **JUNE 24; 5-7PM**

Marelle | Set just off Ocean Avenue in Santa Monica, Marelle brings a breezy coastal sensibility with a polished California point of view. Led by Chef Raphael Lunetta, the restaurant pairs an elevated food experience with a setting that feels warm, fresh, and quietly refined. Private event options range from an intimate dining room for 10 to a lush outdoor patio for 72 and a main dining area that can accommodate up to 80 guests. It is an easy fit for planners who want style, flexibility, and a strong sense of place near the water. **JUNE 24; 5-7PM**

Mitsi | Mitsi brings a fresh downtown sensibility to private gatherings, with an intimate Naud Street setting built around reframed cocktails, natural wine, sake, and fresh nigiri. The atmosphere is stylish and social without feeling overworked, making it especially appealing for smaller events that want design, edge, and a strong food and beverage story. It is the kind of place that feels current the moment you walk in. For planners seeking a more curated, late-night-leaning environment, Mitsi has a distinct point of view. | **JUNE 25; 6-8PM**



REGISTER HERE

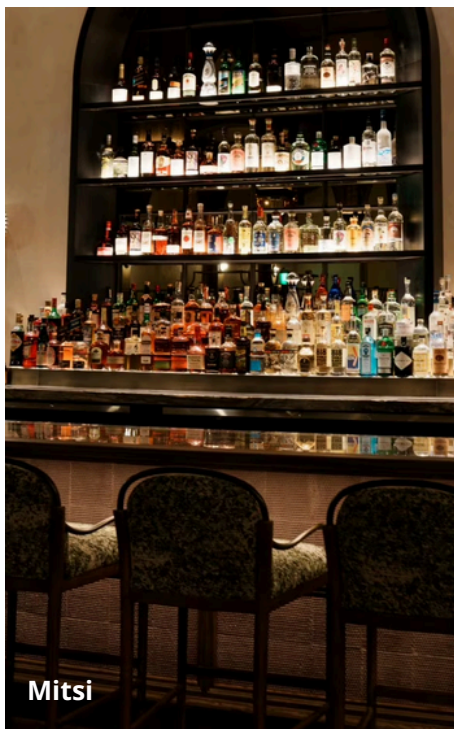


Marelle



Battleship Iowa

Boardner's by La Belle | This venue brings old Hollywood mood in a way that feels earned. Established in 1942 at its current Hollywood location, the venue has long been part of the neighborhood's nightlife fabric, with vintage character, dark glamour, and a reputation as one of the area's enduring gathering spots. It is a strong choice for events that want atmosphere built in from the start. For planners drawn to venues with history, edge, and a little cinematic drama, Boardner's has plenty to work with. | **JUNE 30; 5-7PM**



Mitsi



Boardner's by La Belle



Beyond the Rainbow

What Pride Month Teaches Event Professionals About Belonging

Pride was never meant to be a marketing theme.

It was born from protest. Rooted in resistance, resilience, and the fight for LGBTQ+ individuals to live openly and authentically. Every June, many organizations reduce that legacy to rainbows, themed cocktails, and surface level activations. Look, there is not anything wrong with that, but it prioritizes optics over impact.

Activist Marsha P. Johnson said, “No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.” That sentiment remains just as relevant today. As organizations seek to celebrate Pride in ways that acknowledge the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community. As event professionals, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to approach Pride with greater intention.

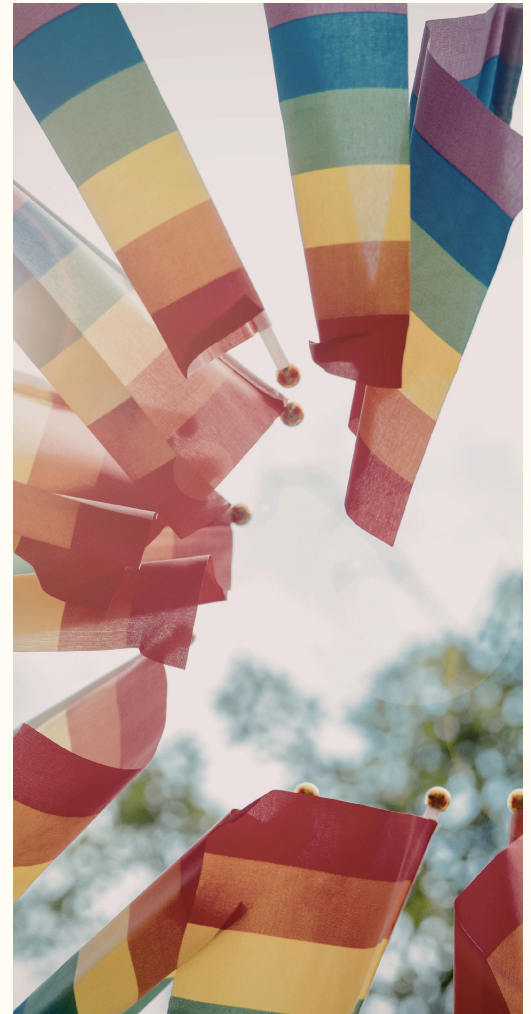
For me, this topic is deeply personal. As a gay Asian man, my journey toward embracing my identity was far from perfect. Like many others, I struggled with mental health and the challenge of feeling fully comfortable in my own skin. It was not until I embraced my sexuality without apology that I began to find clarity, confidence, and peace in myself.

Professionally, I had the opportunity to serve as the event planner for The Abbey in West Hollywood, one of the most iconic LGBTQ+ venues in the country. I designed experiences for the community every day. That experience reinforced a lesson I now carry into every conversation about inclusion and experience design:

Representation alone is not enough. People do not simply want to be included, they want to feel understood and feel like they belong.

It is important to know that visibility is not the same as belonging. The events industry often gets pride wrong in one way that stands out to me, which is that it mistakes visibility for inclusion.

Rainbow branding is great because it creates recognition and promotes celebration and excitement. However, branding alone does not create the feeling of belonging or create memorable experiences.



Here is what we see Pride events falling into:

- Designing for optics over emotional connection
- Assuming all LGBTQ+ audiences want the same type of event
- Overlooking accessibility
- Treating Pride as a seasonal campaign rather than a year-round commitment

The LGBTQ+ community is not a monolith. The shared identity does not equate to shared experience, interests, or expectations. Designing Pride events through a one size fits all lens undermines the very inclusivity these initiatives aim to celebrate. Representation has always mattered, but the audiences expect more.

Long before rainbow logos became a June staple annually, pop culture moments like Will & Grace helped normalize LGBTQ+ visibility in everyday cultural conversations. It demonstrated that authentic representation has always carried more impact than performative branding.

Today's audiences expect that same authenticity from the experiences that brands are creating. In the era of TikTok and social commentary, performative allyship has a very short shelf life. Think about how easy it is to get "cancelled". The audiences are not just observing Pride participation, but evaluating it. This goes beyond Pride, everything is looked at under a microscope. They are asking whether a company's external messaging aligns with its internal culture and whether support extends beyond June. When the answer is no, they take notice and it goes viral.



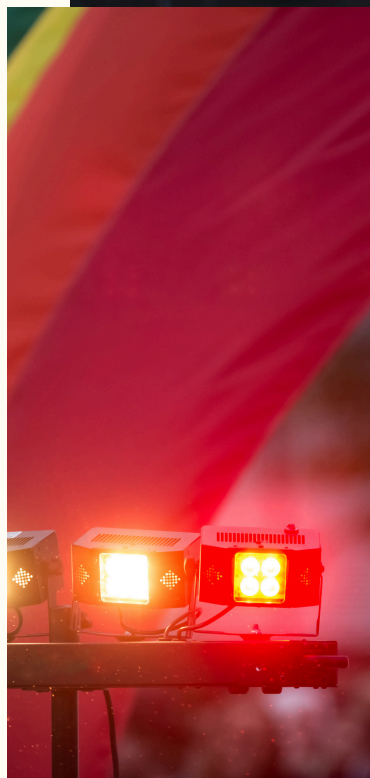
So organizations and planners need to understand that authenticity is no longer an option, it is expected. Pride programming should make people feel something. At its best, event design is not about aesthetics alone, but the emotion.

As event planners, we do not simply create events for people to attend. We are creating experiences people remember. And we all know the ones they remember are the ones that made them feel seen, valued and connected. We should always consider safety, visibility, joy, and community when creating Pride programming. This is what will create the impact beyond the rainbow flags.

As AI and emerging technologies continue to reshape the events industry, it gives us, event planners an opportunity to approach inclusion more intentionally. Used strategically and thoughtfully, AI can help planners brainstorm more diverse Pride programming ideas where they can personalize attendee experience and be more than just a Pride activation. It is important that authentic inclusion will always require human perspective, lived experiences, and intentional design.

So, I leave you with this, the future of events is belonging by design. Pride is not about checking a DEI box, it is about honoring history, celebrating identity, and creating spaces where people feel seen. As event professionals, we are the architects of culture, community and connection. In an era where audiences increasingly expect authenticity, the most impactful events will be designed by those who understand this.

Belonging is not a byproduct of great events. It is built into them by design.





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Arcosanti: The Venue That Refuses to Behave

Some venues give you a ballroom. **Arcosanti** gives you a point of view. Located in Mayer, Arizona, about an hour north of Phoenix, Arcosanti is part architectural landmark, part desert retreat, part living experiment. Founded in 1970 by architect Paolo Soleri, the site was created around the idea of “arcology,” a blending of architecture and ecology meant to challenge the sprawl and sameness of traditional urban design. For event professionals, that makes Arcosanti more than a dramatic backdrop. It is a venue with a built-in story.



Set on a desert mesa in central Arizona, Arcosanti offers a collection of indoor and outdoor spaces that can support everything from intimate retreats and workshops to performances, receptions, meetings, conferences, photo shoots, and larger gatherings. Options include an outdoor amphitheater, the iconic Vaults, indoor meeting rooms, private dining spaces, a café space with limited availability, and smaller rooms suited for one-on-one conversations or quiet programming.

Capacity varies by space, with Arcosanti noting private event options for groups from 10 to 350, and select spaces accommodating more. The outdoor Amphitheater holds up to 500, the Vaults up to 300, the Red Room up to 75, and the Solar Powered Classroom up to 50.

The real magic, though, is in the atmosphere.

This is a place where the architecture does a lot of the heavy lifting. Concrete forms, sweeping arches, desert views, open-air gathering spaces, and the site’s famous bronze and ceramic windbells create a setting that feels cinematic without needing to be overproduced. For groups craving something with texture, intention, and a sense of discovery, Arcosanti delivers the rare combination of visual impact and philosophical depth.

It also opens the door to programming that feels more meaningful than a standard agenda. A leadership retreat

could use the site’s experimental history as a springboard for conversations about innovation, sustainability, and the future of cities. A creative offsite could pair meetings with guided tours, art-making, hiking, or time in the open landscape. A destination dinner or reception could lean into the drama of the desert, the architecture, and the feeling of being somewhere guests have genuinely never been before.

Arcosanti also offers on-site housing, catering options, and audio-visual support, making it especially interesting for day-long events and multi-day programs. Overnight guests have access to more of the grounds, including the Vaults, Amphitheater, Music Center, gardens, hiking trails, pool, and surrounding open nature.

That said, this is not a plug-and-play hotel venue, and that is part of the appeal.

Best fit: retreats, creative summits, design and architecture programs, sustainability-focused meetings, intimate conferences, cultural events, performances, destination receptions, leadership offsites, and any gathering where the venue itself should become part of the conversation.

www.arcosanti.org



THE MIDEAR RESET: WHAT TO DOUBLE DOWN ON AND WHAT TO DROP

Paso Robles has a way of slowing things down. The rolling hills, the quiet vineyards, the particular quality of light in the afternoon. It is not the kind of place that encourages rushing, which made it exactly the right setting for the MPISCC Board of Directors to do something that busy people rarely make time for. To stop, look honestly at where things stand, and decide together what the second half of the year is going to mean.

What started as a hard conversation became something worth carrying back.

The themes that surfaced were not complicated, but they were important. Alignment. Fresh thinking. Building something sturdy enough to outlast any one person's tenure. These are not abstract ideals for this board. They are the actual work.

Getting aligned is harder than it sounds.

Alignment does not happen by accident. It requires people to say what they actually think, to surface the tensions that politeness usually smooths over, and to come out the other side with a shared sense of direction. That process is uncomfortable before it is clarifying. The board leaned into it, and the clarity that followed was worth the discomfort.

For any organization, the midyear is a natural moment to ask whether the people doing the work are genuinely pulling in the same direction. Fresh energy and good intentions are not enough if everyone is optimizing for something slightly different. Getting aligned means agreeing not just on goals, but on what matters most right now.

Fresh ideas deserve real room. There is a tendency in established organizations to let new thinking compete with existing structures on unequal terms. The new idea has to prove itself immediately. The old approach gets the benefit of the doubt simply because it is already in place.

The retreat created space for fresh ideas to be heard without that pressure. And what came through was energizing. The chapter has more creative capacity than any single program cycle can express. Giving that capacity room to breathe is one of the most valuable things a board can do at the halfway point.

Perhaps the most meaningful thread running through the retreat was succession. Not as an administrative concern, but as an expression of genuine care for the chapter and everyone in it. The leaders in that room were thinking about the people who will sit in those chairs after them, and what kind of organization they want to hand over.

That orientation changes how decisions get made. It lengthens the horizon. It shifts the question from what works right now to what holds up over time. What the reset looks like from here.

The board came back from Paso Robles with momentum. Not because everything was resolved, but because the right conversations happened.

Alignment, fresh ideas, and a commitment to succession are not destinations. They are practices. The second half of 2026 is where the chapter puts them to work.



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BE AN MPI: MEETING PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER SERIES

Gaetan Mousseau

National Director, Convention Sales · Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board



For Gaetan, MPI has always been about opportunity, connection, and showing up. His advice to anyone starting out in events is simple: get involved. Networking opens doors, builds relationships, and often leads to the next big step.

As a leader, Gaetan believes in helping others grow their skills and become who they are meant to be. That spirit carries through his MPI experience, especially his favorite WE | CON memory: watching the 2025 team come together to create something meaningful.

He describes the MPI community in one word: resilient. Outside of work, he is a passionate sports fan who loves following local teams, especially baseball. And the song that represents his career journey? “Hallelujah” by Leonard Cohen. A classic choice for a career built on perseverance, connection, and purpose.

Rachel Panczenko

Account Executive, AFR Furniture Rental

Rachel first got involved with MPI at the suggestion of a coworker, and quickly found what so many members discover: a welcoming community filled with vendors, partners, and planners who are generous with their time and knowledge. Her advice for anyone starting out in events is to get out there and network with everyone, building relationships across the industry. As a leader, Rachel believes in moving the team forward, supporting others well, and bringing people along.

She describes the MPI community in one word: community. A favorite MPI memory was her Planner Partner program in the desert, and outside of work, she channels her creativity into pottery, a passion she started three years ago and now sells online.

Fun fact: Rachel has been to 46 states and is on track to visit all 50 by 2026.





the feel good files

FOR THE HUMANS
BEHIND THE HUSTLE

Travel Fatigue & Wellness on the Road

For meeting planners, travel is often part of the job description, but constant movement can quietly wear down both your body and your mind.

Early flights. Delayed connections. Long setup days. Hotel rooms that never quite feel restful. In the events industry, travel is exciting, fast-paced, and full of opportunity. It can also create exhaustion that builds over time. When planners are constantly in motion, routines disappear, sleep suffers, and stress levels rise. The real challenge is maintaining your well-being while in constant motion.

The good news? Small, intentional habits can make a significant difference.

One of the biggest mistakes event professionals make while traveling is waiting until burnout hits before slowing down. Sleep is preparation. Treat it that way.

Before traveling, try adjusting your sleep schedule slightly if changing time zones. Avoid overscheduling the first evening after arrival. Build recovery time into your itinerary whenever possible. Even an extra hour of rest can improve focus, patience, and decision-making onsite.

Travel days often revolve around coffee, convenience foods, and skipped meals. While understandable, those habits can increase fatigue and anxiety. Simple adjustments help. Carry a refillable water bottle. Keep protein bars or healthy snacks in your bag. Eat consistently, even during busy schedules. Limit excessive caffeine when stress levels are already high. Your energy is physical and emotional in equal measure. Both require tending.

Travel constantly changes your environment, which can leave you feeling mentally scattered. One way to stay grounded is by creating familiar routines no matter where you are. This could be stretching in your hotel room each morning. Listening to the same calming playlist while getting ready. Taking 10 quiet minutes before heading onsite. Journaling or reviewing your day before bed. Small routines create a sense of normalcy, even during demanding travel schedules.

Many planners stay mentally "on" from the moment they leave home until the event ends. Emails, texts, and troubleshooting follow them everywhere. Whenever possible, allow yourself moments where you are not actively solving problems. Take a walk without your phone. Sit quietly between sessions. Step outside for fresh air instead of scrolling through updates during every break. Mental recovery is just as important as physical rest.

Not every trip will feel balanced. Some days will be exhausting, unpredictable, and stressful. Awareness and intention matter more than perfection. When you recognize your limits early, you can respond before burnout takes over.

Travel may always be part of the events industry, but chronic exhaustion does not have to be. By protecting your rest, building grounding routines, and caring for yourself along the way, you create the ability to show up fully. For the event and for yourself. Because the best planners know that sustainability is just as important as success.

Deanna Zercher

CELEBRATING MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Debbie Hawkins | 40 years
 Rita Cruz | 25 years
 Corey Braithwaite | 20 years
 Brian Gilman | 15 years
 Kay Allen | 10 years
 Ozzie Otero | 5 years
 Deborah Marino | 5 years
 Sanjay Ahuja | 5 years

and Celebrating 1 Year

Sherri Amador	Jeremy McGinnis
Ikiya Cade-Henry	Stephanie Wilner
Victoria Clifford	Gabriel Nieto
Ian Corlett	Gerry Owen
Janine Coughlin	Claire Parsons
Briana Hallsted	Capri Ruocco
Michelle Julep	Pamela Streeter-Laudermill
Celeste Lee	Kamari West
Jacqueline-Rochelle Lopez	

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Nancy Amparano	Linnea Ivanisevic
Emily Andrews	Carolyn Jackson
Aileen Babayan	Chrysti Lajoie
Stella Bonsanti	Carolina Lopez
Laura Brokke	Megan Marumoto
Raluca Cadar	Allyson Nilsson
Kristal Canales	Maya Parness
Jacqueline Chavarria	Gabriela Perez
Ana Diaz Coreas	Alysha Ramirez
Andy Diego	Karen Sanchez
Veronica Dixon	Chris Tardiff
Zach Green	Rostana Wardak
Travis Harrington	Cathy Williams

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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 that 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.