

# My ECC Experience

Summary of Key Takeaways from  
the 2026 ECC Extra Conference

Year:  
**2026**

Date:  
**February 5th**

Location:  
**Birmingham, AL**





# Thank You for attending!

417

REGISTERED  
ATTENDEES

97

FIRST TIME  
ATTENDEES

171

FUTURE  
LEADERS

129

SPONSOR  
COMPANIES

62

PREMIER  
SPONSORS



# ECC Overview

## For over 50 years, the Engineering and Construction Contracting (ECC) Association

has provided unique opportunities for industry pioneers and innovators to collaborate in a forum free from the daily demands and politics of business. Formed by owners, contractors, suppliers and academics in the engineering and construction business, the ECC aims to drive excellence and the long-term success of the industry through networking, innovation, and outreach.

### The ECC Association provides:

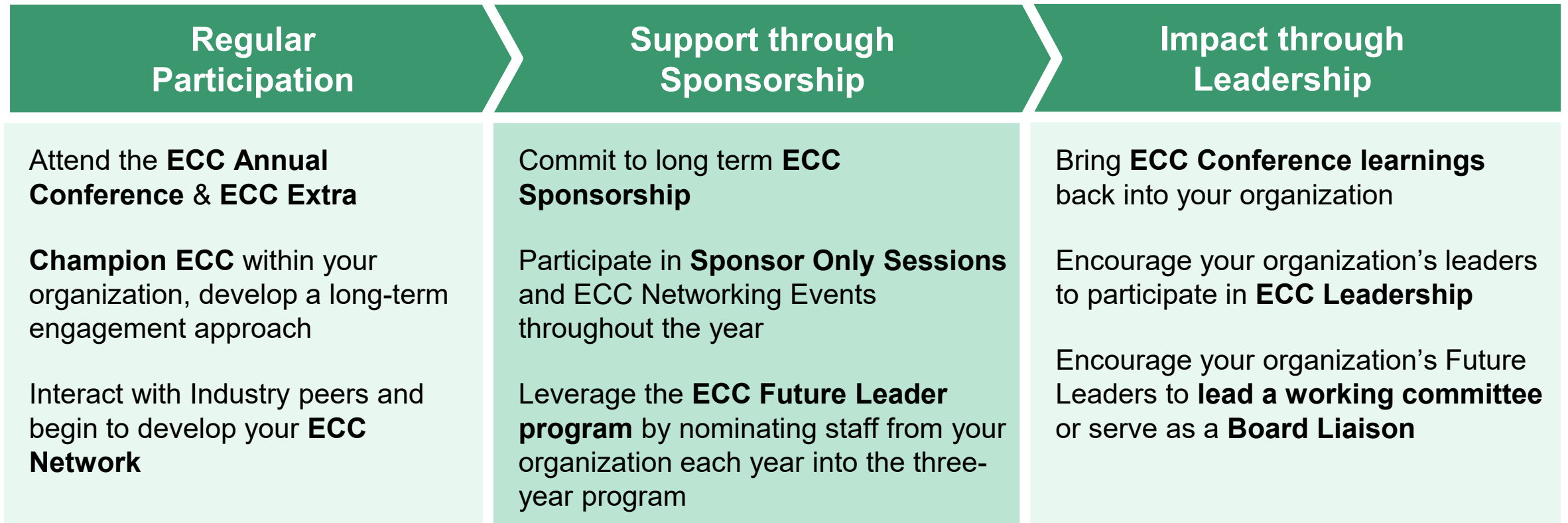
- A business-neutral platform for its diverse participants to come together outside the constraints of everyday business, to explore new paths, collaborate, exchange ideas, and gain perspective.
- Honest, genuine peer-to-peer interaction that promotes better understanding to individual careers and company
- A source for real knowledge and skills that allow participants to be a leader and decision maker within their unique industry role.



### Annual Program Overview:

- ECC Extra Single Day event in February
- Annual 3-Day ECC Conference held in Aug/Sept
- Sponsor Only Sessions and Future Leader program events held twice per year
- Numerous networking events throughout the year

# Progression of the ECC Experience & Next Steps



## Develop a Long-Term Connection

- Bring others within your network into the **ECC Community**
- Make ECC part of your long-term **career development plan**
- Stay active in the **Future Leader Alumni** community

Visit the [ECC Website](#) for information [ECC Sponsorship](#), the [Future Leader Program](#) and more

# 2026 ECC Calendar of Events



**ECC**

*3rd annual*  
**GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
FRIDAY, MARCH 6TH  
2026

**REGISTRATION + SPONSORSHIP  
LIVE @ ECCASSOCIATION.ORG**

BLACK HORSE GOLF COURSE, CYPRESS, TX  
8:00 AM SHOTGUN START

**BENEFITING THE  
ECC SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

For questions, contact Andi Stallard (Andrea.Stallard@kbr.com)  
and Alexis Musso (mussoam@cpchem.com).

[Register Now](#)



**ECC**

**THE MYTH  
OF  
MORE**

IT'S NOT THE TOOLS WE'RE MISSING;  
IT'S THE FOCUS.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026 | 8 - 5 PM**  
THE HOUSTONIAN HOTEL

Registration, Hotel, and Agenda Details Coming Soon!

[Register Now](#)



**ECC Annual  
Conference**

**JW Marriott  
Austin, Texas  
September 7-11, 2026**

Members of the Engineering and Construction Contracting Association,

Thank you so much for selecting me as a scholarship recipient this year. This award brings me one step closer to achieving my dream of owning my own construction company. I will do my best to make you proud.  
With Gratitude,

Dear Susan Jackson,  
I wanted to thank you so very much for your generosity in awarding me the Engineering and Construction Contracting Association scholarship. It means so much and I will do my best to work hard to succeed. I am heading to Cal Poly - SLO in the Fall and am excited to start my college career. Thanks again.

Sincerely,  
Chris Woody

Dear Engineering and Construction Contracting Association,

I am honored and blessed to be the recipient of this scholarship. During my time of essay writing, I discovered a lot about myself, and enjoyed every bit of having this opportunity given to me. Your scholarship will go to great use of my schooling, books, and other means of finishing out my degree. Once again, thank you so much for this absolute blessing of a scholarship and recognition.

Sincerely,

Dominic Lunde

The ECC Scholarship fund was able to raise **\$62,000** for Scholarship of America. This funded **28** scholarships.

- **8** Students Studying Engineering
- **18%** Women
- **12** getting Construction Mgmt Degrees
- **8** Students pursuing Skilled Trades

Students are attending **25** different schools

## OUR MISSION

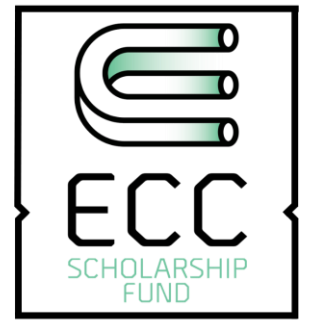
The ECC Scholarship Fund will support students pursuing degrees/certificates in **Engineering, Construction Management, and Skilled Trades**. With the critical workforce shortage in our industry, we recognize that investing in the next generation is essential in building a strong, resilient future



Submission deadline is March 13, 2026: [Apply Now](#)



Learn more: [ECC Scholarship Fund](#)



# ECC Extra Sessions - Overview

## *OPENING SPEAKER – ROBERT J. O'NEILL*

Hear firsthand insights on leadership, accountability, and decision-making under pressure from former SEAL Team Six leader **Robert J. O'Neill**. Through real-world mission experiences, this keynote will connect trust, preparedness, and shared responsibility to project execution, reinforcing a one-team mindset where owners, engineers, and constructors succeed or fail together.

## *THE BUSINESS CASE MADE SENSE – UNTIL THE DECISIONS STARTED*

Learn how financial pressure and increasing project complexity will influence the decisions that ultimately shape project outcomes. Led by **Paul Wicker**, a seasoned strategy and decision analysis consultant with deep expertise in facilitation, probabilistic modeling, and teaching, this session will apply a financial lens to leadership and execution, helping teams identify blind spots and better balance cost, risk, and benefit in day-to-day decisions.

## *MANUFACTURING THE WORK OFFSITE: IS THE REWARD WORTH THE COST*

Take a closer look at the tradeoffs, risks, and returns of offsite strategies in today's project environment. Featuring insights from **Sarah Barker**, EPC Project Manager at Burns & McDonnell, and **Chris Giattina**, CEO of BLOX, this session will examine where modularization delivers predictable results, where it falls short, and how teams can determine what work truly belongs offsite.

## *OUT OF PEOPLE, OUT OF EXCUSES*

Understand how labor scarcity, knowledge loss, and misalignment will continue to challenge project delivery across the industry. Through a candid, interactive panel, **Brandon Mabile**, Corporate Business Development Director at Performance Contractors; **Shara Petrie**, Business Development and Account Management Leader at Hatch; **Lauren Redden**, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Program Chair at Auburn University; and **Verdi Wahjosoedibjo**, Global Discipline Head for Instrumentation at Shell, will bring together owner, EPC, and constructor perspectives to surface what's holding teams back and highlight what leading organizations are doing to keep people engaged and projects moving.

# LEADERSHIP ISN'T THE ISSUE — ALIGNMENT IS. HOW DO WE GET ALIGNED?



**Robert J O'Neill**  
*Motivational Speaker*  
*Robert J. O'Neill, LLC*



Elite teams succeed not because they create perfect plans, but because they prepare relentlessly, communicate clearly, and stay adaptable when reality changes. Robert O'Neil emphasized that calm decision-making, disciplined processes, and mutual respect allow teams to perform under pressure. Success comes from training, trust, removing emotion from critical decisions, and refusing to quit on difficult days. In construction—as in combat—preparation, teamwork, and safety fundamentals determine outcomes.

Ways we can improve our team & project execution:

## Preparation & Discipline

- Preparation beats planning perfection
- Follow SOPs every time; improve them deliberately
- Rehearse contingencies; adapt quickly when things change
- Complacency kills — treat today like Day 1
- Build momentum through small daily wins

## Communication & Decision Making

- Communicate simply and directly — eliminate noise
- Respond, don't react — control emotion and stay calm
- Use clear roles, signals, and closed-loop communication
- Address problems early and directly (no gossip)

## Teamwork & Leadership

- Work *with* people, not *over* them — respect matters
- Trust your team and let people do their jobs
- Train together to build shared instincts and confidence
- Keep a sense of humor; maintain perspective
- Never quit on a bad day — resilience is a team norm
- Stress and panic are contagious—lead with composure

# LEADERSHIP ISN'T THE ISSUE — ALIGNMENT IS. HOW DO WE GET ALIGNED?

## Key Takeaways

- Have the hard conversation early: Address friction directly and privately; don't triangulate or gossip—it destroys trust and slows teams.
- Never quit on a bad day: Normalize tough days. “Quit tomorrow” is a tool to push through short-term pain on long-term projects.
- Overplanning ≠ readiness: The “perfect plan” dies at first contact (Murphy always shows up). Prioritize rehearsals, scenario drills, and contingencies.
- Rehearse failure points: Practice the “what if the helicopter crashes in the front yard?” moments. On jobsites: plan for setbacks, weather delays, late deliveries, utility conflicts, and design change
- Focus on what is true now: When facts change, accept reality immediately (“it doesn't matter why it happened; the clock is ticking—what do we do next?”).
- Complacency kills: Past success breeds shortcuts. Treat Day 500 like Day 1—pre-job briefs, hazard ID, PPE, lockout/tagout, lift plans, confined-space, trench safety, etc.
- Model emotional control: Leaders set the temperature—calm is contagious; panic is, too.



# The Business Case Made Sense — Until the Decisions Started



**Paul Wicker**  
*Senior Decision Analyst*  
*Rosnik Solutions*



**Projects rarely fail because the business case was wrong — they fail because decisions are made under uncertainty using the wrong tools.**

Single-point estimates, blanket contingency, and misaligned objectives hide risk rather than manage it. By explicitly modeling uncertainty, aligning stakeholders through a shared financial narrative, and timing decisions based on information quality, organizations can make faster, more defensible, and more financially sound decisions.

## Financial Metrics Are Often Misapplied

- NPV and IRR are decision-support tools, not guarantees
- Negative NPV does not necessarily mean a project loses money
- Early capital spend and schedule delays heavily impact returns
- Discount rates are often misused as a proxy for risk

## Uncertainty Drives Cost and Schedule Failure

- Deterministic estimates create false confidence
- Contingency hides uncertainty instead of explaining it
- Parallel tasks reduce the probability of on-time completion
- Early baselines anchor unrealistic expectations

## Better Decisions Require Probabilistic Thinking

- Probabilistic analysis reveals ranges of possible outcomes
- S-curves show the likelihood of meeting targets
- Shared financial narratives align stakeholders
- Decisions should be timed to information quality

# The Business Case Made Sense – Until the Decision Started

## Key Takeaways

- Business cases fail when decisions are made before uncertainty is understood
- Early capital commitments deserve more scrutiny than late-stage cost changes
- Schedule slip before first revenue destroys more value than most teams expect
- Contingency without quantified risk provides comfort, not insight
- Probability-based ranges lead to better approvals than single-point estimates
- Shared financial models reduce conflict between owners and contractors
- The timing of a decision can matter as much as the decision itself
- Good decision processes create defensible decisions, even when outcomes disappoint



# MANUFACTURING THE WORK OFFSITE: IS THE REWARD WORTH THE COST?

## Speakers



 **Sarah Barker**  
EPC Project Manager  
Burns & McDonnell



 **Chris Giattina**  
CEO  
BLOX

Off-site manufacturing and modularization allow project teams to deliver safer, faster, and more predictable outcomes by shifting work from dynamic job sites to controlled factory environments. With schedule compression, labor shortages, and site constraints becoming more severe, modularization is an increasingly strategic advantage rather than an optional technique. Success requires early integration, disciplined logistics planning, and a designed for manufacturing mindset that treats project elements like repeatable products rather than one-off builds.

### Strategic Drivers

- Schedule compression and parallel work fronts
- Labor shortages and productivity limitations on site
- Site constraints and logistics challenges
- Improved quality from factory environments
- Reduced safety risk by moving work offsite

### Choosing the Right Scope

- Three categories: components, panelized systems, volumetric modules
- Maximize what can be done in the yard, not in the field
- Match modular strategies to project drivers (schedule, labor, safety, congestion)
- Don't assume "big modules only"; even small targeted modules add value

### Formula for Success

- Early integration and early decision-making (FEL2/FEL3)
- Reverse-sequence planning ("start with the end in mind")  
Logistics, route studies, transport envelopes
- Design for Manufacturing & Assembly (DfMA)  
Productization: repeatable standards, interfaces, supply chain alignment  
Modular installation planning and field readiness
- Real ROI = schedule + productivity + risk reduction + safety

# MANUFACTURING THE WORK OFFSITE: IS THE REWARD WORTH THE COST?

## Key Takeaways

- Off-site construction accelerates schedules by allowing work to proceed in parallel with site activities. This creates time savings traditional field-only workflows simply cannot match.
- Modularization reduces field labor demands and jobsite congestion, creating safer and more productive work zones. Fewer people exposed to weather, heights, and confined spaces means fewer incidents and delays.
- Scope selection should be strategic, focusing on maximizing what can be built in a controlled yard. The goal is not to build the biggest module possible but to target the highest-value elements.
- **Poor planning is amplified in modular execution;** early clarity prevents costly rework.
- **Modular strategies can be targeted** — not everything must be a “big module” to add value.
- Productization through standard interfaces and repeatable modules enables scalability across multiple projects. This approach reduces design cycle times and strengthens supply chain reliability.
- **Early integration (FEL2/FEL3) is essential** for procurement and design readiness.



# OUT OF PEOPLE, OUT OF EXCUSES



**Brandon Mabile**

*Corporate Business Development Director  
Performance Contractors*



**Shara Petrie**

*Business Development  
Hatch*



**Verdi Wahjosoedibjo**

*Global Discipline Head for Instrumentation  
Shell*



**Lauren Redden**

*Assoc. Professor & Undergraduate Program Chair  
Auburn University*



## Presentation Overview

The panel highlighted a severe nationwide shortage in skilled trades—especially electricians, welders, and crane operators—driven by high demand and an aging workforce. Universities and training programs struggle to supply enough qualified graduates, making early engagement, internships, and mentorship essential for attracting and developing young talent.

Companies that provide structured training, clear internship pathways, supportive jobsite environments, and strong mentorship see significantly better retention and leadership development. Technology—especially AI, VR, and jobsite digitization—is emerging as a tool to boost productivity and appeal to younger workers, though human expertise remains critical. Solving the talent shortage requires collective action across owners, EPCs, contractors, and educators, along with more accessible, engaging outreach to the next generation.



# OUT OF PEOPLE, OUT OF EXCUSES

## Key Takeaways

### The Scale of the Workforce Problem:

The construction industry needs:

- 349,000 net new workers this year
- 407,000 next year to keep up with demand

Universities produce a fraction of the industry's needs:

- 180 construction management graduates per year from one major program
- Industry demand ≈ 50,000 annually

### Recruitment: What Is Working:

- Earlier Engagement
- Alternative Talent Pipelines
- Internships as a Primary Pipeline

### Compelling Truths That Attract Talent:

- **Debt-free career paths**
- Six-figure earnings in skilled trades by early 20s
- "Earn while you learn" models
- Faster financial independence than many college paths

#### But Pay Alone Is Not Enough

Young workers increasingly look for:

- Purpose
- Belonging
- Meaningful contribution
- Clear expectations and growth paths

### What Actually Improves Retention:

- Formal Mentorship Programs
- Rotational & Development Programs
- Better Job-Site Experience

### Knowledge Capture: The Retirement Cliff:

- Massive risk of tribal knowledge loss due to retirements
- Effective solutions include:
  - Mentoring
  - Digital knowledge capture
  - Smart-glasses, remote expert support
  - AI-assisted knowledge systems (used carefully)

### Technology & AI: Enabler, Not Replacement:

- AI will **not replace craft labor**
- Primary value:
  - Reducing admin work
  - Increasing "tools-in-hand" time
  - Supporting less experienced workers
  - Key risk: over-reliance without comprehension
  - Critical thinking and judgment remain human responsibilities

### Owners' Critical Role

A strong theme emerged:

**Owners have more leverage than they realize.**

Just as safety improved when owners **required** it:

- Owners can demand:
  - Participation in community-based training
  - Verified mentoring programs
  - Workforce development investment

# Future Leader Kickoff

400+ Future Leaders from 120+ Sponsoring Companies



Each company sponsoring ECC Association is entitled to nominate a participant for the Future Leader Program. Future Leaders can participate up to their third year in ECC activities as part of the Future Leaders Program.

## Kickoff Overview

Our half-day kickoff session kicked off the year by welcoming new members, introducing the Future Leader program, and providing key updates on upcoming initiatives. Each Future Leader Committee gave a brief presentation about its mission, ongoing projects, and member engagement opportunities to encourage participation and networking throughout the community. After the presentations, attendees enjoyed a networking lunch and participated in breakout discussions where committees and new members collaborated to plan and set initiatives for the year ahead, ensuring a strong and successful start to the year.

## Future Leader Committees:

- Safety
- Mid-Year Meeting
- Wednesday Session
- Networking
- Program Engagement
- Marketing & Communications
- Forums (5x)
- Alumni Engagement
- ECC Extra
- Community Outreach

Learn more: [ECC Future Leaders Program](#)

# Future Leaders – 2026 Networking Events

## Upcoming Monthly Future Leader Events

- March Monthly Meetup (March 5)
- ECC Golf Tournament (March 6th) - [Register here](#)
- Mid-Year Meeting (April 8-9th) - [Register here](#)
- May Monthly Meetup (May 14th)
- Bourbon Tasting Event (June 11th)
- July Monthly Meetup (July 9th)





ECC