

# Research develops top tips to foster better relationships between scientists and business

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University researchers and industry practitioners have developed lists of 'top tips' for businesses and academics to foster better relationships that could potentially benefit all parties.

The paper's 21 authors, including Cass Business School's Dr. Andreas Tsanakas, investigated the reasons relatively few scientists are directly engaged with the [business sector](#) and found academic time constraints combined with the career framework within which they operate are significant barriers to collaboration.

Using the insurance sector as a [case study](#), the paper finds that greater levels of direct engagement with university-based environmental scientists could allow insurers to quantify more accurately the risks they take, improving their performance and adding stability to the insurance market.

The study finds that most [academics](#) are more motivated by curiosity and creativity, as well as the impact of their research and its potential to influence their careers than they are by money; they are also time-poor, with the average academic having at most one day per week to conduct their own hands-on research, only half of which has the potential to be diverted into working with business.

The paper's authors also recognise that business practitioners are driven by a variety of motives, not just profitability, and that collaboration with academics can create points of difference within highly competitive

sectors.

From its research, the interdisciplinary group of authors has created a list of ways in which practitioners can support academic partners, including but not limited to:

- Collecting evidence of impact—impact is diverse, and evidence is not necessarily difficult to obtain. Creating an Impact Case Study for the Research Excellence Framework exercise can win university investment in the form of time or money, freeing the academic to pursue further research or develop this strand of impact.
- Offering a place on an [advisory panel](#)—advice that stems from a [research paper](#) can provide academics with evidence of the impact of their research outside academia.
- Asking them to provide training—if a clear fit exists, using an academic to provide in-house training is a good way to get to know them, and any fees might be used to initiate curiosity-driven studies.

Similarly, the authors have created a list of ways in which academics can foster better relationships with business practitioners, including but not limited to:

- Undertake a literature review—a comprehensive review of what is known about risks in an emerging peril-region is a safe, early stage deliverable in a funded project.
- Deliver new research-based science—concepts or theories that could be implemented by the practitioner, offering the possibility of an advantage over competitors.
- Invite the practitioner to give a guest lecture seminar, or training—this could be potentially enjoyable experience, an opportunity to discuss collaboration possibilities, and provides

contact with students who may apply for jobs with the company in future.

With particular reference to the insurance sector, Dr. Andreas Tsanakas said that if stronger collaboration between insurers and environmental scientists leads insurers to better understand environmental science then there is potential for them to better understand the risk within their portfolios.

"This means that they can price and manage risks more accurately" Dr. Tsanakas said.

"Better quality information would enable insurers to run their portfolios more efficiently, which may enable them to price risks more competitively, generating a potential benefit to policyholders."

The study's lead author, Dr. John Hillier of Loughborough University's Department of Geography and Environment, said university-based scientists are more than simply the papers they write.

"A lifetime of critically assessing work places them well for challenging or sense-checking the hazard component of models used by insurers," Dr. Hillier said.

They also know about the cutting-edge of research that might not be published for a few years, and have an instinct for what the step-change discoveries might be over the next five years."

The paper, 'Demystifying academics to enhance university-business collaborations in environmental science', has been published by the *Geoscience Communication Journal*.

**More information:** John K. Hillier et al, Demystifying academics to

enhance university business collaborations in environmental science,  
*Geoscience Communication Discussions* (2018). [DOI:](#)  
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