

2026 Pacific Regional Conference Recap Panel



April 8, 2026

A wide-angle photograph of the Seattle skyline at dusk. The Space Needle is the central focus on the left, with its iconic saucer-shaped observation deck. The city's skyscrapers are silhouetted against the warm, orange and blue sky. In the background, the snow-capped Mount Rainier is visible. The waterfront with ships and bridges is also visible.

Welcome to Seattle PRC Recap



smps
Pacific
Regional Conference

Welcome!



Liz Lewin
Stantec

SMPS Sacramento President-Elect
liz.lewin@stantec.com



2026 PRC Recap Panel

Thank You To Our 2026 Annual Sponsors!



Capitol Level



City Level



PSOMAS



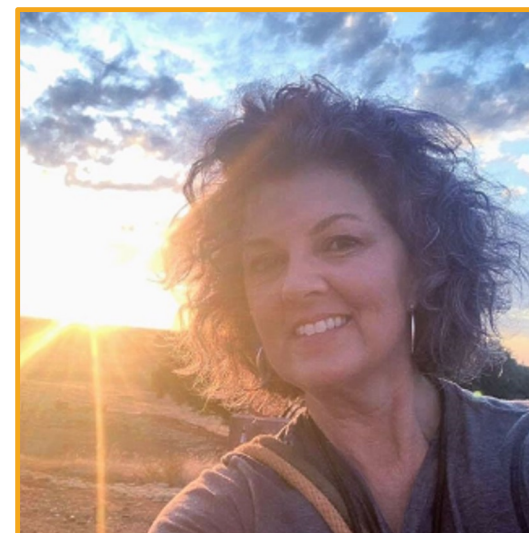
Village Level



Honor Marti's Legacy – Apply for the Marti Martin Pacific Regional Conference Scholarship

Requirements

- Scholarships are for conference registration (\$675); travel and hotel not included.
- Must be a current SMPS Sacramento Chapter member. All members will be considered.
- Scholarship recipients will be required to participate in the PRC Recap on conference takeaways in March.



Pacific Regional Conference Recap Panelists



David Karkhut
CIEF/SRBX



Lauren Lamar
Alston Construction



Lori Burbridge, CPSM
Marketing Professional



Nicole Sawyer
CSWST2

Conference Presenter



Tracy Joyner
Head Coach
*University of Oregon Women's
Soccer Team*

smps
Sacramento

Lace'em Up: Compete, Connect, Create

Tracy spoke on what it takes to build high-performing, high-trust teams—from developing confidence through consistency to leading with clarity and resilience in the face of adversity. Her insights resonated well beyond the pitch and directly supported firm leadership, growth, and collaboration.

Recap By:



Lauren Lamar
Alston Construction

2026 PRC Recap Panel

Lace'em Up: Compete, Connect, Create

Succeeding in a Male-Dominated Field

- Tracy shared her journey pursuing an elite certification held by only 1% women.
- She discussed how, during training, things were often explained to her rather than discussed, highlighting challenges of working in a male-dominated industry and the importance of contributing to the conversation.
- She also spoke about how women sometimes have to over-explain to demonstrate competence.



Her journey was documented in the short-film *Coach*, and she shared clips during her keynote.

Lace'em Up: Compete, Connect, Create

The better you are, the better leader you can be.

- **Know What Motivates You**
- **Embrace Authenticity**
- **Lead With Intention**



Conference Presenter



Courtney Kearney
Founder & Owner
CKearney Consulting

Excellent Leaders Go for Operational Gold

AEC firms need leaders who understand how operational decisions impact profitability, project delivery, and client experience. This session gives senior leaders a clear look at the business processes that drive success interpreting P&L statements, managing overhead, and understanding multipliers and how they shape project strategy. Learn how contracts can protect your firm while supporting client relationships.

Your firm's structure can either streamline or stall your pursuit of excellence. We will connect operational strategies to client experience, showing how process consistency is a critical differentiator in competitive markets. Leaders will leave this session with insights and practical tools to fine-tune their business processes, align teams with financial goals, and deliver gold-standard client experiences that fuel growth, retention, and your firm's long-term success.

Recap By:



Lori Burbridge

Excellent Leaders Go for Operational Gold

I got into marketing/BD because I don't do numbers.

Please stop!

Courtney started with some great vocabulary and formulas to understand your firm's financials, check out her slides!

Excellent Leaders Go for Operational Gold

What is the Client Experience?

- The cumulative perception your client forms across the entire lifespan of the relationship
- Customer service is a moment
- **Client experience is a system – consistent, clear, transparent, reliable, predictable – before, during, and after the project**

Excellent Leaders Go for Operational Gold

Client Experience and Financials

- Financial issues are actually process issues, and affect Client Experience when they create friction, not clarity
 - Are we upholding and reinforcing our client experience promise?

Client Experience is your firm's processes in action built on operational excellence – Excellent Leaders monitor financial, operational and client experience metrics

Excellence isn't accidental, its operational!

Conference Presenter



Kelly Jo Jefferis, CPSM,
Founder and President
Threaded Marketing Group

Proven AEC Marketing Strategies to Boost Results & Reduce Stress

Kelly shared practical systems, messaging strategies, and workflow improvements to streamline marketing operations and reduce burnout while driving growth.

Recap By:



David Karkhut
CIEF/SRBX

Proven AEC Marketing Strategies to Boost Results & Reduce Stress



If everything is a priority, nothing is.

Proven AEC Marketing Strategies to Boost Results & Reduce Stress

1 Source of Truth in Your Org?

- Having a main source of where your company data lives. Less stress and time having to navigate resources.

Efficiency Tips & Best Practices

- Recycling content. Ie: from email to social media, etc.
- 1-month social media calendar
- **Respond within 24-hours and provide client timeline**

Conference Presenter



Duncan Robertson, CPSM,
Director of Marketing and
Business Development
Tumaeack Grove Engineering

Empathetic Connections: Utilizing Emotional Intelligence to Forge Quality Relationships

This session highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in the AEC industry, showing that success goes beyond technical skill and is rooted in trust, connection, and strong relationships. Attendees explored how self-awareness, communication, and understanding client concerns play a key role in navigating a people-driven, risk-based environment.

Recap By:



David Karkhut
CIEF/SRBX

Empathetic Connections: Utilizing Emotional Intelligence to Forge Quality Relationships

- Finding a way to show more appreciation
- How do we show up under pressure
- Emotional signals
 - **Calm = competence**
 - **Curiosity = confidence**
 - **Reactivity = risk**
- 60-Day Challenge



Conference Presenter



Melanie Meeks
Partner
Meeks Marketing



Allie Horne
Partner
Meeks Marketing

Brain Bending: Leveraging Neuromarketing to Win the Interview

Join us on a magical journey where you will learn how to leverage neuromarketing strategies to win the interview. Neuromarketing offers insights into the subconscious aspects of decision-making. Incorporating five neuromarketing concepts into your firm's interviews will result in more wins: **Fear Appeal, Anchoring Principle, Reciprocity, Sensory Marketing, and Emotional Marketing**. Psychology nerds and illusion lovers unite as we learn how to influence decision makers and win more work.

Recap By:

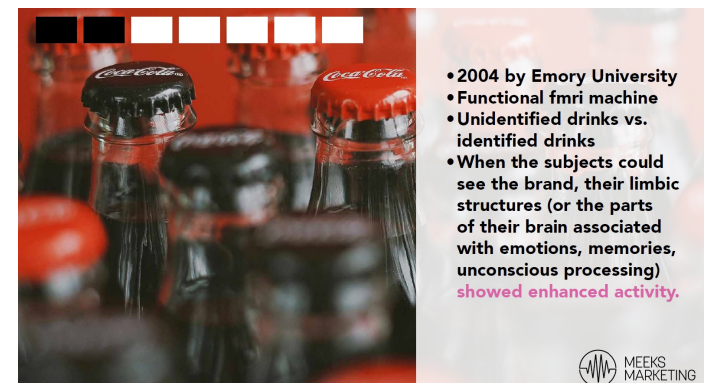
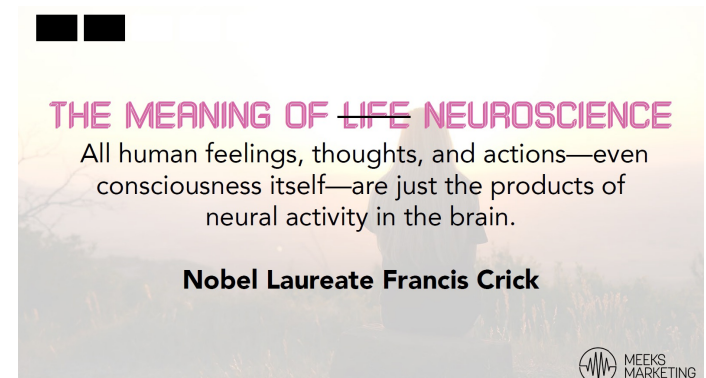


Nicole Sawyer
CSWST2

Brain Bending: Leveraging Neuromarketing to Win the Interview

The Science Behind Marketing

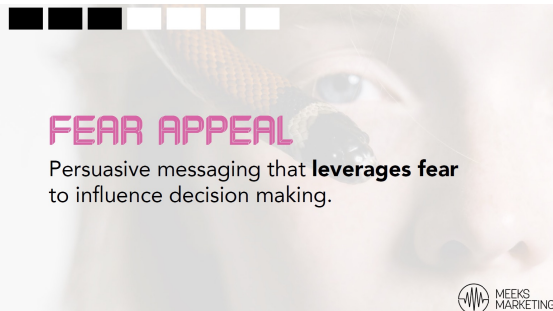
- Neuromarketing combines **psychology and neuroscience** to understand decision-making.
- A study by Nielsen demonstrated that ads with an emotional impact were **23% more effective** than content alone.
- **Emotional stimuli bypass cognitive processing**, becoming encoded more powerfully in the brain.
- **Subconscious cues influence** perception, memory, and final selection decisions.



Brain Bending: Leveraging Neuromarketing to Win the Interview

Five Neuromarketing Strategies

1.

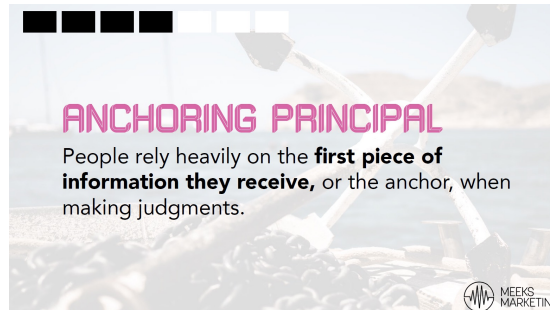


FEAR APPEAL

Persuasive messaging that **leverages fear** to influence decision making.



2.

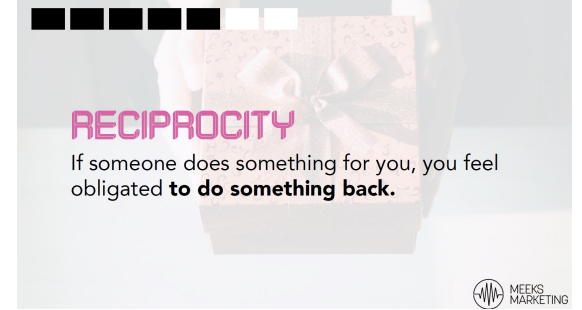


ANCHORING PRINCIPAL

People rely heavily on the **first piece of information they receive**, or the anchor, when making judgments.

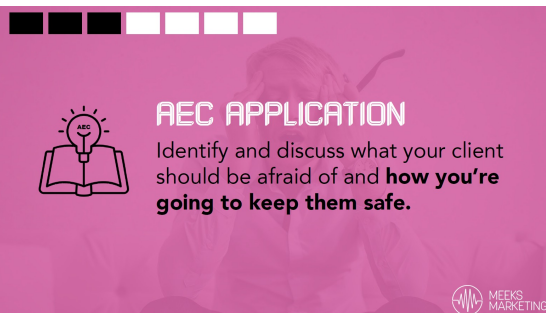


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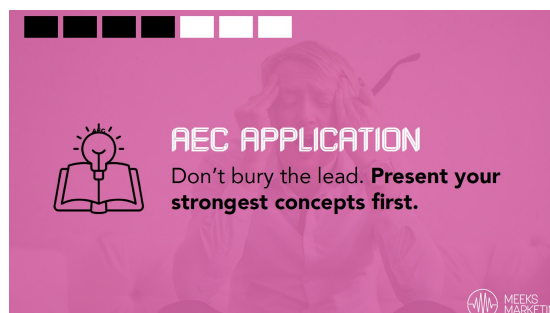
RECIPROCITY

If someone does something for you, you feel obligated **to do something back**.



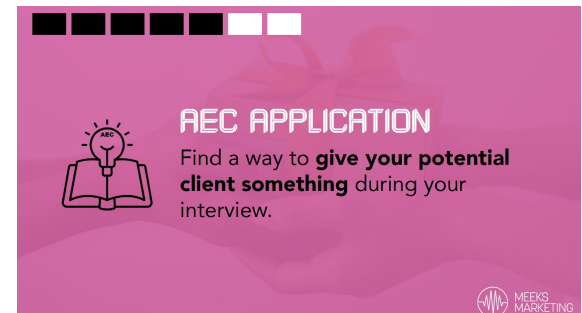
AEC APPLICATION

Identify and discuss what your client should be afraid of and **how you're going to keep them safe.**



AEC APPLICATION

Don't bury the lead. **Present your strongest concepts first.**



AEC APPLICATION

Find a way to **give your potential client something** during your interview.

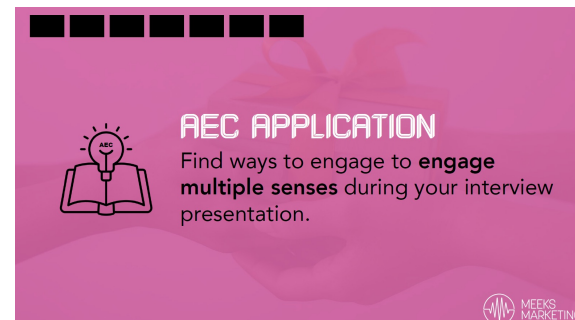
Brain Bending: Leveraging Neuromarketing to Win the Interview

Five Neuromarketing Strategies

4.



5.



Brain Bending: Leveraging Neuromarketing to Win the Interview

Pitfalls & Remedies



INTERVIEW PITFALLS

- All about my firm | **Fear Appeal**
- Lack of connection with interview panel | **Emotional + Sensory Marketing**
- Design choices overwhelm | **Anchoring Principal**
- Lack of chemistry | **Reciprocity**
- Lack of curiosity | **Emotional Marketing**

MEEKS MARKETING

Conference Presenter



Scott Johnston
President
Johnston Framework

smps
Sacramento

Equip Your Technical Teammates with the Skills to Win Interviews

Scott shared practical coaching strategies to help marketing teams prepare technical staff for interviews, improve feedback and panel interactions, and overcome common challenges. He also explained how to streamline interview prep using the Johnston Framework and create stronger content that helps teams win more work.

Recap By:



Lauren Lamar
Alston Construction

2026 PRC Recap Panel

Equip Your Teams with the Skills to Win Interviews

Seven Steps of Successful Project Pursuit

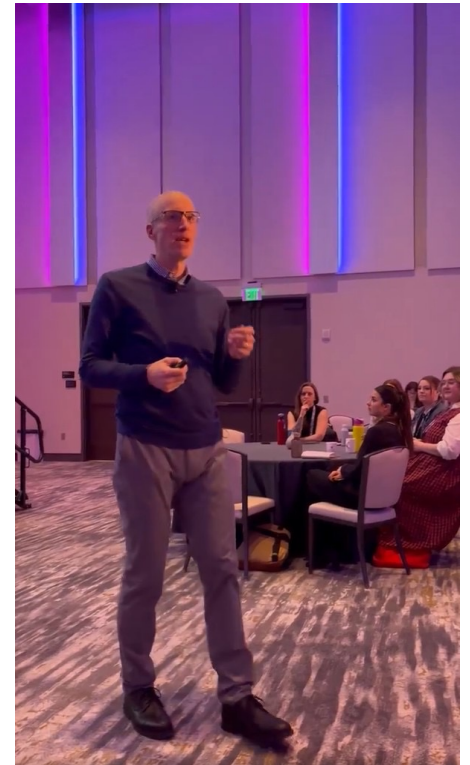
1. Know your client
2. Know your competitors
3. Know your secret sauce
4. Create the interview outline
5. Create visuals
6. Plan for Q&A and interaction
7. Practice



Equip Your Teams with the Skills to Win Interviews

Coaching Philosophy

- **Perfect vs. Effective** - We are constantly building to improve our skills
- **Delivery Skills** - Project your voice and use pauses intentionally
- **Body Language** - Find a natural resting place for your hands, take up space to project confidence
- **Eye Connection** - Essential for building trust and connection
- **Group Interaction & Ground Rules** - Establish clear group rules to increase effectiveness (ex. no interrupting)
- **Eliminate Tentative Language** - Replace with confident language (“will”) or use a pause
- **Learn by Doing** - Practicing on camera and rewatching is far more effective than learning concepts alone



Conference Presenter



Dr. Jaime Raygoza
Career & Executive Coach |
Laughter Yoga Teacher
Rainbow Career Coaching

Lead Like a Champion: Laugh More, Stress Less

Discover how laughter yoga and evidence-based stress management can transform your leadership approach. This session empowers leaders to break the burnout cycle, foster resilient teams, and build a culture where well-being and high performance go hand in hand all through the power of intentional joy.

Attendees will gain actionable, research-backed strategies to reduce stress, boost morale, and improve retention. Leave equipped with practical tools to model resilient, inclusive leadership and elevate team engagement and performance immediately.

Recap By:



Lori Burbridge

Lead Like a Champion: Laugh More, Stress Less

Laughter Yoga

- Unique practice that combines intentional laughter with yogic breathing exercises
- Harness the power of laughter to boost our mood, well-being, and nurture our inner child
- Encourages connection and joy
- Create supportive environments where laughter becomes contagious and helps release stress

Lead Like a Champion: Laugh More, Stress Less

Stress

Recognizing Your Stress Signals

- Physical - headaches, tension, fatigue
- Emotional - irritability, anxiety, shutdown
- Behavioral - sleep, eating, focus changes

**Your body gives you data
before your calendar does**

Why does this matter?

- Proposal + pursuit work requires:
 - Clarity, creativity, and collaboration
- Stress Shrinks attention and patience
 - This is performance hygiene, like sleep for athletes

One solution:

Intentional joy + nervous system resets... Laughter!

Lead Like a Champion: Laugh More, Stress Less

Benefits of Laughter

- For individuals:
 - mood, energy, stress relief
- For teams:
 - communication, trust, collaboration
- For organizations:
 - culture, engagement, retention



**Counting
Laughter
Exercise**

Lead Like a Champion: Laugh More, Stress Less

Implementing Laughter into your Work Routine

- Pre-pursuit reset:
 - 2 minutes before writing/review
- Pre-interview warm-up:
 - breath + smile + 30 seconds laughter
- Mid-deadline break:
 - 60-second “brain scrub”
- Team ritual:
 - 2-minute opener/closer in weekly meetings



Conference Presenter



Tully Mahoney
Storytelling Associate
Stantec

Medal-Worthy Metrics: Topping the Podium with Data Storytelling

As AEC marketers and communicators, we're tasked with crafting narratives that resonate, engage, and ultimately win more work. While many of us excel at simplifying language and cutting through industry jargon, how can we apply those skills to data storytelling? This session explores strategies drawn from data journalism and user-centered design to help marketers turn raw data into compelling visuals that clarify insights, drive action, and enhance marketing impact.

Recap By:



Nicole Sawyer
CSWST2

Medal-Worthy Metrics: Topping the Podium with Data Storytelling

Prioritizing Data to Tell the Story

- **Point of View:** What idea are you trying to convince others to adopt?
- **Stakes:** What happens if they adopt it? What if they don't?
- **Big Idea:** What you want others to do, decide, or think.



POV

+



Stakes

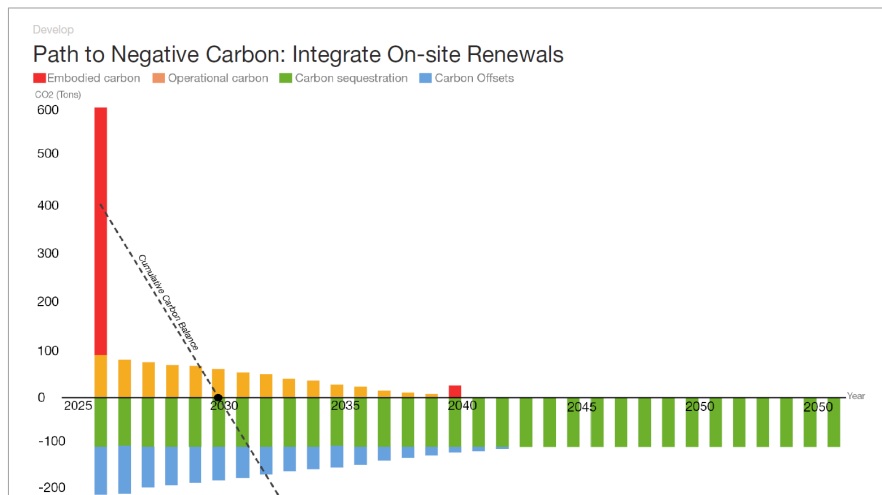
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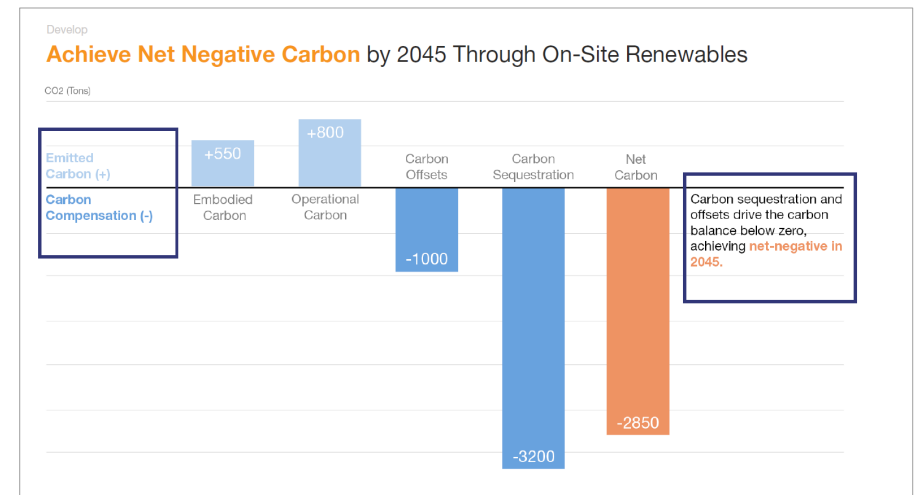
Big Idea

Medal-Worthy Metrics: Topping the Podium with Data Storytelling

Unactionable Data



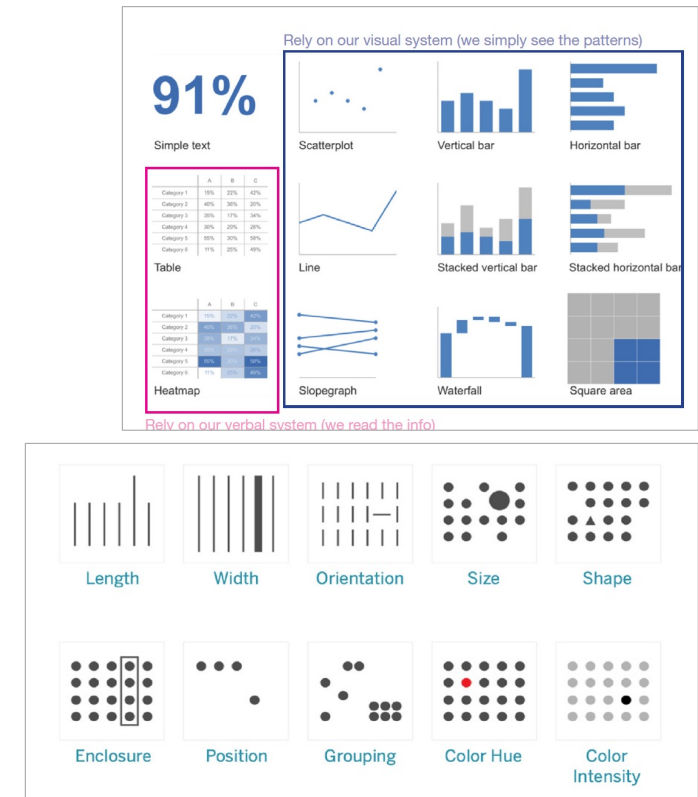
Actionable Data



Medal-Worthy Metrics: Topping the Podium with Data Storytelling

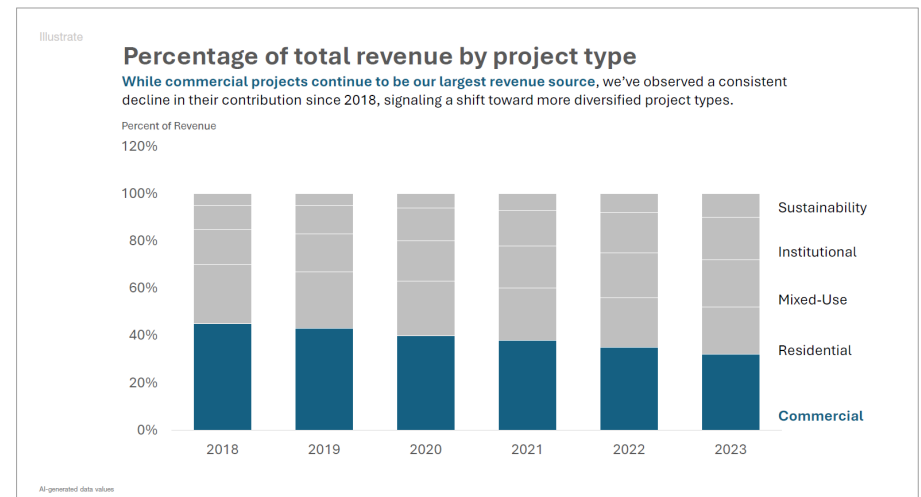
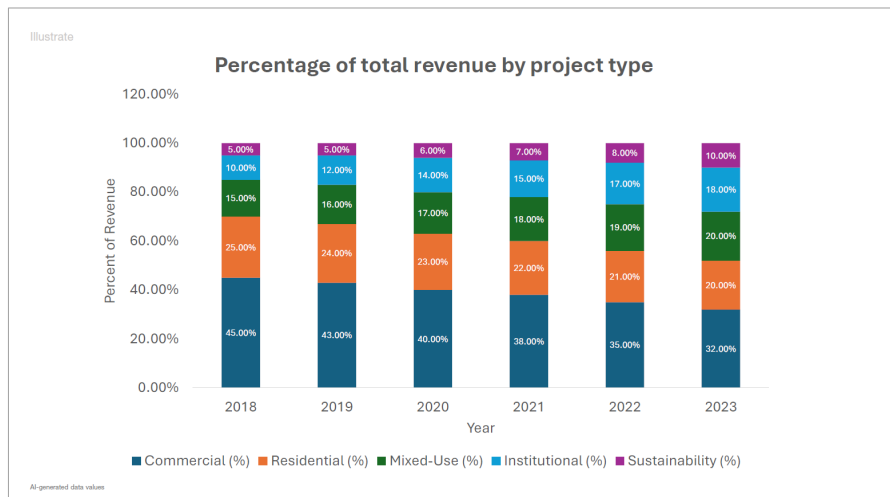
Principles of Design in Data

- **Consider your medium.** Is this a document or a presentation?
- Strategically use white space.
- Create visual hierarchy and alignment.
- Use color and contrast sparingly.
- **Pro Tip:** Left align the title and include the big idea/subtitle underneath.
- **Avoid:** Red and green pairings (most common color blindness).
- **Avoid:** Vertical aligned text.



Medal-Worthy Metrics: Topping the Podium with Data Storytelling

Both of these charts are the same. Only one uses design to reinforce the message.



Medal-Worthy Metrics: Topping the Podium with Data Storytelling

The Data Story Three-Act Structure

1

Set Up

Introduce the plot and build context for your audience:

- Setting
- The problem
- Desired outcome

Hook your audience's attention by answering what's on their mind:

- Why should I pay attention?
- What's in it for me?

2

Confrontation

Why should the audience take action:

- Define the problem with clear examples
- Provide context or comparisons
- Show consequences of inaction
- Highlight benefits of your solution
- Clarify why they are positioned to act

Consider which data illustrations help support your story

3

Resolution

Call to action:

- Recap the problem and the resulting need for action
- Reiterate any sense of urgency

Conference Presenter



Joshua Hanosh
VP of Strategy
Three29

smgs
Sacramento

Did ChatGPT Just Become Your MOST Important Salesperson?

What's the difference between Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)? Joshua discussed clear strategies to adapt your content and brand for how today's buyers research before they ever reach out.

Recap By:



Lauren Lamar
Alston Construction

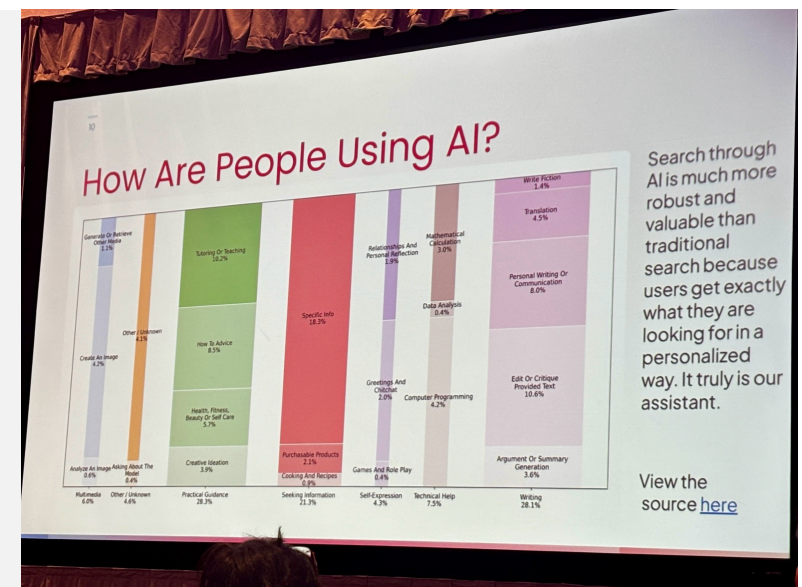
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Did ChatGPT Just Become Your MOST Important Salesperson?

AI is Changing the Way We Find Information

What is GEO?

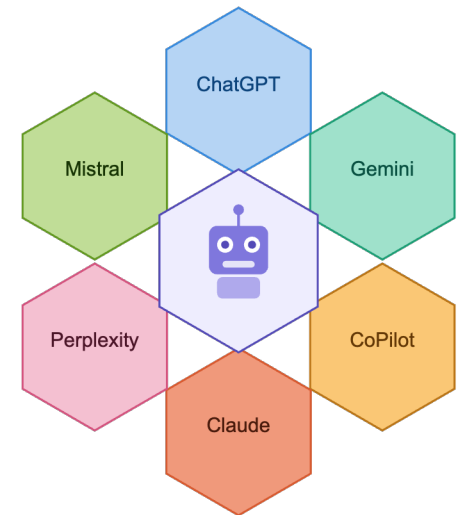
- Generative Engine Optimization gets you cited, not just ranked
- Google is pushing users toward AI-driven search
- GEO converts at 3–4x the rate of traditional search
- Strong GEO strategy reduces business development costs



Did ChatGPT Just Become Your MOST Important Salesperson?

How to Optimize for AI Bots

- Every page needs custom schema so bots can read and cite it
- Most AI crawlers cannot read JavaScript, keep content in raw HTML
- Eliminate page animations on important pages
- For example a FAQ page needs FAQ-specific schema
- Use schema generators to help create the code you need
- Pitch to local media (like the Sacramento Business Journal) to get content published and pulled into AI results
- Make sure your website has fresh content
- Start small — does not need to all get implemented overnight



Conference Presenter



Katherine Robinette, CPSM
Owner, President
Keystone & Raven, LLC

Delegation Strength Training: Pass the Ball Like a Pro

An interactive session introducing the PLATES delegation framework. Participants mapped workload bottlenecks, identified what to delegate, and considered structured delegation briefs to empower teams and free leadership capacity.

Recap By:



David Karkhut
CIEF/SRBX

Delegation Strength Training: Pass the Ball Like a Pro

PLATES Framework

- No need to complicate tasks. Looking for ways to delegate.
- Finding the superpowers of other team members.

Empower and encourage them.
- The importance of sweeping tasks that are no longer effective.

P

PRIORITY AND PURPOSE

*Why are we doing this? And why now? What are the drivers? Can it be delayed? Is it still relevant to our goals? Is it essential that *I* do it/participate?*

L

LEVEL

What level of skill does this require? What level of responsibility does this require? What level of authority (decision-making) does this require? Does this require MY participation? Why? Or can I hand it off?

A

ALIGNMENT

Who is best positioned to do this well? Who is interested in this kind of task/meeting/project? Who has capacity (time, mental, resources)? Who could grow?

T

TIME AND TOOLS

What resources are needed to succeed? What context/background info would someone need? what materials, software, access would someone need? what time commitment is needed? Is there follow-on work from this (or a one-time thing?)

E

EXPECTATIONS

What does success look like? When does it need to be done? What are the deliverables? How will the deliverables be used? Will the delegate close the loop or return to me? What are the consequences of not doing this? What are the costs/budget, if applicable?

S

SWEEP

Does this belong on anyone's plate? Is this task/meeting/project outdated, duplicated elsewhere, or no longer needed? If sweeping this off – what communication is needed?



Delegation Strength Training: Pass the Ball Like a Pro

What Buckets Do You Have in Your Workflow?

- Bucket 1: Managing & Training
- *Bucket 2: Social Media*
- Bucket 3: Graphic Design
- Bucket 4: Admin Updates

Conference Presenter



Amber Wendover
Principal
Thinking People Consulting, LLC

It Starts With You: A 75-Minute Leadership Reset

Amber Wendover delivered an engaging and reflective keynote, *"It Starts With You: A 75-Minute Leadership Reset,"* guiding attendees through a powerful reset on how they approach leadership. Beginning with grounding breathing practices, she created space for reflection before sharing personal stories on overcoming perfectionism and redefining what "perfect" looks like. Her message emphasized self-awareness, intentional leadership, and the importance of showing up authentically—reminding attendees that meaningful leadership transformation starts from within.

Recap By:



David Karkhut
CIEF/SRBX

It Starts With You: A 75-Minute Leadership Reset

Perfection is overrated!

- The importance of listening to your body
- Perfection spectrum
 - Where do I need to be on a scale to be good enough as a student, family member, employee, etc.

Grounding moments. I.e: holding a cup of coffee



Source: www.thinkingpeople.com

Conference Presenter



Key McKay

Sales Ecosystem Strategist & Executive
Communication Trainer



From Contacts to Contracts: Mastering Business Development Strategy

Business development can feel overwhelming, especially in A/E/C where relationship-building is essential but often unstructured. This workshop demystifies the process, helping marketers and firm leaders confidently build, track, and convert high-value contacts into signed contracts. Attendees will leave with a customizable BD playbook and tools to increase win rates, shorten sales cycles, and deepen client relationships.

Recap By:



Nicole Sawyer
CSWST2

2026 PRC Recap Panel

From Contacts to Contracts: Mastering Business Development Strategy

Role of a Business Developer

- Business Development **creates an ecosystem** for the firm.
- Business Developers **build relationships for the ecosystem**.
- This builds the relationship and **turns it over** to the seller-doer.
- The seller-doer **does not** get cold leads.
- **Give resources to help make decisions; not to sell but to help the client.**



From Contacts to Contracts: Mastering Business Development Strategy

The Gardener Analogy

Type	Definition	Example
Farmer	A traditional Farmer is an operator of a production ecosystem.	Is the Sales Manager who only cares about the monthly quota and “strips the soil” of the team’s morale to get it.
Gardener	The traditional Gardener is an artist of a controlled space.	Is the Business Developer who creates a beautiful brand image and lots of “pretty” connections but fails to actually feed the company’s bottom line.
Permaculture Gardener	A Permaculture Gardener is a designer of a self-regulating system.	Is an Ecosystem Strategist!

Business Developers and Marketers should aim to create a healthy, self-regulating sales ecosystem within their firm.

Conference Presenter



Danielle Gray, MBA
Founder
DG Marketing Company



Peace is a Strategy: The Competitive Advantage of Calm Leadership

Danielle spoke on turning calm into a competitive advantage. Her Peace-to-Performance Framework to move from reactivity to results; a 90-second reset for tense moments; and conflict-to-clarity steps that protect relationships and decisions.

Recap By:



Lauren Lamar
Alston Construction

Peace is a Strategy: The Competitive Advantage of Calm Leadership

The P.E.A.C.E Framework™

P: Pause

E: Empathize

A: Assess

C: Choose

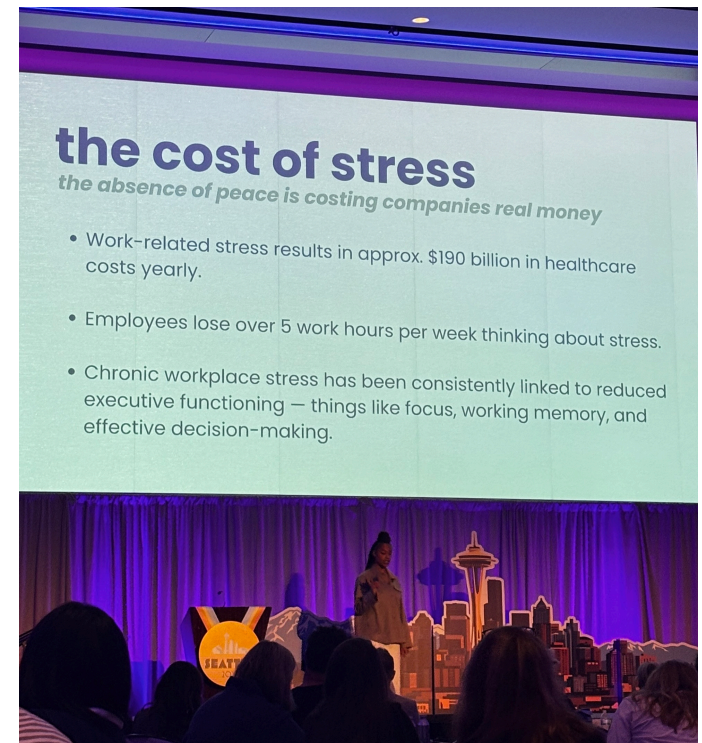
E: Execute



Peace is a Strategy: The Competitive Advantage of Calm Leadership

The ROI on Calm Leadership

- Better Retention
- Faster Decisions
- Stronger Relationships
- Higher Creativity



Access PRC Materials



Scan the QR Code above to access the PRC Materials.

Congratulations!

PRC Bingo Winner

1st Place (Free Registration to PRC 2027):
Christine Kenney!

smps
Sacramento

2026 PRC BINGO!

Hello SMPS Sacramento members! Thank you for attending the 2026 PRC in Seattle!
We are doing the BINGO ice breaker game again to help you make those PRC connections!

Game instructions:

- Have another attendee sign a square that relates to them showing their first and last name legibly. Only one signature per person please - no repeats. So meet multiple attendees and flex those networking skills!
- Submit your card after the conference to be entered into a raffle to win prizes like: One free entry to PRC 2027 or one ticket to any SMPS Sacramento event in 2026. (sorry, no jointly-hosted events eligible)
- Must complete at least 75% of game to qualify for the raffle. (21 or more squares)

How to submit game card:

- Scan or take a picture of your game card and email it to, Andy Larson at andy@cecwest.com by April 3, 2026 @ 4 pm.

Raffle Info:

- Raffle will be held during our PRC Recap event on Wednesday, April 8th. You do not need to be present to win. If you plan to attend the PRC Recap event please register at: <https://smpls-sac.org>

Any Chapter President	Needs Coffee to Function	Any Committee Chair	Their First PRC	A Past President	Does Proposals at Their Firm	Alaska Chapter Member
CPSM	Works for a GC Firm	Serves on a Chapter Board	A PRC Volunteer	A PRC Sponsor	SMPS Member for Over 5 Years	Attending a 2026 PRC Social Event
Any Non-Sacramento chapter SMPS Member	Seattle Chapter Member	Attended 4 or More PRCs	Sacramento Chapter Member	An SMPS Member you Have Never Met Before	Loves to Travel	Works for an Architecture Firm
Works for an Engineering Firm	Cat or Dog Lover	Oregon Chapter Member	Does Business Development	Hawaii Chapter Member	A Chapter President-Elect	San Francisco Chapter Member

Your Name (first, last) and best contact email _____

Upcoming Events

2026 Events Calendar *

APRIL

8 - PRC Recap Panel (Education)
29 - SMF Jobsite Tour (Program)

MAY

21 - SMPS/SRBX Personal Branding Workshop (Education)
Sip n' Swing with AMA (Special Event)

JUNE

Backpack Drive (Special Event)

JULY

Meet the "BD, Marketing Manager"
Speed Dating (Education)

AUGUST

Decarbonization Panel (Program)

SEPTEMBER

Brew Boat (Special Event)
Marketing Trends (Education)

OCTOBER

Nails & Networking (Special Event)

NOVEMBER

Meet the Client Roundtable (Program)

DECEMBER

Sponsor Appreciation (Special Event)

* **Events are subject to change.**

Learn More & Register >>

<https://smps-sac.org/calendar.php>

Thank you!

ORANGE
COUNTY
2027



Hyatt Regency Irvine

Save the date!

March 15-17th



Ignite //

smps
Pacific
Regional Conference

5 tracks

35 sessions

14.25 ceus

get.ready >

Q & A



David Karkhut
CIEF/SRBX



Lauren Lamar
Alston Construction



Lori Burbridge, CPSM
Marketing Professional



Nicole Sawyer
CSWST2