

Episode 136 | MWC26 Wrap Up (Mobile World Live)  
Released March 17, 2026

Justin Springham: [00:00] I'm going to ask you to sum up your experience of MWC26 in one word. DR, what's your word of the week?

DR: [00:10] Agentic.

Carolina Milanesi: [00:13] I've not heard that all week.

Justin Springham: [00:16] It's taken us about two minutes to start talking about AI.

DR: [00:19] A little bit. Yeah. I think operators are really trying to figure this out. I think people are still talking about what it could be or what it will be, but it's here and it's going to be a big deal.

Announcer: [00:34] This is Telco in 20, a podcast that helps telco execs achieve a competitive advantage with AI and the public cloud. It is hosted by Danielle Rios, also known as DR. Today's episode features DR's wrap up with Mobile World Live after MWC26 in Barcelona.

DR: [00:53] Hi guys. I'm DR. I just got back from MWC, and I have to say, I totally called it. Back in February, I predicted agentic AI would dominate the show. Every keynote, every stand, every hallway conversation: agentic. The word was everywhere. But here's what struck me. Most of the industry is still in exploration mode, talking about what agentic could be, what it will do someday.

[01:20] My other observation at MWC is that the telecom stack is moving up the software layer and fast. Hyperscalers are positioning their clouds as the operating system for AI-driven network operations. Satellite networks are turning coverage into infrastructure that telco's can source instead of build, and AI is lowering the cost of building Telco software itself.

[01:43] When infrastructure becomes easier to outsource, competitive advantage no longer comes from owning networks. It comes from how well you run the business on top of them. Your BSS, your data, your customer logic, those aren't back office systems anymore. They're your moat or your vulnerability. At MWC, I stopped by the Mobile World Live Podcast to break it all down. I joined host Justin Springham, managing news editor, Kavita Majithia, and analyst Carolina Milanesi from Creative Strategies.

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[02:13] We got into agentic AI hype versus reality. The satellite land grab operator should be paying attention to, plus the real word of the week, and it wasn't 6G. This episode is a special double drop. The Mobile World Live Podcast and Telco in 20 are both releasing it. Two audiences, one conversation, no filter. Let's take 20.

Justin Springham:

[02:38] Welcome to a very special edition of the Mobile World Live Podcast. MWC26 Barcelona is a wrap. We are absolutely exhausted, but we're going to try and find a few last reserves of energy to review what has been an awesome week at the world's biggest mobile tech event. To help me make sense of everything and hopefully offer some tips for recovery, I've got a great lineup of guests today. I'm your host, Justin Springham, but let me introduce our lineup. Now, it wouldn't be an MWC these days without Totogi's Danielle Rios. DR, great to see you again.

DR:

[03:16] It's great to see you, Justin.

Justin Springham:

[03:17] Thank you for joining us. I'm also joined by another friend of Mobile World Live analyst, Carolina Milanesi. Carolina, good to see you.

Carolina Milanesi:

[03:25] Thank you for having me.

Justin Springham:

[03:26] We can't have a Mobile World Live podcast without our very own Kavit Majithia. Kavit's been on the TV all week. Kavit, how's the voice? Is it holding up?

Kavit Majithia:

[03:36] It is holding up. Justin, I was wondering why you were saying you're so tired. I've been doing most of the work this week.

Justin Springham:

[03:40] That is a fair enough point, actually. Yes. We promoted Kavit last year, and it was a good decision. Look, here we are. Last day of MWC. As I said, we're all pretty exhausted, so we're going to try and find that last bit of energy. I'm going to ask you to sum up your experience of MWC26 in one word. Kavit?

Kavit Majithia:

[04:02] Yeah. Mobile World, it was live. I would say live, because it was constantly live on the tele. We do everything in real time. We try and cover everything as it happens, so yeah, I would say live was my experience.

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Justin Springham: [04:16] Good word. Carolina, MWC for you.

Carolina Milanesi: [04:19] Uncertain. Not as the show itself, but the industry has more questions than answers right now. Whether it is the memory issue or the geopolitical situation, and of course, a lot of people that did not make it here because of the Iran war, it feels uncertain. We need to get grounded and move forward.

Justin Springham: [04:43] Live, uncertain. DR, what's your word of the week?

DR: [04:53] Agentic.

Carolina Milanesi: [04:53] I've not heard that all week.

Justin Springham: [04:53] It's taken us about two minutes to start talking about AI.

DR: [04:55] A little bit. Yeah. I think it was in a lot of the speeches. I think it was in the keynotes. I think it's written on a lot of booths. I think operators are really trying to figure this out. I think people are still talking about what it could be or what it will be, but it's here and it's going to be a big deal. It's going to change the way that everyone interacts with their phone and a computer. I don't know that we're going to have mice and text fields where we're typing anymore. We're going to talk to these things. That's a big change for not only the way we work, but the way that we live in society and with your mobile phone, you spend so much time on that thing. We have to think about how that experience is going to change.

Justin Springham: [05:33] Fantastic. There we go. Mine, intense. I was thinking about what word describes how I feel or how the event feels. To your point, Kav, we are on TV, literally 12 hours a day. Personal experience, personal highlights. Now, DR, after we did the preview podcast, you were very excited about something called not paddle, because you corrected me that I pronounced it wrongly. It's padel.

DR: [05:57] Padel.

Justin Springham: [05:58] Apparently. You put out a call to kick Sunday off with a padel competition.

DR: [06:03] Yeah.

Justin Springham: [06:04] How did that go?

DR: [06:05] It was really, really great. We hosted at this amazing club that is run and owned by basically the Federer of padel. He was ranked number one for 16 years in padel. It was a really interesting way to bring people together because the way that we set up the tournament or the experience, you didn't have to show up on time, you didn't have to stay the whole time. You didn't have to be good at it or know anything about it. Beginners could join as well as really experienced people. It was 16 points and then off the court, so it kept everyone timed together. We didn't have long matches and short matches, and because you kept changing partners, you had a natural reason to go talk to someone that you didn't know. So, what's your name?

Justin Springham: [06:48] Good networking. Yeah.

DR: [06:48] That's the number one thing people said, "I met way more people in a very natural way, and are you going to do this again next year?" I'm like, "We might." Calling all racket sports people, I think it's a really cool way. Hopefully, the weather's nice, but it was covered so we were protected on the elements. It's just get out and run a little bit before MWC. We provided the rackets. You just had to bring your trainers and an outfit. It was awesome.

Justin Springham: [07:11] Next year, we'll need to tell the team we're not doing any work on Sunday.

DR: [07:13] Well, wrap it up.

Justin Springham: [07:17] Carolina, a personal highlight. Anything stand out for you? Aside from the headlines and things we can get to, was there anything on a personal level?

Carolina Milanesi: [07:24] On a personal level, two things. I think I had the best pizza in Spain ever at one of the foot courts here.

Justin Springham: [07:32] Here at the Fira? You had-

Carolina Milanesi: [07:34] Yeah.

Justin Springham: [07:34] Wow. That's why it sounds-

Carolina Milanesi: [07:36] There's a wooden oven pizza place. I think you up your game with all the food around.

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Justin Springham: [07:40] They changed caterers, I guess.

Carolina Milanesi: [07:42] Yes. No seriousness. It's always nice to connect with people. I was based here. Now, I'm in the States. Every time I come back, it's nice to see people I used to work with, reporters I am still in contact with, and just the breadth of people and languages. I never appreciated the diversity that's here as much as I have this year, for obvious reasons.

Justin Springham: [08:05] Good stuff. Positive. Kavit, any personal highlights?

Kavit Majithia: [08:10] Well, I spoke about the TV, how much we've done. We've been on the show floor quite a lot. I think I can sum it up with two things. I was on the show floor doing a lot of video stuff, checking out connected ambulances, ceramic vases that are made by robots, and like an olive tree that went through a scan that helps them harvest stuff and checks their temperature and all that, and it makes it grow better. Then on the flip side, I also interviewed the Federal Communications Commission chair, Brendan Carr. So, you get-

Justin Springham: [08:38] One end of the spectrum.

Kavit Majithia: [08:42] To the other, yeah. You have hard hitting policy for that interview and then you have all this other cool tech stuff that you see on the show floor. I think that sums up MWC quite well.

Justin Springham: [08:50] This year we didn't really stitch Kavit up actually. Last year, what happened-

Kavit Majithia: [08:54] We're still trying to.

Justin Springham: [08:55] Well, there's still a few hours left.

Kavit Majithia: [08:55] There's a pink suit that needs to be worn by-

Justin Springham: [08:58] Yes, there is a very bright suit that one of us has to wear later. But last year, Kavit had to do K-pop dancing live on TV.

Kavit Majithia: [09:05] Justin talks about it every day as well.

Justin Springham: [09:07] Yes, I know.

DR: [09:08] He reminds you of it.

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- Kavit Majithia: [09:09] Yeah, he does.
- Justin Springham: [09:11] There's our personal highlights, personal experiences. But in terms of news headlines, I was on a panel this morning and I asked one of the analysts to sum up the news feed this week. I thought she gave a really good word. She just said measured. I said, "Okay, expand." She said, "Well, there's not really been any one big announcement. It's been just good amounts of news and good amounts of progress, but nothing that blew away." She said a couple of years ago we had Open Gateway, and we've had Musk on stage before, but no real massive rockstar this year. DR, if I asked you about your news headlines, I've got a feeling it's going to be around AI.
- DR: [09:51] Well, just talking about the news at MWC, we talked in the preview about will 6G be a big topic? I don't really pay attention to that as much because it doesn't really affect me as a software vendor, but there was a surprising lack of that probably to the chagrin of the Ericsson and the Nokia and the Huawei's of the world. I think lots of news around direct to device satellites. Gwynne Shotwell is an amazing woman who's running SpaceX, and the Starlink announcement that she made, making a specific point that they're not challenging the terrestrial networks... Yet.
- Kavit Majithia: [10:31] Yet we've rebranded to Starlink Mobile. I think they could have emphasized that because they put that in the name.
- Justin Springham: [10:36] Could have been worse. Could have been Musk Mobile, I suppose.
- DR: [10:39] It's super interesting. You see all these big operators signing up with them. They definitely have helped out in big disasters, wars that have happened or floods and natural disasters. It's super useful. It absolutely works. It is fast enough. People love it. Places where it's geographically difficult to build a terrestrial network, but operators have owned infrastructure forever and is this the right move? I think we need to really think through that.
- Justin Springham: [11:06] Yeah. Actually, one of the things that's telling us well, I think it was a call by the GSMA today that said, we've got to a point now where the satellite industry needs regulating in terms of how it interacts with mobile. Kav, we got to a point where it's

got big enough for us. What was the quote from Margherita Della Valle?

- Kavit Majithia: [11:23] We must avoid a wild west in disguise. Yeah. That was great. Margherita Della Valle, she was... I think the satellite news really kicked off the show didn't it? Because we had a Vodafone on stage with Astronaut Tim Peake, and they're talking about the AST joint venture and they announced a big thing on Friday. You sent me something on Friday when I was-
- Justin Springham: [11:41] Friday before the show.
- Kavit Majithia: [11:42] When I was on my morning flight, Justin sent me a news story.
- Justin Springham: [11:45] The Friday before MWC is the only day that Mobile World Live doesn't publish any news all year.
- Kavit Majithia: [11:48] and Christmas.
- Justin Springham: [11:50] Yeah. We have Christmas day off.
- DR: [11:52] Congratulations.
- Justin Springham: [11:53] Then there was this big story that we did cover.
- Kavit Majithia: [11:54] Yeah. It's a big story. They signed up Orange and Telefónica and Deutsche Telekom were also working with them. Yes, it was a big story to kick off. Then she obviously did the keynote and fleshed out more details about the joint venture. Then we had SpaceX on after. Yeah.
- DR: [12:09] Yeah. Is SpaceX building a software defined, vertically integrated global network? Yes, you still need those relationships with the operators, but the operators have done the hard work on the spectrum and all that stuff and they get to bypass it. Are they building a global telco? Now, I don't think that's really their goal. It's just going to be a byproduct. I think they're really trying to figure out connectivity on Mars or the moon. You laugh, but it's totally... They have to solve it, and they're experimenting with earth. I don't think it's their goal to do that, but is it going to be the side effect of what's happening?

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Justin Springham: [12:43] Yeah. I get the connectivity on the moon, but talking about getting to a point where humans live on it and need it, that seems another-

Kavit Majithia: [12:51] Would you be able to access TikTok on Mars, Justin?

Justin Springham: [12:53] The number of times this week Kavit has accused me of being an avid TikTok fan. I keep telling him-

Kavit Majithia: [12:58] You need to look hard to find his mobile.

Justin Springham: [12:59] ... I'm too old for TikTok.

DR: [12:59] Are you a scroller? You're a scroller.

Justin Springham: [13:01] I'm a scroller, but not on TikTok.

DR: [13:01] Okay.

Justin Springham: [13:05] I'm an Instagram scroller.

Justin Springham: [13:08] Carolina, what stood out? Anything else? We've covered the fact that 6G wasn't particularly huge this week, AI, obviously satellite. Anything else stand out for you?

Carolina Milanesi: [13:17] I want to piggyback on what my fellow analyst said about being measured. It feels like there was a lot of groundwork being done, whether it was the talk of 6G, or Qualcomm with their wear elite new platform for personal AI. I think we are trying to get to a point where AI makes sense, where you can monetize from it, where you bring in customers, whether they're enterprise or consumers along in this journey, while building the infrastructure that you're going to need in order for AI to actually deliver.

[13:53] I think you cannot get overexcited. Consumers are already pretty scared about AI. I think that really pitching high and over promise is not going to work because there's already a lot of tension. I think that measured approach is just a means to an end to try it and really get people behind AI in a positive way.

DR: [14:14] I've met a lot of people on the AI side and the way that they're using their phone now. Just my own son, who's 20 years old, who codes with AI, he'll just pick up his phone and he talks to it. He dictates to the phone to Claude code that's then

connected to Cursor and he kicks off whatever change he wants in his software. He'll do that while he's driving. He'll do it while he's walking. He's literally coding and living. It's just such a different way of interacting. There's a guy that works for me that taught me at dinner, he's like, "Yeah. I use this OpenClaw thing to search Twitter for people complaining about bad products. Then I kick off a service to rewrite that product into a mobile app, put it on the app store, and then start trying to sell downloads."

[15:06] I was like, "Have you made any money?" He's like, "No," but every 30 minutes, it pings him on his phone and gives him an update. The agents tell on each other, like, "He didn't do it right, and this one didn't follow the steps that you prescribed." These are the people I hang out with. I'm like, "This is insane." My own kids, they just sit there and talk to it. I have a Tesla, I have Grok in my car and I'll be driving down the street and I just hit Grok and I'm like, "What's going on with this topic?" I can interact with it or if I have a random question. It's going to change the way we live and work.

Kavit Majithia:

[15:39] It's interesting you mentioned OpenClaw because that came up in a keynote about the Meta person who asked OpenClaw agent to clean up her email account, and it literally deleted everything. Then she told it to stop and it wouldn't. The whole thing was about the dangers of AI.

DR:

[15:55] Yeah. OpenClaw got a lot of noise on Twitter because everyone loves it and it's super easy to use and you don't have to go through some of the machinations of setting up Claude Code and Cursor. It's making it very easy for non-technical people to create, but it also is very powerful. It's a little bit of a dangerous knife. There was a lot of security stuff and rogue stuff going on. They'll lock that down. I think it got bought by OpenAI.

Kavit Majithia:

[16:21] I did it. Yeah.

DR:

[16:22] Yeah. It got bought and that was five minutes of awesomeness. I think it's like \$100 million company or whatever in like three minutes and you're just like, "I hate you."

Carolina Milanesi:

[16:34] But your example of what you can do with AI agents, in my opinion, pushes us to think differently about addiction. Now, we are addicted to social media, which is not most of the time particularly useful. Certainly, it doesn't make much money for

you. But if you're thinking about having the agents and what you can do and the fact that they work 24/7, what is that going to do to us in terms of both being disciplined, not chasing everything that we can just because of AI, but actually, understanding beforehand what is worth chasing and what isn't. Then from a work perspective, it's okay when you're running your own business, but when you're an employee, how does that change work and the demands on you as an employee because the agent keeps on working. The agent doesn't get sick. They don't go out on maternity leave or...

DR:

[17:25] We've always talked about the 10X employee and a 10X engineer in software. You can literally set up 10 pipelines of development. The average person, let's say 2 weeks of vacation, is working about 2,000 hours—at least in the United States work week. I have 10 agents, that's 20,000 hours of work that 1 person can accomplish. It's just a whole new pace. That is the future. Some people are like fighting it. I'm like, "You can't fight it at all. This is just the new way of working."

[17:54] I'm sure people felt this way when we moved to having a personal computer on the desktop in the 80s. I was 10 when that happened, but I'm sure people were really upset that you're like, "I can type and print and I don't have to use a typewriter." We are going through probably the biggest work shift we've seen, at least as Gen Xer born in 1970. It's huge. You have to become commander of that. That's how we have to shift and just embrace it.

Kavit Majithia:

[18:19] The agent won't get the MWC lagging that you're going to get next week as well, Justin.

Justin Springham:

[18:23] No.

DR:

[18:23] No.

Justin Springham:

[18:24] Every single week after MWC, I come down with something exciting.

Kavit Majithia:

[18:26] See, we used to do the review episode when we got back and you should hear that episode.

Justin Springham:

[18:35] I barely have any voices. This is why we're doing the review this week and not next week. Exactly. Did anyone grab any decent swag, any freebies on the show floor this year?

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Carolina Milanesi: [18:44] There are lots of plush toys, but you had to sit through a half an hour presentation.

Justin Springham: [18:49] Just to get a toy.

DR: [18:49] Really?

Kavit Majithia: [18:49] There's a panda backpack over there at YOFC and I thought I'd take one for my daughter, but you had to go through a line and then there's a roulette machine. We have to press the button and then there's four prizes, and I didn't win.

Justin Springham: [19:02] You didn't?

Kavit Majithia: [19:02] A waste of time.

Carolina Milanesi: [19:02] Look at you.

DR: [19:06] We weren't giving these out as swag. It's one of these football scarfs with Totogi, and I brought one for each of you guys. I always do a little present for the team because it's so rare that we're together. My team is spread out all over the world. MWC really is a collection point for us and a connection point. The team made these scarfs, and I was like, "Scarf, really? Do you think the guys are going to like the scarf?" Everyone's wearing it. We had some extra and I brought one for each of you guys.

Justin Springham: [19:35] That's amazing. Well, we're going back to a gloomy-

Kavit Majithia: [19:35] Still cold. Yeah.

Justin Springham: [19:39] Gloomy London winter.

DR: [19:40] Maybe help you with your illness and the one you might get in a couple of days. Ferry Grijpink from McKinsey wears the scarf all the time, because you lived in Singapore and was getting sick all the time, because of like maybe the air conditioner and then the humidity. Someone's recommended wear a scarf even in Singapore, and it stopped him from getting sick. Maybe Justin next year, you're going to be like wrapped in the Totogi scarf here.

Justin Springham: [20:03] A Totogi branded scarf.

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DR: [20:05] You're like Ferry from McKinsey here.

Justin Springham: [20:07] Well look, thank you very much for the scarf. We have something for the two of you as well.

DR: [20:11] Awesome.

Justin Springham: [20:12] Our producer Ben is walking over.

Kavit Majithia: [20:13] He's modeling it as well.

Justin Springham: [20:14] Here we go. Look, we have a Mobile World Live gilet.

Carolina Milanesi: [20:19] Look at that.

Justin Springham: [20:20] Yes. Carolina, there is your Mobile World Live gilet. DR gets one too. That's awesome. Kavit and I have been wearing these all week as well. Not these two particular ones. These two-

DR: [20:31] Next year I'm going to come here and walk all around with these guys, so I can get access to all sorts of behind the scenes.

Justin Springham: [20:42] Backstage passes.

DR: [20:43] Yeah, exactly. I'm like, "No. I'm with-

Carolina Milanesi: [20:45] You can't believe everything.

DR: [20:45] I'm Mobile World Live, guys. Me too.

Justin Springham: [20:45] We joked about this earlier, but in terms of recovering from this crazy week, and actually these days, MWC is not a week. It feels as though as soon as you come back from Christmas and New Year, you spend all of January prepping and Kavit and I had a, for some reason, it was my stupid idea to spend the whole of February doing a preview month. We would produce-

Kavit Majithia:: [21:08] That's fun.

Justin Springham: [21:08] Yes. Kavit was like, "Please never do this again, Justin. This is the worst idea you've ever had." We had to produce original content every day. Yeah. It feels as though MWC is two

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months long these days. We joked earlier that I always get sick next week. Has anyone got any tips for how we can all make sure that we don't come down with the dreaded post MWC lag?

- Kavit Majithia: [21:24] You gave me a week off, Justin.
- Justin Springham: [21:25] Did I say that? Is that for all the overtime you've done the last couple of months? Carolina, are you just going to sleep for the next week?
- Carolina Milanesi: [21:31] Well, maybe for the weekend, but yeah, sleep I think is the best thing, resting your feet. For me, it's getting back to my four cats and just reconnect with something that's not technology.
- Justin Springham: [21:45] I was going to say, putting your phone down.
- Carolina Milanesi: [21:46] Putting my phone down.
- DR: [21:47] Do a detox.
- Carolina Milanesi: [21:48] There you go.
- DR: [21:48] Yeah.
- Justin Springham: [21:49] No, you can't have a week off, Kavit.
- Kavit Majithia: [21:51] Then I have nothing else. I'm just going to be knackered all week.
- Justin Springham: [21:53] You got a holiday coming up soon anyway.
- Kavit Majithia: [21:54] I have?
- Justin Springham: [21:55] Yeah. There you go.
- Kavit Majithia: [21:55] Yeah.
- Justin Springham: [21:57] Well, look, thank you very much for joining us. I think we did pretty good job there wrapping up everything that's happened in the last week in about 30 or so minutes. It's been great to have your company. Thank you very much, DR, Carolina, Kavit.
- Kavit Majithia: [22:09] Thanks, Justin.

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Justin Springham:

[22:09] Thanks for listening.