

2016
IEEE POCO
Panel of Conference Organizers
28 - 30 July 2016 • Montreal, QC, Canada

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**IEEE MEETINGS,
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POST-EVENT SUMMARY

JULY 2016



Au revoir Montréal

By Marie Hunter
Senior Director, IEEE MCE

POCO in Montreal will truly be an event that we remember for years to come. The many memories that we will take with us were built upon the incredible hospitality of our host city. Selecting a host city for a conference is critical for success. Montreal really was a great choice for POCO! The venue was spot on, the city itself is very well located and easy to get to. Our Canadian colleagues and volunteers were exceptionally positive and engaged. We had a great turn out from our young professionals on Thursday night as well as on education day. We had more to experience of the city at the convention center and at the amazing "Cirque Eloize". *By the way there is a rumor that they have invited Fred Schindler to join their troupe.* The venues and the commitment to see it through all came together in Montreal. We have already seen two new conferences select Montreal since POCO.

At POCO, we demonstrate techniques and share ideas for different ways to facilitate networking ("name badge gamification", events and competitions on the exhibit floor), and to provide value for our exhibitors (bringing them into speaking engagements and social events and honoring them as part of the community).

The ideas being presented gave me a deep sense of connection and optimism. There is such enthusiasm and focus on the future and building these activities! Some mentioned keynotes that resonated with them or interactions over lunch or huddling in the huddle room. What do you remember as a high point?

About POCO

In July 2016, IEEE Meetings, Conferences & Events (MCE) held the Panel of Conference Organizers (POCO), an annual event which convenes the conference community. Over 200 attendees from more than 20 countries had the opportunity to network, share ideas and collaborate. Leveraging the location of Montreal, many local conference and IEEE Section leaders along with representation from most of the IEEE Canada conference volunteer leadership were active participants. These local experts, along with IEEE leaders representing Society and Council Presidents, VPs of Conferences, Regional Directors and Conference Coordinators, and Section Chairs created a community built to network and brainstorm on the future of conferences and events.

Attendees took part in thought-provoking and insightful sessions that aimed to provide real value to conference leaders. The program focused on attracting and engaging new audiences in new and innovative ways, as well as offered new session formats to provide real-time problem solving and demonstrating the importance of adult learning with "fun factors" to meet the ongoing needs of our global organizer community.

Attracting New Audiences



POCO 2016 began with a warm welcome from Fred Schindler, Chair of IEEE Conferences Committee, followed by Marie Hunter, Senior Director of IEEE Meetings, Conferences & Events, who introduced the 2016 theme of *Attracting New Audiences*, and encouraged participants to become beacons and leaders within the IEEE Conferences Community.

Content consisted of panels as well as some interactive sessions. The first panel focused around the issues of attracting new audiences and included experts from industry, young professionals, women in tech and entrepreneurs and provided great insight on reaching target attendees. In all of these different demographics, all panelists stressed the importance of

knowing what your audience wants, and focusing on delivering and promoting those items. The second panel hosted an interactive conversation around IEEE's efforts to attract more industry to IEEE events. Reporting out information from the industry membership research project, Ad Hoc committee work and an overall view from leadership on the insights gained in the past year, participants were given some tips on how to attract and engage this audience. Finally, tips were provided by IEEE Society and Section leaders, as well as preferred hotel partners, Hilton Worldwide and IHG, along with Tourisme Montreal on selling the value of your event to cities, vendors, and potential exhibitors and partners. Experts explained ways to make events attractive to attendees, and bringing partners and exhibitors to the table.

Infused throughout this important content were fun and productive sessions from learning communication skills taught through Improvisation designed to take your ability to think and respond quickly in all situations to a whole new level with the speed and agility.

Brent Bushnell, co-founder of Two Bit Circus and longtime IEEE member, shared his experience to combine gaming, science, robots and fire to excite audiences about STEM and STEAM education and ways to apply this to IEEE events.

The day concluded with the Portland Pints and Pours happy hour, where attendees could network with partners and each other, and then the evening Welcome Reception.



POCO Audience Engagement Highlights

High Profile Speakers Sponsored by Partners

As in previous years, there was tremendous enthusiasm from our event partners. Exhibit space sold out long before July. In order to offer additional opportunities and increase the value of the program, there was a push to ask that industry partners contribute high profile speakers as part of their sponsorship, giving them time on stage to introduce them along with a video or remarks about their product. This arrangement continues to be mutually beneficial for the partner, IEEE MCE, the audience and the speaker.

New Session Formats

POCO has an emphasis on trying new formats. Previous years demoed the *fishbowl* and the *unconference*. 2016 marked the trial of the *Experience Talks and Idea Accelerator*. The concept is that a quick talk would follow with an optional hands-on deeper dive workshop. Participants can self-select parallel sessions and even stay in the room to hear all of the experience talks.

Pop Up MCE Huddle Room

This pop up, moveable and shippable room can be branded for your event using lighting and served as a place for informal meetings and discussions. If you have lots of space, but not enough small meeting rooms, consider a pop-up huddle room!

POCO Badge Game

The Bingo Style game on the back of participants' badges was a simple way for attendees to connect and introduce themselves to the MCE team. It worked as both an ice breaker and a gamification strategy. This example can easily be applied to a new audience networking/integration strategy when you want any two groups to interact.

Social Media Interaction

Use of all social media through #IEEEPOCO was encouraged, groups were created on LinkedIn and Facebook and a Snapchat filter was created for POCO.

Fun and Educational Social Activity

Portland Pints & Pours Happy Hour offered dedicated time to socialize with POCO partners, the Welcome Reception location at the [Palais des Congres](#) offered an opportunity for site visits and education, and the Ask Me Another game on stage as participants settled in from the breaks served as a way to get to know each other and break the ice.



Host City: Montreal, Quebec, Canada



The city of Montreal was an excellent host for IEEE POCO 2016. Our partners at [Tourisme Montreal](#) and [Business Events Canada](#) were actively involved in assisting with the planning and program development of this event. You may remember seeing them at several POCOs in the past. Not only were they attending as exhibitors, but they were gaining valuable insight into the conference, and ways to infuse the City of Montreal into enhancing the program. We hope you were able to experience Montreal for yourselves. Lastly, we want to give a big thank you to Montreal from IEEE MCE!

Innovation Infusion

Friday started off with an insightful keynote from the IEEE Managing Director of Technical Activities, Mary Ward Callan, on *Embracing the Full Technology Lifecycle*. Using these concepts, participants started the day open to changing behaviors and thinking of new topics, applications and audiences for their conferences and events.

Attendees then divided into smaller groups to try out a new session format comprised of quick Experience Talks followed by Idea Accelerator Workshops and small group discussions. Topics ranged from finding affordable locations, building an RFP, establishing registration fees and building a budget, and finding inspiration and innovation.

Melissa Marshall delivered an engaging talk on how effective communication is the linchpin between research and those that are in a position to advance that research. Michelle provided strategies to share with the speakers at their events to encourage improved technical talks at conferences, such as offering engaging examples and practical strategies. Enthusiastic participants left with a new skill set for communicating science and helping others to do so.

Lea Miller, MCE Audience Development Specialist, shared ways for attendees to leverage existing audiences and reach new audiences with the goal of increasing overall attendance.

This strategic talk explained the significance of strong websites, branding, and email campaigns, as well as best practices for implementing. Her presentation shared next-level ideas for innovation, including social media, mobile strategy, and creative marketing campaigns. The presentation was supported by various MCE case studies, demonstrating results and creativity as examples for participants to easily apply to their events. The phone is already ringing off the hook for Lea!



Co-Location at POCO

Although co-location for IEEE leadership committee meetings is not new to POCO, 2016 marked the first year that the IEEE Conferences Committee held an official committee meeting in co-location with the event. This co-location furthered a partnership between IEEE volunteer leaders, conference organizers, MCE and some of our best events industry partners.

In addition, IEEE Region conference leadership was invited to attend POCO and join a strategy session on the future of IEEE conferences and how MCE and Conferences Committee can support and partner together with them on the future of geographical unit events.

Please contact [MCE](#) to arrange for your groups to co-locate with POCO next year to gather your leadership to the conferences community.



POCO 2016 was inspiring, invigorating, insightful and fun. Thank you for all of your positive and productive energy and for making 2016 the best event yet!

We look forward to experiencing more adventures in 2017 as we co-locate the Conferences Community with IEEE Sections Congress in Sydney, Australia from 7 – 9 August 2017.

The IEEE Meetings, Conferences & Events team looks forward to seeing you there!

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Making Connections, Building Communities

Feeling a sense of community, energy, and even inspiration- that's what happens when an event transforms into an experience.

Powerful, lasting memories. Stronger impressions. Increased commitment. MCE helps you transform your event into a resonant experience that stays with participants long after the meeting ends. Our mission is growing IEEE's technical communities through innovative, collaborate gatherings.



What does that mean?
That we're here for you, from early concept design through strategic agenda development and attendee engagement strategies.

Maybe we're consulting on logistics and location specific planning. Or maybe we're crafting media and putting your meeting online with streaming video and mobile apps.

Maybe we are introducing you to patrons or speakers that we have connected with along the way.

From planning through execution, MCE has the expertise to make the connections and help you build your community.



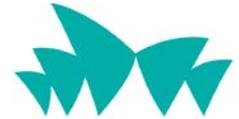
Professional Event Management Services

- Site selection & contract negotiation
- Venue & supplier management
- Registration, plenary, exhibit & concurrent session management
- Audience generation strategies
- Creative event media design and development
- Logistics planning/event management
- Patron program development
- Speaker management & engagement
- Exhibit sales & management

Bringing IEEE partners and professional expertise to your event

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ieee-mce@ieee.org



Thank You and Honors



We want to thank and acknowledge the leadership of Fred Schindler. We were fortunate to have so many of the conference committee and other leadership present. We are grateful to Fred for his strategic leadership and efforts to expand the conversation and our community. Fred is an outstanding leader, partner and circus performer... who knew?

It takes a global village to produce POCO, but our lead event producer, Beth Surmont, deserves special honors. From lining up speakers to bringing on sponsors to energizing the event with the latest event trends, her signature style was all over the event. All of us join in saluting the outstanding job she did on this year's POCO, even if she did need to retreat to a cabin in the woods afterwards to regain her sanity! Thanks Beth, for making this the best POCO ever.



Thank you to the entire POCO team, including:

<i>Julie Amodeo</i>	<i>Erin Lyman</i>
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<i>Carl Debono</i>	<i>Michelle Measel</i>
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