

Modern leaders focus on people's strengths, not their weaknesses

The main purpose of the MFA 5+ Inspiration Series program of events is to provide inspiration and new perspectives to the MFA5+ community, challenging them to think differently while helping them develop their business acumen and leadership skills.

Our first session for the year, titled '*Leadership Traits of a Modern Changer*', certainly provided plenty of challenging perspectives for the 360 attendees in Sydney and Melbourne.

Here, members of the MFA 5+ community share their key lessons from the presentation of keynote speaker **Beau Vernon, AFL Coach and Disability & Mental Health Advocate.**



Step outside your comfort zone

Ryan Varley, *Strategy & Planning Director, Zenith Media*

For me, one of the most striking lessons from the session was Beau's message to step outside of our comfort zone. He made the point that our comfort zones are often quite narrow, while the space outside – where we're uncomfortable – is huge.

In Beau's words:

"The more you step outside your comfort zone, the larger it becomes and the more you grow. And the better off you'll be in the long run."

As an example, Beau talked about the first time he went around the block in his wheelchair (after the accident that left him paraplegic) and how much he was out of his comfort zone, but he did it anyway. And now, while still having no feeling from the chest down, he plays golf, surfs, drives a car, goes fishing and kayaking, is a handcycling champion and plays wheelchair AFL. What an inspiration!



See people's strengths, not weakness

Linda Wong, *Director, People, MFA*

We often focus on our own weaknesses, and those of others, in a bid to improve. But Beau made a great case for rewiring the way our brain works. By seeing people's strengths, not their weaknesses, we can break down barriers and become more inclusive. The end result is that we become better together. He said that while prospective employers would be more likely to want to hire him before he was confined to a wheelchair, he is now an infinitely better person – with so much more value to add.



A positive mindset is incredibly powerful

Sarah Kramer, *Communications Planning Director, CHEP Melbourne*

I took away several learnings, but the one that resonated with me the most was the point made by Beau that our mind is our most powerful asset. Being aware of your emotions is what's important here. It's okay to have a whinge, but then let's reset and focus on what we can control. Having a positive mindset allows us to push ourselves out of our comfort zones, stopping fear from holding you back and in turn, opens doors to many more opportunities. It was perfect advice, just before I had to step onto the stage to moderate the panel in front of my peers, and it helped calm my nerves.