

08 Flinders Partners Researcher Survey

Summary Report

1. Introduction

The 2008 Flinders Partners (FP) Researcher Survey is an initiative undertaken by Flinders Partners aimed primarily at gauging the commercialisation interests of Flinders University researchers and their perceptions of Flinders Partners.

2. Method and sample

A self-administered survey instrument was used to gather the required data. Around 750 hard copies of the survey (including incentives) were distributed to research staff of the University via staff pigeon holes in August, 2008, followed by two reminders. The results should be considered in view of sample characteristics. First, the majority of the 132 respondents are part of the Medical School (37); however, a good spread across Schools and Faculties was achieved during the data collection process. Second, while 36% of the respondents indicated no previous employment in industry, more than 42% of respondents had worked in industry for more than 5 years. A high level of previous involvement with commercialisation activities was also shown, particularly in relation to consulting (62.6%).

3. Results¹

(1) Current projects and interests

53 respondents (46.1%) indicated that they currently have projects with commercial application or projects that could benefit from the involvement of external partners. In addition, a large number of respondents showed interest in becoming involved in commercial activities, particularly in regards to consulting (59.7%), international consulting (40.9%), projects/partnering and contract R&D (both 32.3%).

These results suggest a high level of research with commercial potential and, in turn, a large number of projects and staff who may benefit from services provided by Flinders Partners. Most respondents indicated their areas of research interest and activity as well as preferred method of communication, allowing the FP team to engage with the individual in a targeted and service-oriented manner.

(2) Experiences and perceptions

While only 32 researchers completed the questions about their experiences², the results are positive, with measures of trust, satisfaction and word of mouth showing average scores of 5.3. A lower score (4.7) for the length of time it has taken to complete tasks suggests a potential for FP to improve in this area.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their feelings towards FP on a scale from 1 (negative) to 7 (positive). An average of 5.21 indicates a positive feeling towards FP. It is interesting to note that a slightly lower average score of 4.92 was recorded for those respondents who have not worked with either FP, FC or FT previously. Those respondents who have worked with FP since the beginning of this year even showed a very good average of 5.73.

(3) Comments and wishes

Comments reflected the quantitative results, with positive statements such as efficient, helpful, friendly, professional, encouraging and innovative. Suggestions for improvement include the extension of the team and an equal service of all faculties, strategies already being implemented at FP.

Wishes related primarily to finding funding and partners, and thus early stages of partnering, followed up by in relation to project applications and management, legal, marketing, general advice and initiatives such as networking events and commercialisation workshops. Greater focus on early career and inexperienced researchers was also suggested, indicating an opportunity for FP to support and educate staff new to commercialisation and industry partnering. A large number of wishes also related to collaboration and involvement, encouraging FP to continue with their partnering focus and their strategy of proactively engaging with researchers. In relation to policies and levies as well as operations and delivery, respondents wished for greater transparency and less bureaucracy.

4. Next steps

Next steps include a general meet-and-greet event, individual follow-ups with respondents, and further developments of service and marketing activities based on the results of the survey.

¹ Please contact Flinders Partners if you wish to have a more extensive report on the findings.

² Experiences related to Flinders Partners, Flinders Technologies and Flinders Partners. Researchers were given the option of providing this information confidentially