



PRESS RELEASE

SIX EMERGING LEADERS TO TACKLE HOT TOPICS AND SPARK INSPIRATION AT MFA EX

9 July 2025: From media metrics that mask the truth to the power of intentional culture and the surprising impact of better listening – six emerging industry leaders will unpack bold, thought-provoking ideas in five **Inspiration X** sessions at MFA EX in Melbourne and Sydney.

Selected through a competitive process by the MFA EX curation panel, these presenters – all with less than eight years' experience – were chosen for their fresh thinking and powerful perspectives. Two presenters will take the stage together, with the other four will present solo. This year for the first time, Inspiration X candidates were required to include a video or audio component with their submission.

The aim of the four-minute talks is to present a new or provocative perspective and inspire the media agency industry to **Dare to Change**, driving us toward one shared goal: greater effectiveness.

MFA CEO Sophie Madden said: "Inspiration X has become a standout favourite at MFA EX, with attendees consistently calling it some of the most compelling and energising content of the day. The quality of submissions this year was exceptional, making it no easy task to narrow it down to just five sessions. The final topics are sharp, relevant and thought-provoking – with just the right mix of humour and edge. We can't wait to be surprised, challenged and inspired by these six rising stars in September."

Taking to the stage in Melbourne on 4 September will be:

Eloise Russell, Group Experience Director, Mindshare

Search Everywhere: Are we getting smarter or just lazier?

As generative AI makes answers instant, are we getting smarter – or just more reliant? Eloise will explore the rise of AI-powered search and a curious side effect: *intelligence hallucination*. From digital amnesia to inflated self-confidence, she will unpack how search affects memory, creativity, and decision-making – and what we can do about it.

Sam Bessell, Strategy Director & Jan Janas, Senior Strategist, Atomic 212°

Seriously. Shut Up!

Most people don't listen with the intent to understand, but the intent to reply. In an industry awash with constant disruption, our ability to truly hear each other is more compromised than ever. In this session, Sam and Jan will reveal how poor listening derails productivity, damages client relationships,



and limits career growth – before arming the audience with practical, proven techniques to help them become better listeners and transform the way they work.

And presenting in Sydney on 18 September:

Florence Gleeson-Cook, Business Manager, Slingshot Media

Data & Dragons

Romantasy flipped the fantasy genre – and the publishing industry – on its head. Not just creatively, but commercially. It succeeded by challenging assumptions and following the data. For media planners and buyers, it's a wake-up call: perception skews strategy, but data reveals opportunity. From Gen Z homeownership to Sydney's real spending power, Florence will explore the blind spots we overlook and how data can set us straight.

Caitlin Watters, Partnerships Manager, UM

We sell culture in our plans. So why aren't we better at creating it?

Culture isn't a vibe, it's a strategy. Yet rising burnout and high churn rates show we're often missing the mark. Caitlin will guide the audience through building a practical culture roadmap in real time – to help us stop freestyling culture and start designing it with intention. Because when culture works, people stick around.

Amartya Majumdar, Media Effectiveness Manager, iProspect

Not all catfish live in rivers. Some live in your dashboards

In media, we love numbers. But without context, metrics like CTRs, completion rates and ROI can catfish us – sounding impressive while hiding the truth. Amartya will reveal how our industry can stop being fooled by surface-level stats and start fishing smarter – by choosing the right data, not just more data.

Attracting more than 2,500 attendees across Melbourne and Sydney, MFA EX is the industry's must-attend event, dedicated to showcasing the power of media to drive meaningful change and uniting the industry in a collaborative, non-competitive setting.

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About the MFA

The Media Federation of Australia (MFA) is the peak body representing media communication companies. The MFA is a non-for-profit organisation established in 1997 with a current membership base that represents over 90% of all media billings placed by media agencies in Australia. The MFA's vision is to encourage operational excellence in the field of media communication connections and to define and develop best practice standards to support its members and the role they play in servicing their clients.