

2025 CWA Summit: A Mature Look At A Maturing Industry

May 4, 2025

Posted By: **Staff** in [CWA Blog](#), [CWA Summit](#)



Just under three weeks ago, a global swath of professionals met in Salt Lake City for the 2025 CWA Summit. It's no secret it's been a (at minimum) raucous year for the indoor climbing industry. Political uncertainty, consumer behavior, government tariffs, inflation, and market pressures converged on everyone from single-location bouldering gyms in the rural U.S. to international wall builders from around the world.

The CWA saw this happening in real time and adjusted the annual event to meet the moment we're all living through.

In June 2024, the CWA Summit went through an extensive review process. Like mechanics diagnosing an unknown rattling deep in the engine, the CWA took the CWA Summit apart, and put it back together again, with shiny polish and a few new parts. We heard the faint sounds of gears grinding and did our best to replace the parts that needed replacing and grease the parts that needed attention.

Then, we heard the far-off sounds of the economy, faint at first, transformed over time into a train-like horn that couldn't be ignored. The CWA pivoted, and introduced ways to help attendees save money and still attend. The same was done for our valued exhibitors, through multiple initiatives, one of which allowed them to give away tickets for free.

Gym owners have thick skin, and mighty pain tolerance. This industry isn't for the financially queasy, and even then, what we're all living through right now, in the context of the last five years, no less, is... uncomfortable, to say the least of it.

All that to say, the CWA and its many factions: the staff, Board of Directors, various committee members, and initiatives felt what the industry is going through and adjusted tack on the fly.

(Re)Building the Plane in the Air

It's telling that the first Canadian keynote at the CWA Summit was held during trying times with tariffs flying back and forth across the U.S.-Canadian border. We couldn't be prouder to stand by our friends to the north (and continue to hold events for them, as well as expand benefits).

The beloved Women's Fireside Chat, which started as a booth on the Trade Show Floor in 2023 and is now a mainstay and favorite aspect of the CWA Summit for many, reached its highest attendance in its history.

The Business and Administration track of Education Sessions at the CWA Summit was built out to include more robust economic education opportunities, well after the programming was more or less set. We commissioned a last-minute survey that was used in real time during the session itself.

Reading Between the Decimals

Attendance overall was down this year. It wasn't an illusion if you noticed it. And though attendance was down about seven percent compared to last year, that was due mostly to our Canadian friends choosing not to come this year. It was also due to economic pressures felt across the world, so folks who usually brought 10-15 people brought five or so. If you break down this math, you realize something.

Despite it all, the CWA Summit *grew* this year. This isn't merely twisting statistics. The 2025 CWA Summit leads a three-year trend of unique climbing wall attendees. It's practically the highest in five, behind 2022 by less than 15 unique businesses.

The value of the CWA Summit continues to prove important to the industry around the world.

Our Future Promise

If you attended, our Service Crew probably encouraged you to leave feedback on sessions you attended. This data is used to year-over-year improve our content offerings to you, and to make sure we're giving the industry what it needs. Like we said in the beginning of this article, we evaluate the feedback you give us and use it to make real decisions about what gets changed, modified, removed, etc.

So when our 2025 CWA Summit Attendee Feedback Survey went out two weeks ago, we couldn't be more excited to see its strong returns. **If you haven't yet taken it, please remember - your feedback is so important to us.** We are a small team, and put on this

magnificent show each year for more than a thousand people from around the world. You, reading this, are one of those.

You might assume that a conference of our size will rarely listen to individual feedback, and if received en masse, will make real-world changes based on it. But you're wrong. The CWA team reads every piece of feedback we receive and takes it into consideration.

At the end of the day, the CWA Summit is yours. We want to see you at the next one, and to continue coming over future years.

To do that, know that we will listen to you, listen to the industry, and watch our surroundings so we can evaluate and put out the best show possible.

That is not possible without you. Thank you.



WHY GYM-TO-CRAG PROGRAMMING IS VALUABLE

May 5, 2025

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: MOMENTUM INDOOR CLIMBING



March 31, 2025