

THE MPISCC NEWSLETTER

Scoop.

AUG '25



IMPACT ISN'T ACCIDENTAL

Nothing extraordinary ever came from going through the motions.

In our industry, impact is a choice. It's the result of showing up differently. It's what happens when you bring your full self, your boldest ideas, and the courage to color outside the lines. It's the spark that transforms a casual connection into a breakthrough collaboration.

We work in a field that thrives on creativity, ingenuity, and momentum. But those qualities don't appear by accident; they're cultivated by people willing to experiment, challenge the status quo, and take the risks that lead to real change. And here's the truth: it's easy to play it safe, to attend events without engaging, to nod politely without contributing. But playing small rarely moves the needle for you, for your career, or for this community.

We are so lucky that MPI is more than a membership card but rather a live laboratory for ideas. It's the testing ground for skills you want to sharpen, the platform to share your perspective, and the space where collaboration can turn into transformation. It's where you can try something bold: a new event concept, a fresh approach to networking, a creative twist on how we connect members. And see it come to life with the support of a community that wants you to succeed.

So here's your challenge for this season or even your next project: bring something unexpected to the table. Not just for your own growth, but for the collective energy and momentum of our chapter. Push for better. Say the thing no one else is saying. Try the idea that feels a little risky. Mentor someone new to the industry. Start the conversation that could change everything.

Let's make this the season where we stop waiting for change to happen and start making it happen. As our fearless 2025 President says, "Make it memorable; shape tomorrow today."

Margaret Launzel-Pennes
VP, Marketing & Communications, 2026 President Elect, MPISCC

TOGETHER, WE DELIVERED

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR
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AT SLOOMOO INSTITUTE



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THREE CHAR



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

SAVE THE DATES



MPI

SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
CHAPTER

ROADSHOW 2025. GAME ON.

9.09 | FAIRMONT BREAKERS - LONG BEACH

9.10 | AC HOTEL - PASADENA

9.11 | THE BEVERLY - LAS VEGAS

9.12 | COSM - LA

REGISTRATION OPEN!



STATE OF THE

INDUSTRY



SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
CHAPTER

Get Ready for What's Next

Join us for an in-depth look at the trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the year ahead in meetings and events.

The State of the Industry brings together leaders, innovators, and changemakers for insights you can put into action. Mark your calendar — this is where the conversation starts.

JANUARY 2026 | SONESTA LAX

*Break the Mold.
Reimagine What's Next.*

The Power of
WE

CON



SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
CHAPTER

SAVE THE DATE

May 6-8, 2026
Langham Pasadena



MPISCC VOLUNTEER IMPACT AWARD WINNERS

Q1


KENNY HARLOW, PRODUCER, INNOVATIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Kenny's dedication to MPISCC is unmatched. A Seattle native and graduate of the University of Washington School of Business, Kenny built a 20+ year career as a professional dancer, choreographer, and show producer before officially joining Innovative Entertainment in 2022. As Chair of the Hospitality Committee, he not only attends every committee meeting and chapter event, but also jumps in wherever help is needed. From planning and managing event volunteers to contributing his own creative talents, Kenny consistently goes above and beyond. His commitment to our chapter is so strong that he will soon take on an even greater leadership role — joining the MPISCC Board of Directors in 2026 as Director of Regional Engagement.

Q2

LAINE THELIAN, CREATIVE PRODUCER, POP EXPERIENTIAL

Laine brings her exceptional creativity and talent to the MPISCC Marketing & Communications team, where she crafts standout social media posts and engaging blog content that capture the energy and personality of our chapter. At POP Experiential, she is known for blending bold ideas with polished execution, producing work that inspires, informs, and connects. Her keen eye for design, ability to tell a compelling story, and deep understanding of audience engagement make her an invaluable part of our volunteer family. Laine's contributions ensure MPISCC's voice is as dynamic and impactful as the community it represents, and her dedication to elevating our presence helps strengthen the chapter's connection with members and the wider industry.



BE AN MPI: MEETING PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCER SERIES

Joe Marcy

CMP, CMM, See Monterey, Director, Group Business Development



When Joe started out in the events industry, he was encouraged to join MPI—and never looked back. “I was new and wanted to learn. MPI gave me a space to grow, connect, and expand my knowledge. He believes leadership means learning from the ground up, setting goals, and motivating others. MPI gave him the tools to do just that. Favorite MPI moment? 2017 Installation at the Beverly Hilton; Parents front row, watching him become Chapter President, “A full-circle moment I’ll never forget.” One word to describe MPI? Community. “It blurs the line between personal and professional in the best way.” His advice to newcomers? “Join industry associations. They’re key to building your network and growing your career.”

Marlene Blas

CMP, MTA

From law school to the global events stage, Marlene’s journey is all about saying yes to growth, travel, and resilience. “I started planning events during law school. An assignment led me to an MPI event—and I was instantly drawn in.” Her advice for newcomers: “Seek out mentors. Don’t be intimidated by titles—just go for it. And volunteer. That’s where the magic happens. Her leadership style: “It’s about leaning in and taking chances. Step up to the plate, even when it’s uncomfortable.” Fun fact: Marlene has visited every continent and is now planning to live abroad part-time! Career anthem: I’m Still Standing – Elton John. “After a heart attack and a stroke—despite living a healthy lifestyle—I’m still here. Still standing.”



Jill Przelenski

University of Southern California, Director of Booking



From Universal Studios to national conferences, Jill’s MPI journey has spanned decades — and friendships that feel like family. Joined MPI in 1997. First meeting? Within one month of starting at Universal Studios, and “I’ve been a member ever since!” Advice for newcomers: “Network as much as you can. It’s the best way to grow — no matter what side of the industry you’re on. And always volunteer!” Jill’s MPI motto? “MPI SCC? More like an MPI BFF!” Favorite MPI Memory: Attending national conferences from ’97-’00 while at Universal — especially Philadelphia! MPI in one word: Loyalty “This community shows up, supports you, and stays with you.” Cheers to Jill for bringing heart, humor, and hustle to the MPI family!

BEYOND THE MONTH: CREATING EVENTS WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS

Every August, California observes Transgender History Month — a time to honor the contributions, struggles, and achievements of transgender individuals throughout history. But for meeting and event professionals, it's more than a calendar observance. It's a reminder that the spaces we design, the programs we curate, and the experiences we shape send powerful messages about who is welcome.

In an industry built on connection, the responsibility is clear: if we want attendees to feel they belong, our events must reflect the full diversity of the people we serve. That means thinking beyond “checking the box” and instead weaving inclusivity into the fabric of every decision — from the keynote stage to the restroom signage.

What can this look like in practice?

- **Intentional Representation** – Seek out transgender speakers, panelists, and performers whose expertise enriches your content and whose stories expand perspectives.
- **Spaces That Welcome Everyone** – Provide gender-neutral restrooms, safe spaces, and policies that ensure no one has to wonder if they'll be respected.
- **Language That Invites Participation** – Offer pronoun options on badges, avoid gender assumptions, and train staff to model inclusive language.
- **Partnerships That Deepen Impact** – Collaborate with LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations to enhance programming and bring authenticity to your efforts.

While August shines a spotlight, true inclusivity isn't seasonal — it's a mindset. When we design events where all identities are seen and valued, we do more than celebrate a history. We help shape a future where equity and respect are the norm, not the exception. Our industry has the reach, creativity, and influence to make that future real. The question is: how will we use it?

Lucy Roberts
MPISCC Director of DEIB



SANTA ANA SHINES: A STORY OF COMMUNITY, CULTURE & CELEBRATION

In Santa Ana, where nearly 70% of residents trace their roots to Latin America, September unfolds not just as another month—but as a living celebration of independence, identity, and togetherness.

It all begins in late August, when vibrant engines rumble to life at the **Chicano Heritage Festival**. Classic lowrider cars, local artists, and families converge in a colorful celebration of shared heritage—a living, breathing street festival that sets the tone. Come early September, the rhythm shifts from cars to conversation. The **Senior Center** transforms—its halls echoing with regional dances, poetry readings, and intimate storytelling that bridges generations. Then arrives the heart of the season: **Fiestas Patrias** (Sept 13–14, 2025). Two sun-drenched days of celebration light up downtown:

- **Ceremonia del Grito** on Saturday evening: a poignant moment of reflection and unity.
- **Sunday parade**: brave footsteps, brass bands, and a sea of flags.
- Throughout, food trucks, artisan booths, carnival rides, and live performances paint the streets with laughter and pride.

Local museums and galleries, including the **Bowers**, invite visitors into immersive exhibits—from vivid murals to interactive installations, each framed in the sounds and stories of Latin America. Restaurants around town embrace the spirit further: for one special season, **Chiles en Nogada** take center stage—poblano peppers stuffed, draped in walnut cream, and crowned with seeds of pomegranate. A dish as delicious as it is symbolic, echoing the tricolor of Mexico's flag and its spirit of independence.

Behind the scenes, city planners, chefs, musicians, dancers—and **Travel Santa Ana's** own **AnaLaura Becerra**—work in harmonious partnership. AnaLaura—Santa Ana's welcoming ambassador—offers indispensable insight: sharing programming ideas, coordinating site visits, and aligning visiting planners with local talents and venues. Her support brings cohesion to vision. And for the first time in 2025, **Travel Santa Ana** is measuring out-of-town attendance. Anecdotally, cultural curiosity draws a new wave of visitors—families, travelers, even delegations—seeking the authentic pulse of Mexican independence celebrations.

Santa Ana offers a ready-made blueprint that feels local, intimate, and yet beautifully large in heart:

- **Built-in momentum** from August to mid-September.
- **Authentic activations**: parades, culinary traditions, museum storytelling.
- **A web of collaboration**: artists, institutions, restaurants, and civic leaders already primed for your ideas.
- **Support on the ground**: through the guidance of AnaLaura and city departments.

Santa Ana's Hispanic Heritage Month is not just an event—it's a story in motion. For planners seeking cultural resonance and community connection, this city's September is more than a calendar entry—it's an invitation to co-write something meaningful.

Lucy Roberts
MPISCC, Director of DEIB

the feel good files

FOR THE HUMANS
BEHIND THE HUSTLE

Time is Ticking...Managing Onsite Stress Without Burning Out

In the world of event planning, the pressure doesn't end when the planning stops—it often intensifies the moment doors open. From last-minute vendor delays to attendee needs and tight run-of-show schedules, onsite execution demands time management superpowers and calm under pressure. But when stress mounts and the clock is ticking, even the most seasoned planners can find themselves on the edge of burnout. Here's how to manage onsite stress with intention—without sacrificing your well-being.

1. Prep with Precision: Your Timeline Is Your Lifeline

Great onsite time management starts long before the event begins. Building a hyper-detailed timeline with contingency blocks for the unexpected is a must. Include buffer time between sessions, meals, and transitions and a communications plan to keep your team informed in real time. Consider using a mobile app or cloud-based tool that keeps your master schedule accessible and editable. When you know what's happening and when, you can navigate chaos with clarity.

2. Delegate or Drown: Build a Support Squad

Planners often take pride in being the glue that holds it all together—but trying to do everything yourself is a recipe for burnout. Assign clear roles to team members or volunteers, empower leads for areas like registration, A/V, speaker management, and catering, and trust your team. Letting go of small details allows you to focus on critical issues and decision-making.

3. Schedule Breaks Like You Schedule Sessions

Event attendees get refreshment breaks—why shouldn't you? Block non-negotiable breaks into your schedule, even if it's just five minutes to breathe, hydrate, or step outside. During multi-day events, aim for: one solid meal break per day, 10-minute recharge windows every 3–4 hours, a wind-down ritual at the end of the day to help your brain switch off (journaling, a quick walk, deep breathing).

4. Control What You Can, Accept What You Can't

Tech glitches, speaker delays, weather—you can't control it all. But you can control how you respond. Create contingency plans for common onsite challenges, maintain a short list of go-to vendors and backups, and most importantly, train your brain to pause before reacting. A deep breath and a moment of assessment can prevent snap decisions made in stress.

5. Decompress Before You Crash

Once the event wraps, it's tempting to immediately dive into teardown, reports, and post-event emails. But your body and mind need recovery. Build in 24–48 hours of light duty if possible after large events. Use that time to sleep in or rest, reflect and journal what went well and what didn't, and don't forget to celebrate your wins—big or small.

So the next time the clock starts ticking, take a breath, trust your plan, and pace yourself—you've got this.

OH!
SNAP!

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BOOKED BY THE BEST BUILT FOR THE BOLD.



Monica Garcia

Shell Lewis

ROSE BOWL STADIUM | GOLD PLAY

WHO WE ARE

Latina, Women, and Veteran-owned media agency creating cinematic content and unforgettable guest activations for stadiums, luxury brands, and B2B events. We deliver tech-powered, strategic storytelling and your guests leave with legacy-level media.



WHO WE SERVE

- Major stadiums: Dodgers, SoFi, LA Coliseum, Rose Bowl
- Global brands: Sony Music, Neutrogena, CBRE
- Luxury planners + women-led media brands
- Founder-backed experiences

WHAT WE DO / PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Full-service media. Signature activations. Cinematic content. The Trading Cards? Just one of our greatest hits.

SEE TRADING CARD ACTIVATIONS LIVE [HERE](#)



READY TO WOW YOUR GUESTS? LET'S BUILD YOUR LEGACY.
[OH! SNAPTASTIC! WEBSITE](#)

LEVEL UP YOUR SALES GAME WITH MANDI GRAZIANO



If your 2026 plans include driving bigger results, closing more deals, and building a sales team that thrives under pressure, there's one name you need to know: Mandi Graziano.

A bestselling author, acclaimed sales coach, award-winning hospitality veteran, and dynamic podcast host, Mandi brings more than two decades of sales leadership experience to the stage and the training room. She's led top-performing teams for Starwood, Hard Rock Hotels, Caesars Entertainment, and Hospitality Performance Network — and she knows exactly what it takes to win in competitive markets. Her bestselling book, *Sales Tales: The Hustle, Humor and Lessons from a Life in Sales*, captures her bold, often hilarious business stories — and the same energy and authenticity infuse her speaking and coaching style. Mandi doesn't just deliver strategies; she creates “aha” moments that stick with teams long after the session ends.

Ways to Work with Mandi:

- **Book Her to Speak:** Bring her to your next conference or sales meeting for a high-energy keynote that inspires action.
- **Invest in Sales Coaching & Training:** Put Mandi in your 2026 budget to level up your sales team with tailored coaching programs through her Facetime Coaching Company, founded in 2006 to help companies stand out, follow up more effectively, and stop being invisible online.
- **Engage with the Podcast:** Tune into Adventures in Business Live! on LinkedIn Live or your favorite podcast platform, where Mandi and her co-host unpack creativity, strategy, and real-world business lessons.

Offstage, Mandi calls San Diego home, where she lives with her husband, Scooter, and their Golden-doodle, Luca. An avid cyclist and SWEATworking enthusiast, she brings the same energy to her client work that she brings to every ride, walk, and workout — fresh ideas, steady momentum, and a results-driven mindset.

The bottom line: Mandi Graziano moves the needle. If you want to see your sales numbers and your team's confidence climb, make Mandi part of your next big project or event.

TO MAKE THE CONNECTION:

coach@mandigraziano.com | 619-822-9454 | www.mandigraziano.com

CELEBRATING MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Cherryl Brazier | 30 years
Ken Sanders | 25 years
Nicole Newman | 20 years
Chanel Sheragy | 10 years
Carol Srivongse | 10 years
Vinkesh Bali | 5 years

and Celebrating 1 Year

Jessica Blunt	Peter Khan
Sandy Brown	Joe Monteferante
Sarah Doyle	Kelly Olson
Tobey Geise	Xiomara Parra
Kevin Glenn	Marly Shifflett
Angela Griffin	Louise Smith
Kit Gutierrez	Jaime Starcheski
Thomas Hallin	Siegfried Tieber
Nina Khan	

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Sherri Amador
Lauren Ballesteros Rawlings
Ikiya Cade-Henry
Trish Carlson
Danielle Federico
Darice Goodwin
Celeste Lee
Kaitlen McKinnon
Gabriel Nieto
Chris Nuccio
Gerry Owen
Claire Parsons
Agnes Rutkai
Pamela Streeter-Laudermill
Kamari West

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THOUGH
FOR
FOOD

THE DEATH OF PASSIVE ATTENDANCE

Step into a session where the atmosphere is electric. Conversations ripple through the room. Someone shares an insight that sparks a flurry of follow-up questions. A poll result flashes on the screen, shifting the focus in real time. In a breakout corner, a small group sketches a solution that didn't exist an hour earlier. This is what events are starting to look like when participation is designed into the experience from the very beginning.

Modern audiences thrive when they can influence what happens in the room. They want to contribute their expertise, test new ideas, and walk away knowing their presence made a difference. That shift is transforming how event programs are built — from the opening keynote to the final session.

Interactive elements are becoming the backbone of successful agendas. Live polls and real-time surveys keep conversations moving in directions that matter most to attendees. Breakout discussions surface perspectives that a single presenter could never deliver alone. Co-creation exercises and skill labs push participants to take what they've learned and immediately turn it into something practical. Even networking is evolving — moving beyond small talk to include guided activities that create genuine connections and shared problem-solving.

Speakers are evolving, too. The most engaging presenters now prepare as much for the dialogue as they do for their own delivery. They know how to spark a room, draw out diverse voices, and adapt their message on the fly to match the momentum in the space. That shift requires both skill and confidence — and it makes every session feel fresh, relevant, and worth the time.

Generational influences play a big role in this movement. Many younger professionals have been immersed in collaborative learning environments since childhood, using technology that allows them to shape outcomes instantly. They approach events with the same mindset — expecting to contribute, exchange ideas, and help create something in real time. This expectation is setting a new standard for what an event can and should deliver.

Spoiler alert: These ideas are at the core of the reinvention of [WE]Con in 2026. The entire experience will be designed so participants are in the driver's seat — guiding content, engaging directly with peers and speakers, and helping shape the event's outcomes. Every element will be built with activation in mind, ensuring the room's energy comes from the people in it.

When participation is the standard, events become living experiences. Ideas move faster. Connections run deeper. The takeaways have staying power because they're co-created by the very people who will carry them forward. That's the future our industry is building toward — and it starts with rethinking how every seat in the room can be part of the action.