

Industry Engagement Skills - A key capability needed for researchers today

Testimonial from Phd candidate at Flinders University

The most important thing I took from the program and have implemented in my post-PhD career is the development of a one-line phrase that captures the 'why' of my research. I come back to this phrase when making many career decisions; it helps me reflect on 'why' I do what I do, and makes me reflect on how or if a potential opportunity fits my 'why'.

On my website (laurenlines.com), I have framed my 'why' as a question: 'What if all children lived in safe, strong families and communities that enabled them to reach their full potential?' This question helps me to encapsulate what I do and ensure that I am being strategic in my career when opportunities inside and outside of the university emerge. Although I am one of the few who have continued working at a university post-PhD, the nature of my research means that to make a difference, I need to engage with families, communities, professionals, policy makers and government.

THE CHALLENGE



Developing the confidence and skills of early career researchers to effectively identify industry engagement opportunities and explore alternative career pathways.

Early career researchers in Australia are facing a challenging and rapidly-changing environment. Each year, it's estimated that more than 10,000 PhDs are awarded by Australian universities, and over half of these PhD recipients will obtain employment outside the university sector. The challenge for the universities training these PhDs is to equip them with transferable skills, valuable outside the university sector; and to help them learn how to effectively articulate and demonstrate the unique value that research training has for employers. Universities also need to help PhDs identify and communicate the value and applicability of their PhD research project to potential end-users (these may include future employers). This skillset is substantially different from the skills PhD students need to effectively deliver publications and conference presentations to other researchers in their field. The overwhelming majority of researchers entered this field to make a positive difference in the broader world. Universities must enable PhDs to orient their research activities and outputs to increase the chances of impact for their stakeholders (e.g. industry, government, end-users etc).

CRUXES' RESPONSE



Cruxes has designed a professional development program to equip early career researchers with the capability and confidence to articulate their transferable skills to non-academic audiences. As well as to build engagement with stakeholders outside of academia to translate their research capability into solving problems in the real world. The program, now called Base, consists of a fast-paced, practical, hands-on workshop, supplemented with a series of self-paced online learning modules. Participants also unlock a one-on-one coaching session with the program facilitator to deal with barriers and challenges they face in enhancing their industry engagement skills.

THE RESULT



Cruxes delivered the Base (Industry Engagement Skills) program in October-November 2020 to a cohort of 18 early career researchers at Flinders University. Participants' self-assessed feedback showed a significant boost in their confidence to initiate discussions about the value of their research and engage with stakeholders who are interested in collaborating and supporting their research. 97% of participants indicated that they have a better understanding of the next steps to take in creating real-world impact from their research.



Want to learn more?
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