



Beau Lotto

AUTHOR · FUTURIST · SCIENTIST · TED SPEAKER

Leaders trust their judgment. But judgment is built entirely from past experience, which means it reliably reproduces what already exists. The challenge isn't a lack of data or analytical capability. Every decision in an organisation is filtered through a perceptual system that evolved to predict, not to discover. Genuine adaptation requires something harder than a new strategy: it requires the ability to see what your own assumptions make invisible.

Neuroscientist and founder of Lab of Misfits Beau Lotto helps organisations understand why the brain's perceptual system, built to predict rather than to discover, is the root constraint on decision-making, change, and innovation under uncertainty.

Beau Lotto's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Beau Lotto

- His central argument is scientific, not motivational: the brain did not evolve to see the world accurately, it evolved to survive, which means every leader's judgment is shaped by assumptions they cannot see. That insight reframes the innovation problem from a strategic failure to a perceptual one.
- Lab of Misfits designs Experiential Experiments: structured immersive experiences that demonstrably shift how audiences perceive in real time, not merely inform them about perception. An audience leaves having *experienced* a change in how they see, not having heard a case for why change is necessary.
- His awe research, conducted with Cirque du Soleil and published in peer-reviewed form, is a named organisational experiment demonstrating that specific emotional states measurably alter perception and behaviour, giving executives evidence-based ground for culture and creativity investment.
- The Blackawton Bees project, which produced the first peer-reviewed scientific paper authored by primary school children, published in the Royal Society's *Biology Letters*, is proof that his participative science method changes how non-experts engage with uncertainty and discovery.
- Over 70 peer-reviewed articles give hard scientific grounding to conclusions that most innovation and leadership speakers make from anecdote or case study alone.

Biography highlights

- PhD in Cellular and Molecular Developmental Neuroscience, University

AVAILABLE FOR

- Panel Participation
- Speaking
- Training and Workshops

BEAU'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Behavioural Economics
- Change Management
- Executive Development
- Innovation & Disruption
- Leadership
- Organizational Agility
- Scenario Planning & Strategic Foresight

LANGUAGES: English

of Edinburgh Medical School; BSc in anatomy and physiology, UC Berkeley; postdoctoral fellow at Duke University

- Lecturer then Reader at University College London; currently Visiting Scholar at New York University
- Founder of Lab of Misfits (2001), described across multiple independent sources as the world's first neuro-design studio; clients include Cirque du Soleil, Microsoft, and L'Oréal
- Author of *Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently* (Hachette Books, 2017); co-author of *Why We See What We Do* with Duke neuroscientist Dale Purves
- Three mainstage TED talks; combined online viewership of over 1.6 million
- Led the Blackawton Bees project, which produced the first peer-reviewed scientific paper authored by primary school children (Royal Society's *Biology Letters*, 2010)
- Featured in BBC Horizon; Lab of Misfits held a two-year public residency at London's Science Museum (2010-2012)

Biography

When the brain processes information, it does not reflect the world. It predicts it. That is the central finding of Beau Lotto's 25 years of research into human perception, and it has a direct organisational consequence: the assumptions leaders cannot see are the ones most reliably shaping their decisions.

Lotto earned his PhD in Cellular and Molecular Developmental Neuroscience at the University of Edinburgh, completed postdoctoral work at Duke University under neuroscientist Dale Purves, and went on to become a Reader at University College London. His research, spanning more than 70 peer-reviewed articles, examines how the brain constructs reality at the cellular, computational, and perceptual levels, with the aim of understanding how biologically-inspired systems adapt to uncertainty.

That research became the basis for *Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently* (Hachette Books, 2017), which argues that the next significant innovation, in business as in science, is not a new technology but a new way of seeing. To put the thesis into practice, Lotto founded Lab of Misfits, the world's first neuro-design studio, which has designed Experiential Experiments for organisations including Cirque du Soleil, Microsoft, and L'Oréal, and conducted peer-reviewed awe research with Cirque du Soleil that demonstrated measurable psychological and behavioural effects from specific experiential conditions.

His three mainstage TED talks and a two-year residency at London's Science Museum, where his Lottolab studio ran live public experiments in perception, establish a rare combination: a working scientist who has spent decades translating rigorous neuroscience into experiences that change how both individual leaders and large audiences actually perceive. For organisations serious about adaptation, that distinction matters.

Key speaking topics

- Neuroscience of perception and decision-making
- Leading and adapting under uncertainty
- Perceptual constraints on innovation
- The science of awe and its organisational applications
- Assumptions, context, and behavioural change
- Experiential science and participative learning

- Creativity and the ecology of innovation

Ideal for

- C-suite and senior leadership teams navigating significant strategic or cultural change
- Transformation and innovation leads looking for evidence-based frameworks rather than motivational framing
- CHROs and learning and development leaders building cultures of curiosity and adaptability
- Boards and strategy forums grappling with decision-making quality under conditions of complexity

Audience outcomes

- A neuroscientific understanding of why assumptions - not a lack of information - are the primary constraint on leadership judgement and organisational change
- Direct, first-person experience of how perception can be altered, not just an explanation of why it matters
- A reframed understanding of uncertainty: why it is a precondition for discovery and adaptation, not simply a risk to be managed
- Concrete vocabulary for discussing perceptual bias and assumption in team and leadership contexts
- Awareness of how experiential design and structured questioning can expand the range of what an organisation is able to see

Beau Lotto's 2026 talks & topics

Risk / Uncertainty

An experiential exploration of why the brain resists doubt, why uncertainty is structurally unavoidable, and how engaging with it, rather than managing it away, is the biological basis of adaptation and discovery.

Key takeaways:

- Why the brain evolved to avoid uncertainty and how that shapes organisational decision-making at every level
- Why meaningful change and genuine discovery require moving toward, not away from, uncertainty
- How natural adaptive systems treat uncertainty as the starting condition for innovation, not a problem to be solved

Adapt or Die

A behavioural neuroscience examination of adaptability that gives leaders a scientific account of why organisations stall, and what is required to move differently.

Key takeaways:

- Why adaptability is a perceptual capacity before it is a behavioural one
 - How the brain's predictive architecture shapes organisational responses to change in ways leaders typically cannot see
 - How perceptual intelligence; the ability to interrogate one's own assumptions, supports more effective leadership in complex environments
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Change

A neuroscience-based examination of why change is simultaneously necessary and resisted, and how questions and perceptual reframing, rather than mandates, are the actual mechanisms of transformation.

Key takeaways:

- Why the value of any change is context-dependent, and why that changes how leaders should pursue it
 - How questions and metaphor function as neurological catalysts for shifting what people see as possible
 - Why change becomes self-sustaining when the underlying assumptions shift, and how to engineer that shift
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Leadership

An exploration of what effective leadership looks like through the lens of behavioural neuroscience, focused on the qualities that correlate with organisational success and the willingness to lead others into uncertainty.

Key takeaways:

- The leadership qualities most strongly linked to organisational performance as evidenced by perception research
 - Why guiding others into uncertainty (rather than projecting certainty) is the neurologically grounded definition of effective leadership
 - How a leader's own perceptual patterns shape team behaviour and organisational culture in measurable ways
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How to See New Meaning in Data

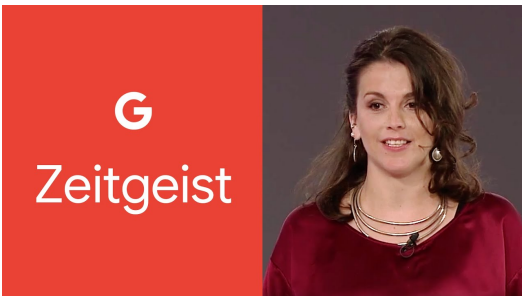
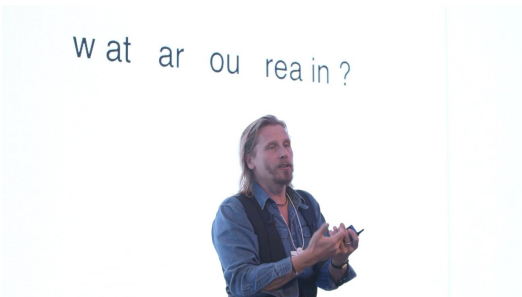
An examination of how the brain transforms raw information into meaning, and why the constraint on insight is rarely the data itself.

Key takeaways:

- Why data carries no inherent meaning until processed by a brain shaped by prior experience
- How perception determines which patterns are visible and which remain invisible regardless of analytical sophistication
- Practical principles for expanding the range of insights an organisation is capable of recognising

within the information it already holds

Beau Lotto's Videos



What Beau Lotto's clients say

Captivating from the moment he took the stage during our recent Leadership Summit, Beau delivered a fascinating and illuminating presentation that set the tone and became a major topic of conversation thereafter. Through his unique perspective, he challenged each and every attendee to think differently about how they see, experience, and engage with people, and the world at large. Finding the right speaker who can engage such a large group (100+ people) is no easy task but Beau delivered – and has left a lasting and thought-provoking impression on us all.

John Ferguson

President & CEO, Purolator

The initial request was to kick start the Summit in a different way and to radically challenge the leaders to “unlearn” social conditioning and personal perspectives and approach the following days at the conference with a more open mindset to help encourage different solutions to business challenges. Beau’s deep knowledge and insight on his topic shines through; and is perfect to support audiences in breaking out of old habits of thinking and embracing more diverse ones. In my opinion, the topics that Beau touches on is the future for healthy organisations and I would say his content is relevant to any business that wants to shake up their teams to think differently, embrace change and recognise the beauty in stepping out of constraints.

Abi Humayun

Co-Founder / Director of Clients & Activations, Boeringer Ingelheim

Beau is a perfect, positive start to the day.

I have chaired conferences for over 20 years and this is undoubtedly one of the best keynotes I have ever seen. Beau began the second day of our conference – when people may be low on energy – and within moments over 800 people were engaged. By the end of the talk, they were also informed, challenged and inspired. Beau provided the hope that change is possible, along with a road map to making it happen. Our delegates left the plenary session feeling positive and primed for the rest of the day. Very few experts can also speak, entertain and inspire. Beau does.

Donald Taylor

Founder, Learning Technologies Conference, London

Your keynote presentation was the top-rated session of ISF Congress in Rotterdam. Your session delivered exactly what we needed from a great keynote. Members were entertained by your stylish delivery and inspired by your content. Member quotes included the following:

‘Great and interesting speech, bringing your own way of thinking and approaching things on to a new way. Never thought of it the way it was presented.’ ‘Engaging and inspiring’ ‘Fascinating and engaging! What a great start to the day.’

Steve Dobson

Chief Operations Director, Information Security Forum Limited

I'm writing a short note (for now) to thank Beau for his incredible presentation yesterday. In 17 short minutes he managed to change the way that our audience perceived themselves and the world around them. Not only did he manage to excite them about his own work but he closed the morning session on a high that left them wanting more in the afternoon. We hope that he enjoyed speaking for the how to: Academy and look forward to reading more about his work in the future.

How To Academy

I simply adore these talks. Beau Lotto is one of those who studies a specific subject, such as our adaptation to illusions, primarily optical, that can be applied to any subject of human studies. For instance, it matters not what tools, wealth, knowledge, physical features, etc. we are granted in life, but rather how we choose to use them. Apply this to a scenario and you'll understand.

TED

Beau Lotto has been resident in the Science Museum for the past year. He has created a lab and a series of programmes that is like no other; it's not too far from the truth to describe his time here as like having a Renaissance man in our midst - Beau blends art, science, curiosity, illusion and music to entertain children, adults and scientists alike. The programmes that the studio have put together with the Museum are also truly inspirational and life-enhancing... I believe that our visitors will be strongly influenced and inspired by Beau and the Lab, and our mission must be to get as many people exposed to this opportunity as we can.

London Science Museum

The event went very well. The speaker reacted very positively to a last minute change in the programme for which we were extremely grateful! Beau Lotto's speech was very pertinent and he involved the audience which is important at UFI meetings.

UFI

It was amazing! Sometimes a vision can be a little extreme but in this case, we absolutely nailed it. We have had over 50 emails and messages talking about how it was the most unique event experience they have ever had and how in some cases, it was life changing.

Kaplan

What a knockout! The feedback from all the members was fantastic, thank you very much. I have already had some interest from another multinational company who unfortunately were not at the meeting. I shall continue talking to other senior member executives in our membership as I think your material really is fantastic.

TechUK

I worked with Beau Lotto for a film I made for the BBC2 science series 'Horizon'. Beau was our main contributor and organised an experiment, involving 200 people, which took place at the Science Museum and was the main thread through the film. Beau was great to work with - very creative, highly ambitious and with incredible energy. His communications skills are quite something to behold: when dealing with the volunteers from the public for the experiment, he held them in the palm of his hand and infected them with his enthusiasm. Respected by his peers and looked up to by his students he is someone who people like to listen to and learn from. I'd love the chance to work with him again.

BBC

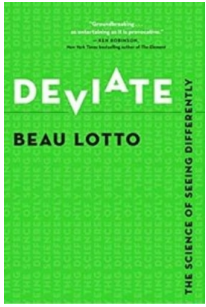
Our client saw Dr Beau Lotto on the Horizon programme and they were so impressed that they were interested in having him present at their annual glaucoma meeting. Dr Lotto was very accommodating from start to finish and his enthusiastic nature was refreshing. Dr Lotto's presentation was interactive, educational and entertaining. Both the client and delegates thoroughly enjoyed the nature of the presentation and it provided a welcome break from the seriousness of the meeting. On a personal note, Dr Lotto was a pleasure to work with. He was responsive to correspondence and a real character on site. I would happily recommend Dr Lotto to anyone interested in having him speak in a public capacity.

Darwin Healthcare Communications

Beau was very energetic and his slides were visually appealing. His presentation style leaves delegates listening to every word and his enthusiasm for the topic helps engage the audience into what he is saying. He speaks about things that affect everyone and appeals to all types of audiences. He was a pleasure to work with, arrived on time and worked to the brief he was given without any fuss.

Citywire

BEAU'S LATEST BOOKS



Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently