

# FAST TRACK IMPACT

## **What does your digital footprint say about you?**

15 questions that will tell you if  
your professional online identity  
is an asset or a risk

## **Impact tracking made easy with Evernote**

Find out how your teams  
can track their impacts  
using nothing but their email

## **Do your design skills undermine your credibility and impact?**

Don't just design your next  
website or talk to be informative;  
design it to have impact



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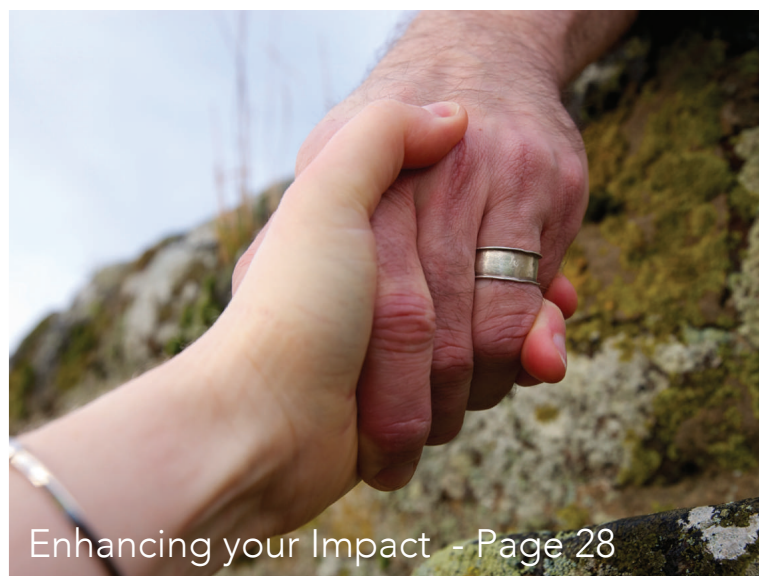
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# Editorial

"I am excited to welcome you to the first issue of the Fast Track Impact magazine. There is more and more interest from researchers about how they can generate impact from their work, but there is very little high quality, new material that can help them. This magazine attempts to fill this gap in a way that is enjoyable, relaxing and inspiring for people who have to speed-read for a living.

I have enough impenetrable jargon to get through every day in the journal articles I'm reading and the grant proposals I review. I want to learn more about research impact without hurting my head even more. That's why I've edited this magazine to be as easy to digest and as uplifting as possible, in the hope that you might choose to read this during a break or on your commute to work.

This first issue includes my latest thinking on impact alongside the latest news and stories from others working in the field. I've had the pleasure of working closely with Fast Track Impact's in-house designer and our photographer, to create something that I hope you will value enough to share with colleagues, whether you bought a hard copy or downloaded the free version online. The second issue will be due in the second half of the year.



Our mission in Fast Track Impact is to change the way researchers generate and share knowledge, so that their ideas can change the world. I hope that the articles in this first issue inspire you to do just this."

A handwritten signature of Mark Reed in black ink.

**Prof Mark Reed**

HEFCE Chair of Socio-Technical Innovation at Newcastle University  
Chief Operating Officer, Fast Track Impact Ltd



Joyce Reed is Fast Track Impact's photographer. While her heart lies in nature photography, she loves the intellectual challenge of working for Fast Track Impact. An article about digital footprints? Easy: go for a walk in the forest, draw binary code on Mark's foot and leave a trail of code on the leaves he walks over.

"Usually it takes a few days to mull over my brief, because it tends to be so abstract" she explains.

"But I love it when everything suddenly becomes clear. This image is from the same photo shoot as the cover photo. The sun came out after heavy rain, and you could smell wood and earth in the air.









# NEWS

## EU seeks to evaluate the impact of its research

The European Commission is looking hard at how it can enhance and better evidence the impact of the research it funds.

A High Level Group on Maximizing the Impact of EU Research and Innovation is being set up to provide evidence that will inform the design of the successor to the €80 billion Horizon 2020 programme, which is due to commence in 2021. Following this announcement, Commissioner Carlos Moedas told the Conference on the European Research Area in October 2016 that the successor to Horizon 2020 had to be built on “a more sophisticated approach” to impact. He told delegates: “We have an obligation and an incentive to be much better at understanding and communicating the impact of what we do. Not only to ministers of finance, but to the general public.”



It is not clear to what extent reforms will relate to the application and review process, support for impact during the course of research, and/or evidencing of impacts during and after research has been conducted. The Horizon 2020 application process already asks how proposed research will generate impact and “European added value”. However, the current “dissemination” focus of many EU funded research projects could arguably, with support, move beyond dissemination to the generation of impacts. A more challenging proposition, given the scale of EU funding, would be any kind of comprehensive evaluation of impacts arising from this research. Commissioner Moedas appears to favour an approach based on metrics, which has been widely considered internationally.

Peter Strohschneider, president of the German Research Foundation, commented that introducing a REF-type exercise in Europe would be “very expensive” and lead to “scientific and intellectual shortcomings” if it were focused on metrics. “Questions of metrics are questions of power... This is all about political decisions on what we take as relevant in research”. However most countries

that have investigated the use of impact metrics in detail have rejected this sort of approach as simplistic and unable to capture many impacts, particularly for certain disciplines. It seems likely that the EU will reach a similar conclusion in time.

## Does the public agree with the value that researchers place on the impact of their research?

New research published in the British Medical Journal shows that the UK public value the impacts of research that are most prized by researchers.

The research asked medical researchers and members of the public to rank impacts, such as life expectancy and job creation, from best to worst. Using methods from economics, the team were able to show that the impacts most prized by researchers – improved life expectancy, job creation and reduced health costs – were also valued most highly by members of the public. However, there was less agreement between the groups on other impacts, including commercial capacity development, training and dissemination. The two groups were more likely to agree about impacts that were more far-reaching and significant in terms of their social benefit, rather than impacts occurring within the research system.

The research shows the potential for impacts that are judged to be far-reaching and significant (for example those graded as such in the Research Excellence Framework) to communicate the benefits of research to the public.

Pollitt, A., Potoglou, D., Patil, S., Burge, P., Guthrie, S., King, S., Wooding, S. and Grant, J., 2016. Understanding the relative valuation of research impact: a best–worst scaling experiment of the general public and biomedical and health researchers. *BMJ open* 6(8), p.e010916.

## Might communicating your research to the public undermine your status as an expert?

Researchers from University of Muenster, Germany, have suggested that popular articles about research “make science too easy”, leading members of the public to “underrate their dependence on experts”.

The research, to be published in *Public Understanding of Science*, shows that members of the public are more likely to agree with knowledge claims after reading popularized articles compared to reading the original research. The authors say this demonstrates the “easiness effect of science popularization” which can lead members of the public to “rely too strongly on their own capabilities when making judgments about scientific claims”.



# NEWS

The article comes at a time when trust in experts is at an all-time low, with the rise of popularist, “post-truth” politics in many countries around the world. The findings present a dilemma for researchers who want to communicate their work and use their expertise for the public good. The research shows clearly that effective communication of research can empower publics to better understand and use research. However, the research asks whether there is such a thing as “too much empowerment”? This is likely to split a research community that is struggling to find a route back to relevance and evidence-based policy and practice.

Commenting on the finding, Clifton Bain, Director of the UK's International Union for the Conservation of Nature Peatland Programme, who works regularly at the research-policy interface said, “Until now we focused on evidence; in a post-truth world we need to tell evidence-based stories, peer to peer”.

Rather than giving up on communicating research, the findings suggest that researchers need to change their approach to communication. Rather than pushing messages out through mass media channels and walking away, social media is enabling researchers to retain ownership of their own message, and engage in the conversation as their findings travel from peer to peer through social networks.

Scharrer L, Rupieper Y, Stadler M, Bromme R (in press). When science becomes too easy: Science popularization inclines laypeople to underrate their dependence on experts. *Public Understanding of Science* doi: 10.1177/0963662516680311

## Australian impact and engagement assessment pilot opens for business

The Australian government will pilot ways to measure the impact of university research and the universities' engagement with business and industry in 2017 ahead of a national rollout of the assessment system in 2018.

Announcing the pilot scheme, which will operate across ten broad disciplinary areas, Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham said, “The Engagement and Impact Assessment is about incentivising the smart and talented people working in our labs and universities to better focus on research that has wider economic and social benefits.”

A focus on “measuring” impact in during the consultation phase has shifted to the “assessment” of impact, with a move towards the submission of case studies, despite concerns over the likely cost of the exercise.

Engagement and impact will be assessed separately. Assessment of engagement will involve metric indicators and a narrative statement. Impact assessment will involve qualitative case studies, supplemented with quantitative

information where available. Submissions will be assessed by panels comprising academics and end-users of research.

A recent study of 45 Australian senior cancer researchers demonstrated mixed acceptance of their role and engagement with research impact activities, and highlighted potential problems of relying on researchers for collating and reporting impact data. Responding to the announcement of the pilot scheme, Chief Executive of Universities Australia, Belinda Robinson, said, “Some Australian research will result in direct commercial outcomes and some will not. That should never be the only test of the value of research.”



## New App enables “chance” collisions with people who can help you generate impacts

Like many researchers, James Eder believes in serendipitous impact. One morning on the Tube he sat next to someone who was preparing a CV and engaged them in conversation. It turned out that he was exactly the sort of person Eder was looking for in his company, and a few weeks later they were working together. After this, the gregarious young entrepreneur started to wonder how many other people he might be sitting next to he



# NEWS

could help, or who could help him.

Eder's goal with new free app Causr, is to trigger impactful conversations with those around us (e.g. on train platforms, in airport lounges and cafes), leading to lasting working relationships and impacts that would not otherwise have been possible. He has given himself the title of Causr's "Chief Collision Creator" because he believes people miss out on life-changing "collisions" with



interesting people all the time.

The app uses LinkedIn to authenticate and populate your profile and lets you know when there are others with relevant interests nearby, who (by virtue of having the app) you can assume might be interested in meeting you. Causr is designed to act as an "ice-breaker", giving you enough information about those around you (a job title, a shared university or a club membership) to give you the confidence to initiate a conversation. The app's name is based on the Latin word for "motive", *causa*. Eder says that "the idea behind Causr is cause and effect". If we could identify a common cause with those around us, might we be able to work together to achieve the effects we want to see in the world? If the person you "bump into" has significantly more power than you to achieve those effects, and your research has something to offer, then perhaps we might be able to harness serendipity for impact, rather than waiting for chance happenings to occur.

Find out more at [www.causr.co](http://www.causr.co) or listen to an interview with James Eder at <https://www.virgin.com/entrepreneur/voom-podcast-love-and-connections-venntro-and-causr>



**Want to connect to your target audience ...**

**Building on your communication strengths ...**

**To build long-term trusting relationships?**

**Want to ...**

**Increase your impact**

**Become more visible**

**Improve your profile ?**

**Sounds like you should contact me.**

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# Profile:

## Dr Kath Murray



*Dr Murray's PhD research changed stop and search legislation and won her ESRC's Outstanding Early Career Impact Award. How did she do it?*

Dr Kath Murray's doctoral research on police-public encounters revealed very high levels of stop and search in Scotland, which sparked a national debate. Her research has resulted in new legislation, major changes in police practice and a 93 per cent drop in stop searches and seizures.

Her Head of School, Professor Richard Sparks, commented that, "For a doctoral project to have initiated a major public debate on an aspect of police practice and led directly to a change in legislation is unprecedented, in my experience".

So how did she do it? We caught up with her to find out.

**1. "What made you choose this topic for your PhD research? At what point did you realise you might be able to actually change stop and search legislation?"**

"The original PhD set out to examine the impact of police-public encounters on public confidence in the police. I was interested as to what stop and search encounters looked like in Scotland, and given a lack of published statistics, I put in Freedom of Information requests to the eight legacy police forces. At this point, it was clear that the project would be controversial. The data documented over

1.2 million encounters over a six-year period, most of which lacked legal authority, fell disproportionately on young people, and raised serious concerns around human rights, legality, legitimacy and accountability.

Still, the prospect of reform seemed unlikely. Whilst the figures were shocking, volume stop and search was a signature policy of Police Scotland's Chief Constable Sir Stephen House and a 2011 SNP Manifesto commitment, plus the SNP had an overall majority in the Scottish Parliament.

The possibility of legislative change came about further down the line, once the research was in the public domain and the issue had gained a strong foothold in the media, which led to something of a perfect storm. Media coverage prompted political engagement, and vice versa, as opposition MSPs raised questions, and the Scottish Parliament Justice Sub-Committee on Policing took up the issue."

**2. "Many PhD students would have just done their research and let others worry about the impact. What motivated you to act on your findings?"**



"Whilst volume stop and search was largely presented as a 'Police Scotland' story in the media, in fact the policy went back a couple of decades in some parts of Scotland. Recorded search rates were disproportionately high under some of the old legacy police forces, but this had mostly passed unchallenged, at least publically, and no-one was really speaking out on the issue. Added to this, the research was initially met with an exceptionally defensive response by Police Scotland and the Scottish Government. Faced with a mixture of institutional apathy and hostility, the motivation was principally one of social responsibility, coupled with public interest. ."

### 3. "What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?"

"At first, it seemed that no amount of research evidence or stakeholder engagement would shift the prevailing outlook. As such, I set about getting the messages across in other ways: through comment and articles in the media, contact with parliamentarians and advocacy groups, open-access reports and briefings, and articles written for general audiences."

### 4. "What advice would you give to other early career researchers who want their research to make a difference?"

"In some respects, it's difficult to generalise. These were exceptional circumstances on a number of counts, including the size of the research problem, the heated politics around policing following the merger of Scotland's eight forces into a single force in April 2013, and relatedly, the level of media interest. What I think is clear, is that making a difference is not straightforward, especially when the findings are controversial. Challenging existing institutional

arrangements and powerful authority figures is not easy and publically nailing your colours to the mast can be uncomfortable, particularly in a small country like Scotland that has close-knit policy and academic circles. On the other hand, I would still maintain that when publicly funded research is faced with a closed door that we need to shout louder."

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*'Why have we funded this research?' On politics, research and newsmaking criminology' by Kath Murray is due for publication in Criminology and Criminal Justice in 2017.*





# Online Impact

## What does your digital footprint say about you?

*15 questions that will tell you if your professional online identity is an asset or a risk*

**W**e've all got one, but what does your digital footprint say about you? Not everyone who asks themselves that question is happy with the answer. However, there are some simple things you can do to ensure your digital footprint represents you effectively and works for (not against) you.

The digital realm is full of risk. However, not having a digital footprint may be just as big a risk as having a poorly managed footprint. Many interview panelists will Google the people they short-list for jobs. The absence of a digital footprint may raise questions, if the applicant is claiming to be a researcher with an international profile. Are they not capable of creating an up-to-date, easily findable profile? Or are they trying to avoid having a digital footprint, and if so why?

For most researchers however, the greatest risk is their time and their reputation. Social media can suck up time and distract, and we've all heard of high profile people who have lost their jobs over an ill-judged social media post. However, there are ways of managing your digital footprint that do not risk either your time or reputation.

### Step 1: what do you want your digital footprint to do for you?

The first step is to decide what you want to get out of your digital footprint. Your online presence shouldn't just be a chore that you feel duty bound to continually update – it should give back to you in tangible ways. If you're putting in lots of time and getting nothing back, then you either need to shrink your footprint to

make it more manageable or change what you're doing to get better value out of the time you invest online. Ask yourself whether you want your digital footprint to:

- provide you with research networks, collaboration and funding opportunities and information; and/or
- enable you to achieve impacts from your research beyond academia.

If you primarily want your digital footprint to enhance your research, then you do not need to engage with social media, but if you do, you will probably want a fairly small, highly focused network of colleagues who you can learn from, influence and crowd-source information from.

If you also want your digital footprint to enable you to generate impacts from your research, then you will probably need to engage with some form of social media. There are more risks associated with achieving this goal (both in terms of time and reputation), but there are relatively low risk ways of starting out.

### Step 2: How much risk are you willing to take?

The greater your visibility and influence, and the more you use your digital footprint to reach out beyond the academy, the more risk you will expose yourself to online. You could become a victim of your own success if you are unable to prioritise the responses and opportunities that arise, and you end up spending more time engaging online than you do on your research. An error of judgement might go un-noticed when you are starting out, but your every move will be seen when you have tens of thousands of followers. Depending on how controversial your research is (and sadly your gender), you may also find people taking your words out of context, misunderstanding and taking offence. We've all seen how emails can be mis read and taken out of context, leading to conflicts that could have been avoided if we had simply picked up the phone. Social media takes this possibility to a whole new level. When this happens, online abuse can quickly follow.

It is important to be aware of these risks as a researcher online, and to make a conscious decision about the level of risk you are prepared to take before expanding your digital footprint in ways that will expose you to greater risk. If you only want your digital footprint to benefit your research, it is possible to take a fairly low-risk approach online. If you want to use your digital footprint to reach out more widely and start generating offline impacts from your research, then you will need to accept a higher level of risk, but there are still ways of keeping things safe.

### Step 3: Take low-risk steps to make your digital footprint benefit your research

There are many quick and simple things you can do to make your digital footprint work more effectively for you.

- **Audit your digital footprint:** do a Google search for your name and the institution you work for and see what comes up. If you've

Googled yourself before, it is worth downloading a new browser or using a colleague's device as Google will know that you are looking for you and not someone with a similar name, and automatically rank your institutional profile close to the top of the list. This is not what others searching for your name would see, unless they had searched for you a number of times in the past.

- **Interrogate your online identities:** what profiles come up when you search for your name? Are they for you or someone else? Is your main institutional profile on the first page or do other profiles get listed first? Do these other profiles represent you the way you would like to be seen by the outside world?
- **Prune, cultivate or consolidate your online identities:** first remove any non-professional identities or make them private. Next, ask yourself how each of these different profiles benefited you in the last year. If you aren't getting any value then don't waste your time keeping them up-to-date – remove your profile and focus your limited time on the profiles that are most likely to bring you the





benefits you are seeking for your research. As part of this, you may consider consolidating many profiles into one or a few that you can more easily keep up to date. This may be as simple as ensuring that you have got links signposting the most relevant profiles (e.g. your Google Scholar publication list and Twitter account) from the profile that comes up first in a Google search (e.g. your institutional profile).

- Actively manage your digital footprint: regularly review and update all your online profiles every six months or so

## Step 4: Investigate low-risk online platforms designed for researchers

There are a number of low-risk online platforms for researchers to communicate their research that are worth investigating:

- If you've got an academic email address, you can get a Google Scholar profile. Google will automatically populate your profile with your publications (you can correct it if there are mistakes) and rank them by citations. Now whenever one of your papers turns up in a Google Scholar search, your name will be hyperlinked from the author list to your profile so people can read more of your work, which could help boost citations
- Unlike Google Scholar, ResearchGate and Academia.edu are actually social media platforms because they enable researchers to engage in debate around the publications they list. Although higher risk than Google Scholar, which does not allow this, the networks are only open to researchers, so risks of online abuse are lower than public social media platforms. These platforms also automatically populate your profile so they don't take a lot of time. However, ensure that you go into settings in ResearchGate though, to prevent it spamming your co-authors on your behalf whenever it finds new papers you've written
- Although relatively new, the UK-based social media platform for researchers, Piirus, has a

large and rapidly growing user-base. This is a network with a difference though, as it provides researchers with small scale consultancy opportunities with Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) which can help you drive impact from your research

## Step 5: Decide if and when you want to use your digital footprint to generate impact from your research

It is important to emphasise that you get to decide for yourself if you want to engage in higher risk activities online that are more likely to generate impacts from your research. No-one should make you feel left out or like you are a dinosaur because you have decided that you do not want to engage with social media. Weigh up the potential benefits and the risks, and then make a decision you feel happy with and stick to it with the confidence that you have made an informed decision.

For many researchers, this is a fluid decision. The time may not be right for you now, but you would like to dip your toe in the water and slowly move towards a more influential and outward looking digital footprint. It is possible to take gentle steps in this direction, rather than diving in at the deep end to a platform you do not fully understand and getting yourself into trouble. Most researchers go through the following steps:

- **Watcher:** start by signing up to a social media platform like Twitter or LinkedIn and just connecting with and reading from relevant people and accounts. If you choose who you follow carefully and manage your signal:noise ratio by unfollowing less relevant accounts, you can get immediate benefits for your research by efficiently staying on top of the latest developments and funding opportunities in your field. You can also get a lot of benefits already for impact. Start connecting with high-level politicians, journalists and industry leaders who might be able to help you disseminate your research and achieve impacts. Many journalists have their mobile phone number in their profile and many leaders will respond to private



messages on social media directly despite the fact that you cannot reach them via letter or email. Start following people you think might benefit from your research and listen into their public conversations and comment, so that you know the language they use and the issues that are resonating with them. When you do meet these people (or people like them) face-to-face you are much more likely to be prepared for the difficult questions and be able to use language that will resonate.

- **Sign-poster:** The next step most researchers take is to start sign-posting people to useful resources online. It may be your latest paper, an article you read via social media that morning or something you're about to send to your PhD students or research group. Now rather than just sending the email, you are

repurposing your email and posting the link to the story or paper on social media. Typically people will just copy or paraphrase the title of the piece they are sharing, so these are not your words that can be taken out of context or used against you.

- **Content-generator:** The final step that researchers take, typically (and advisably) after spending significant time learning the ropes as a lurker and sign-poster, is to start actually posting their own content based on their research. This is the point at which most opportunities for generating impact occur, but if you're going to invest the time and energy in generating new content, make sure you've got a clear social media strategy so you know that you are using your time wisely.

“Weigh up the potential benefits and the risks, and then make a decision you feel happy with and stick to it with the confidence that you have made an informed decision.”



**Answer these questions find out if your professional online identity is an asset or a risk:**

1. I sometimes get invitations to do new work that I actually want through people that have found out about my work from my personal or institutional website
2. There is one webpage where you can find out pretty much anything you need to know about me professionally
3. Most of my online profiles are fairly up to date
4. I have a Google Scholar profile, so when my papers come up in a search my name is hyperlinked to a list of all my other papers
5. If you do a Google search for my name with my university, I appear in the first page of results
6. There is some information about me on my institutional profile but you can find out a lot more via my profiles on other websites
7. When you Google my name with my university, you get a mix of professional and personal profiles and content
8. When you Google my name with my university, you're unlikely to find me
9. I can be found on Twitter, but the stuff I tweet about isn't really related to my work
10. I have quite a few old profiles on various websites that I've not been able to update
11. My social media profile(s) represent me professionally and I generate content based on my work when I've got anything useful to say
12. My professional and personal social media and other online profiles are clearly distinct from each other, and personal accounts are set to private
13. I have a fairly clear idea of what I want to get out of spending time on social media
14. I actively engage with others about my work on social media
15. The number of people I'm connected to via social media is steadily growing

***If you answered YES to questions 1-5,***

you have a useful and easily findable digital footprint. This is a safe place to be. Your work is easily findable (and citable) and you present a healthy professional image that represents you effectively and works for you.

***If you answered YES to questions 11-15,***

you have an influential, outward-reaching digital footprint. This is a more risky, but potentially much more rewarding place to be in. As you grow in influence, people will watch your every word, so there is less room for errors of judgement, but when you speak, the world listens and you can really influence debate. As your influence grows, your professional visibility grows, both in and out of the academy, and relevant opportunities for impact will start to come to you.

***If you answered YES to questions 6-10,***

you've got a bit of work to do if you want to build a digital footprint that represents and works for you effectively. This is a risky place to be as you could be missing important opportunities. Depending on the sort of personal content that appears in a Google search or how hard you are to find, your digital footprint may raise questions in some people's minds about your credibility as a researcher doing internationally relevant or important work.

To download a social media strategy template, visit [www.fasttrackimpact.com/resources](http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/resources).

You can hear more tips about online engagement for researchers on the Fast Track Impact Podcast: [www.fasttrackimpact.com/podcast](http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/podcast)

# Answer these 4 questions to start driving impact on social media

Are you wasting time on social media or is it helping you achieve impact? The easiest way to make sure your time on social media really counts is to have a social media strategy. If you can answer these four questions, then you've got yourself a social media strategy. Simple. And to make it even easier, we've released a new updated version of the Fast Track Impact Social Media Strategy Template that will help you get some serious clarity seriously quickly.

You don't have to write anything down – you just need to act on the answers to these questions to stop wasting time and start generating impacts on social media. Of course if you want to write stuff down, this template is for you. Use the template to the right and the prompts on the following pages to pin down a clear strategy.

- 1. What offline impacts do you want to achieve via social media?
- 2. Who are you trying to reach, what are they interested in and what platforms are they on?
- 3. How can you make your content actionable, shareable and rewarding for those who interact with you, so you can start building relationships and move the conversation from social media to real life?
- 4. Who can you work with to make your use of social media more efficient and effective?

The template below is a quick and easy way to organize your thinking and keep track of you progress towards impact based on your use of social media.

Impact goal	
What would I expect to see happening offline that would indicate my engagement with social media is moving me closer to this impact goal?	
Which stakeholders or publics on social media can help me reach this goal?	
Which social media platforms are these stakeholders and publics most active on?	
What aspects of my research are these stakeholders and publics most likely to be interested in?	
Linked to these interests, what content, resources or opportunities would these groups find most valuable or rewarding?	
What actions or activities could I promote via social media to encourage deeper engagement with my research, which might lead to conversations offline that could help achieve impact?	
What are the main social media accounts that have content linked to this impact goal? What can I learn from their most popular material? Regularly update this list of accounts and insights, and promote your work to their followers by directly requesting retweets/likes or following their followers.	



# How to actually save time in your working day by engaging with social media

By Mark Reed

“I don’t have time to read all my emails – how am I meant to keep up with streams of information from social media too?”

“I’d like to engage more with social media for work, but there’s no down-time and nothing obvious I could cut out to make time for it.”

These are some of the most common (and entirely fair) objections I hear about social media when I train researchers. But does social media have to be a drain on your time? Would you believe me if I told you that I actually save time by engaging with social media – about 40 minutes extra time in my working day to be precise?

What would you do with 40 minutes of extra time per day? Most days I actually use the extra time to rest or indulge non-work interests and get better work-life balance. However, on busy days, that 40 minutes can make the difference between having time to respond to my urgent emails or not, or it might give me time accept an invitation to write a blog post and produce something that gets my research to a wider audience.

The reason I can put a figure on my claim is that a researcher recently challenged me and I didn’t have the data to back up my claim. So I loaded Apptacker on my phone and measured my time on social media over two weeks. The amount of time I spent had gone up since I’d last estimated it (I’m now managing five Twitter accounts including my School’s account in addition to more limited engagement with LinkedIn and Facebook). But I was still making a net time saving on my working day.

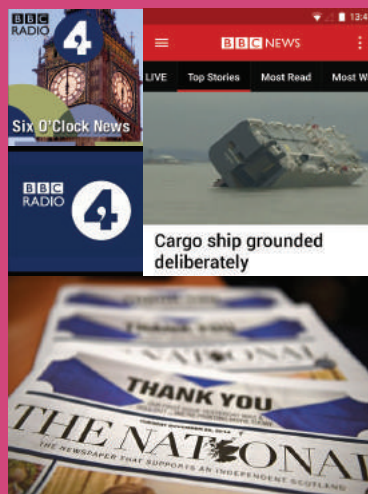
To explain how, let me invite you to do an experiment with me...

1. Work out how long you spend engaging with the news on an average day. When I first did this, I listened to BBC Radio 4 Today for 10–30 minutes a day, the *Six O’Clock News* for 20–30 minutes a day, read news from the Yahoo or BBC News apps for 5–15 minutes a day, got news from Twitter for 5–15 minutes a day and spent between 30–50 minutes a week listening to the BBC World Service, reading *The National* newspaper, *The Guardian* and other newspapers. On average this added up to around 90 minutes per day.
2. Replace your usual news with your own tailored news stream via Twitter. Follow the radio and TV news programmes, apps and newspapers you currently use on Twitter. Given that most of these will offer their content free on the platform, you may want to consider donating to news organisations who allow this. Now find a few more specific news feeds that are relevant to your research, for example your professional body or society, your research funders and key researchers in your field. For one day this week, disengage from all other forms of news and only get your news from Twitter.
3. See how much time you save. I built my Twitter following (over 40,000 followers across my accounts) on about 20 minutes per day, but I now spend about 50 minutes per day, actively managing five accounts in different ways to achieve specific impact goals. My 50 minutes per day includes getting all my news, generating content and reaching out proactively to target groups.

Average week day news intake

90 minutes

50 minutes



...including active engagement & outreach via social media

I now get more relevant news, tailored to my interests and am building my online influence and offline impacts, while giving myself 40 minutes a day of extra time.

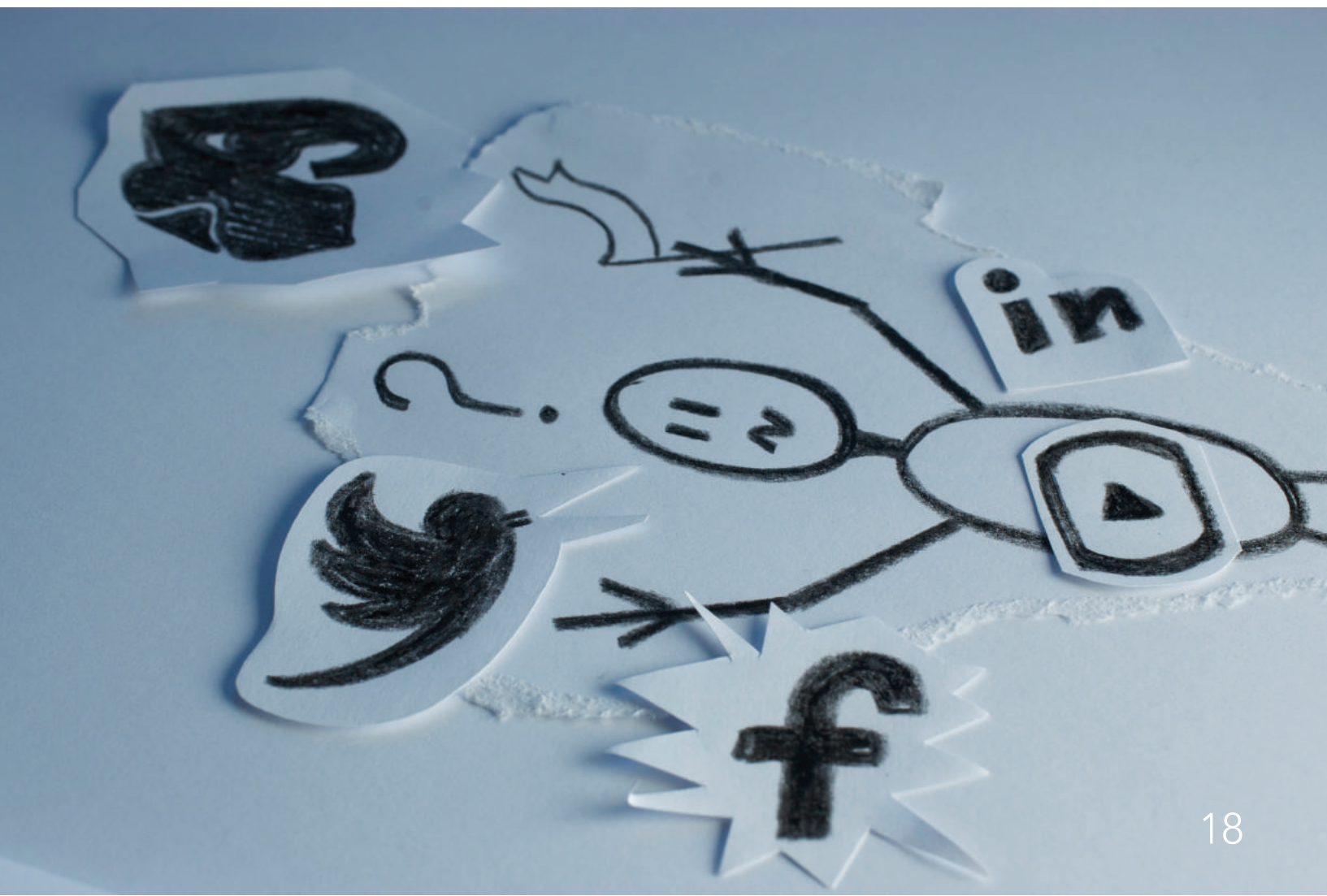
## How to become influential on Twitter the easy way

If you want to use social media to generate research impacts, you need to have influence, and online, influence is all about numbers. Most researchers don't have time to generate new content every day and focus on building a social media empire. The good news is that you don't have to have time; you just need a growth strategy.

It can take as little as 20 minutes per day to become highly influential. Fast Track Impact (@fasttrackimpact) went from just over 2000 followers to over 30,000 followers in less than a year by adopting a simple growth strategy that was implemented between the cracks of a busy role as a professor. During the same period, a PhD student Rosmarie Katrin Neumann

(@RosmarieKatrin) went from 50 followers to over 7000 followers using the same strategy and a similar investment of time. Over four years, the University of Dundee's Centre for Environmental Change & Human Resilience (@CECHR\_UoD) went from zero to over 100,000 followers and currently grows at over 100 follower per day.

The growth strategy these researchers used is used by almost every organization on Twitter that has an impact goal, whether that goal is profit or social good. Despite the technique making it into the peer-reviewed literature in 2016 (see the citation at the end of this article), most researchers have never heard of it. This isn't for everyone; most researchers do not need to become influential online to achieve their goals and have a digital footprint that works for them. However, if you have good reason to become influential online, then it is well worth considering. Most researchers who need to become influential online do so because they have identified that social media is a potentially powerful pathway to impact with particular publics or stakeholders they need to influence.







## So how do you do it?

1. **Have a social media strategy:** know what impacts you want to achieve through Twitter with which groups and come up with some indicators that will tell you if Twitter is actually helping you generate these offline impacts
2. **Set up a professional (project or thematic) account** from which you can promote research to specific audiences (and which you will feel comfortable promoting explicitly)
3. **Be credible and visual:** link to content and use images
4. **Curate your top 3 tweets:** whenever you are leave the platform for a while, make sure that your last three tweets (including a pinned tweet if you have one) effectively represent the best of what you put out from that account
5. **Only tweet when you've got something worth saying (even if that isn't often):** as a researcher, you are more likely to build a following and reputation if your content is of consistently high quality
6. **Get the attention of influencers:** in your tweet, tag relevant accounts that have significant followings, send the tweet via a Direct Message to them, email them or pick up the telephone. Even if you only have 10 followers, one of these influencers may be able to put it in front of hundreds of thousands.
7. **Put your high-quality material in front of people who are looking for content like yours:** find others on Twitter who are generating similar content to you, and follow their followers regularly. You can assume that people who have recently followed a very similar account to yours are looking for high-quality material on the subjects you



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write about. Assuming your content is good, a high proportion of these people will follow you back once you have drawn your account to their attention. Many of them will retweet the content that made them follow you and many of their followers will like what they see and follow you too. Twitter may prompt you to confirm your password the first time you start using this strategy, but as long as you are generating good content and people are following you, Twitter will allow you to continue using this strategy because you are demonstrably adding value to the network and not a spammer. Depending on how well this works, you may hit a “follow limit”, but there are many websites and apps that can

help you quickly unfollow accounts that did not follow you back, so you can continue using the strategy. As you follow increasingly more people, you will need to start reading your timeline from another account or from Twitter lists.

8. **Analyse your performance:** Twitter has built in analytics that will tell you which tweets are most successful – learn from what works and improve your practice

*Schnitzler, K., Davies, N., Ross, F. and Harris, R., 2016. Using Twitter™ to drive research impact: A discussion of strategies, opportunities and challenges. International journal of nursing studies 59: 15-26.*

Find others on Twitter who are  
generating similar content to you,  
and follow their followers regularly.



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# Know your Impact

## Impact tracking made easy with Evernote

Universities across the UK now require researchers to record evidence of the impacts that their research has, creating an additional administrative burden on already overstretched researchers. As a result, few researchers engage regularly with impact monitoring systems and important evidence may be lost.

Now Fast Track Impact have teamed up with Evernote to offer a quick and easy solution to collect evidence on the go in three simple steps:

1. Just one member of your team needs to sign up for a paid Evernote account – the rest of your team can use the free version of the app or website, or just email impacts into your Evernote account

2. Start a new notebook, share the notebook with your team and anyone else who would like to have access to your impacts (e.g. an administrator who is helping you input evidence to an institutional repository)

3. Give your team your unique Evernote email address to send in notes, photos, recordings, documents, clipped webpages and other evidence of impact to be collated in your shared notebook

Why track impact with Evernote?

- Increase your productivity and the productivity of your research team with the world's leading productivity software
- Take the pain out of reporting by collecting evidence as you go. Have relevant material quickly to hand when you need to enter it into institutional repositories
- No need for your team to remember a new log-in or learn new skills; if you can send an email, you can keep track of your impacts.



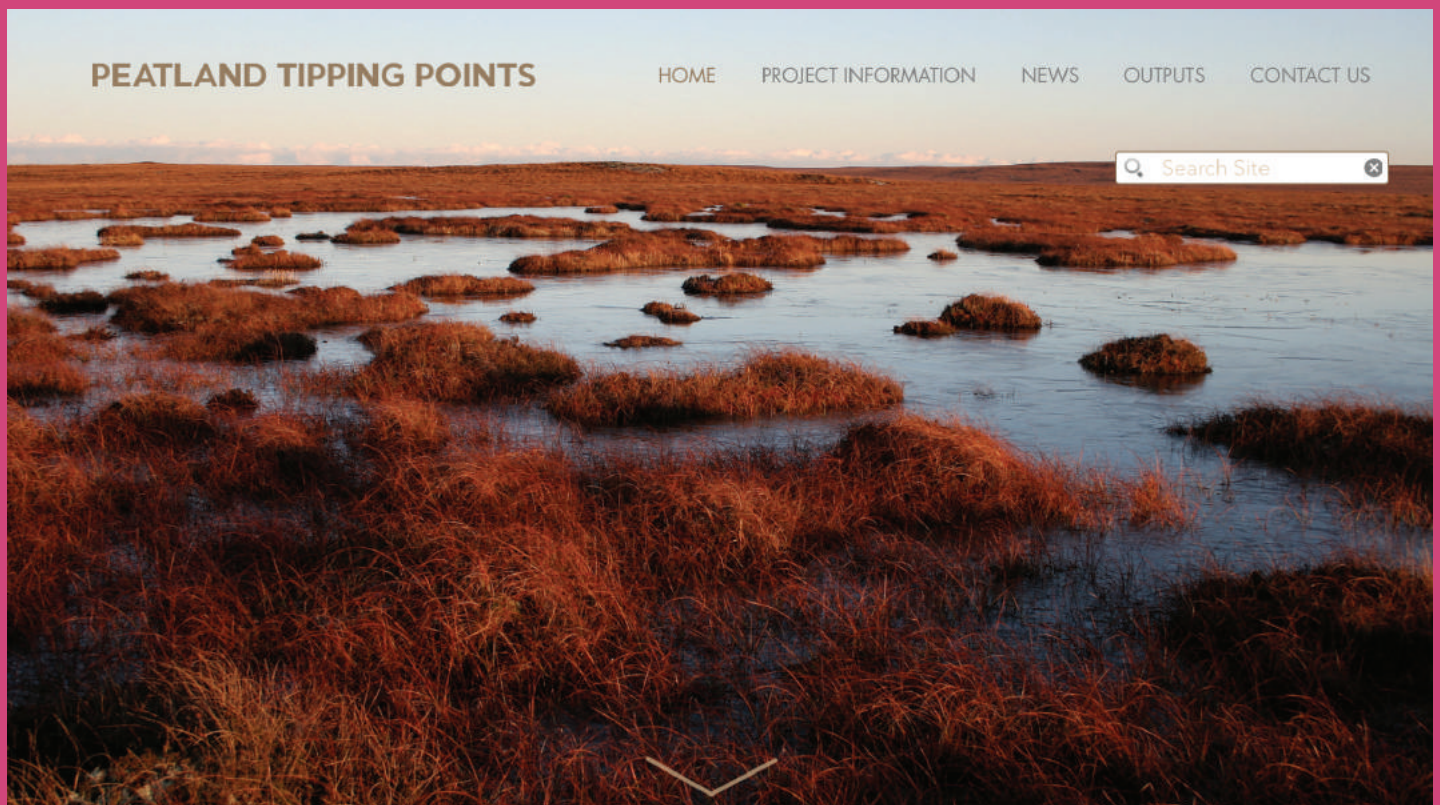
# “Take the pain out of reporting by collecting evidence as you go”

Team members don't have to download the app, visit a website or even be online unless they want to

- To set up impact tracking in Evernote, you need to be an Evernote Plus user (£29.99 per year), but your team members use the free version. When you subscribe to Evernote through Fast Track Impact, you receive a £7 discount on The Research Impact Handbook by Mark Reed (RRP £17.99)
- If you don't like it, you can cancel your Evernote subscription for a full refund within two weeks, and keep the book discount voucher

In the following example, a research project is using Evernote to collect impacts from team members over the course of the project. To make it easy for the team, the website has a link which brings up an email to the Principle Investigator (PI)'s Evernote account. In this case, the PI has a few different projects and he wants impacts from each project to go into a different notebook, so he has added the name of the notebook preceded by the @ sign, to tell Evernote where to put it. These screenshots show what happens:

## 1. Team member navigates to the 'Contact Us' page on the project website





## Contact Us

Prof Mark Reed

Centre for Rural Economy  
and Institute for Agri-Food Research  
& Innovation,  
School of Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Development,  
Agriculture Building,  
Newcastle University,  
Newcastle upon Tyne,  
NE1 7RU, UK



**Impact reporting:** report impacts arising from this research here (please do not alter the subject line)

2. Click on 'impact reporting' link at the bottom of the page

3. Write email

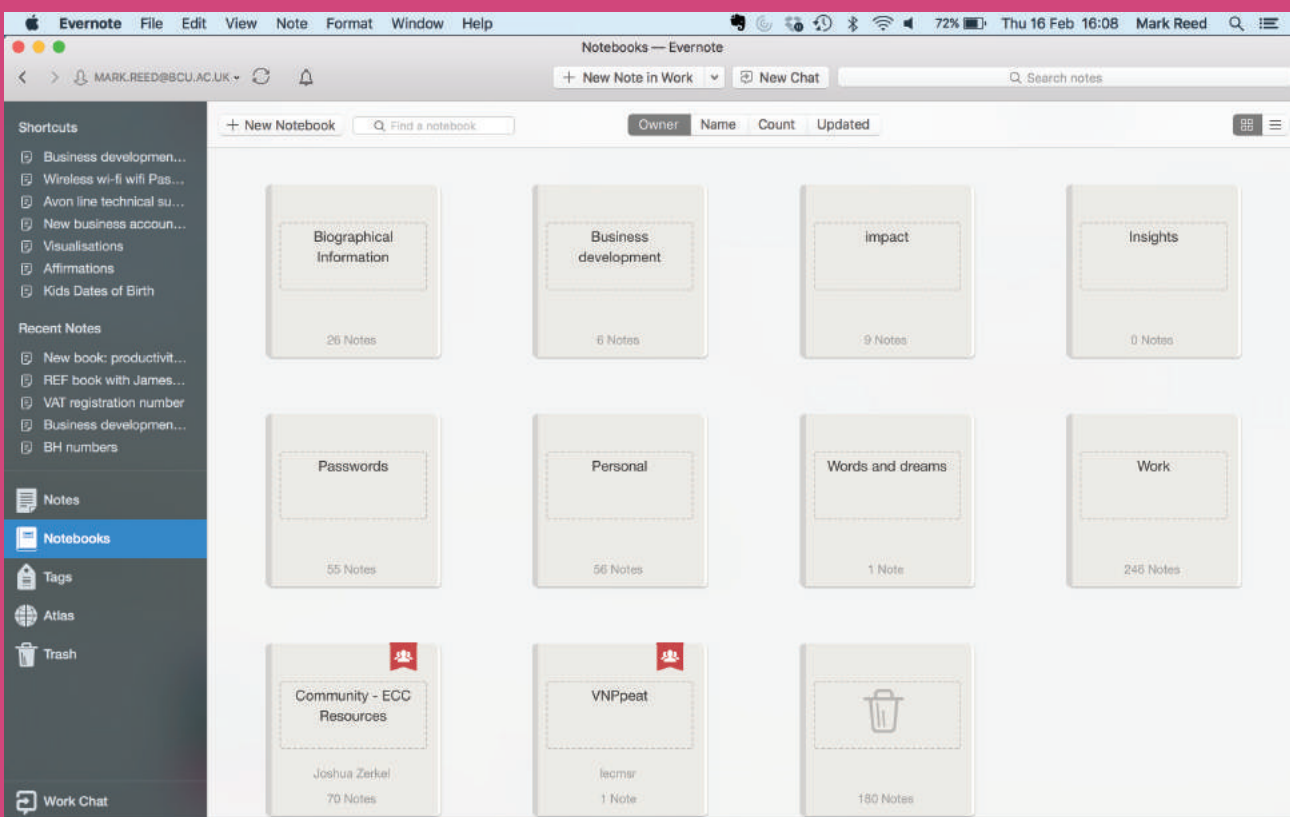
To: lecmsr.3948974@m.evernote.com

Cc:

Subject: Reporting impacts @VNPpeat

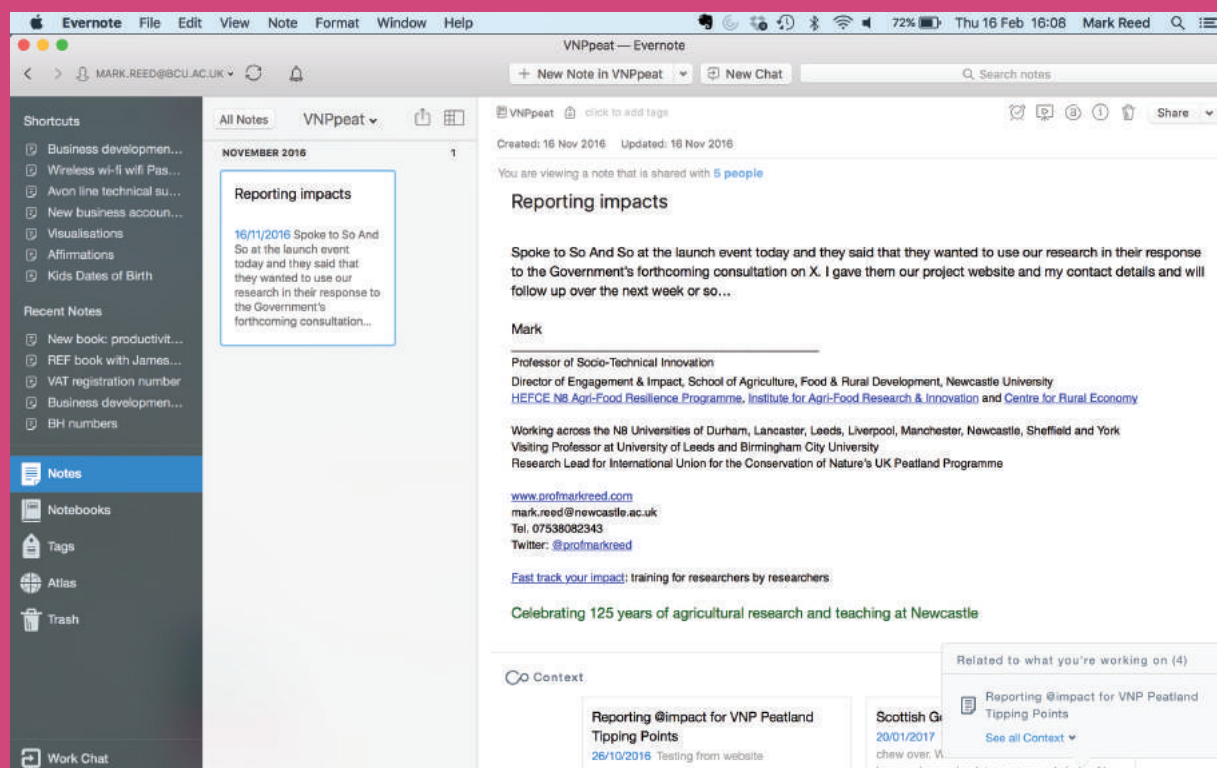
NE1 7RU, UK

Send



4. PI goes to Evernote on computer, web or mobile device and opens the relevant notebook. In this case the folder has been shared with the team so members can see impacts that have been stored via a web link or via the app on their own mobile devices

5. Once inside the notebook, the PI can see the email, which has been stored and can add tags to organize the content





# Introducing the Fast Track Impact Tracking Template

At Fast Track Impact, we like to give you short cuts that make it simple for you to generate impacts from your research. Following the huge success of our templates for impact planning and for analysing your stakeholders and publics, we are now introducing the Fast Track Impact Tracking Template.

There's no point wasting time trying to generate impact if you have no way of telling whether you are moving towards or away from your impact goals, and no way of knowing if the activities you're doing with stakeholders and publics are working or falling flat. There is a single column in our impact planning template for impact indicators. In this template, we've expanded that column out into a full impact tracking template that you can use in project management meetings to quickly and easily see if you are on track or not.

The traffic light system makes it easy to see when there are activities that are consistently failing to deliver, so you can devote attention in the areas that most need it. There are 4 steps:

1. Enter your impact goals and activities from your impact planning template
2. Identify activity indicators that will easily tell you if your activities are working or not, and make sure you've got quick and easy ways of measuring your indicators
3. Assess your progress using the traffic light system and make any comments about the reasons for your assessment and what you plan to do
4. Do the same with impact indicators that will tell you if you are making progress towards your impact goals

The worked example below comes from the Valuing Nature Programme's Peatland Tipping Points project, and illustrates how the template can be used in practice.

Download a free editable version of this template and the other Fast Track Impact templates at [www.fasttrackimpact.com/resources](http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/resources)

Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4			
Impact outcome or objective	Delivery mechanism or activity	Activity indicator	Means of measurement	Progress	Comments	Impact indicator	Means of measurement	Progress	Comments
Restore 20 million hectares of damaged peat bog by 2025, based on published research into the methods and benefits of restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Peatland Code to publically demonstrate progress towards policy statements on private-public partnerships for conservation</li> <li>Policy brief</li> <li>Presentations to policy analysts</li> <li>Briefings to Ministers via trusted NGOs and other contacts</li> <li>Input to development of Peatland Code</li> </ul>	Peatland Code developed, piloted & launched with high-level support from Government	Peatland Code launch event and documentation		Launched October 2015	Number of hectares of land restored per year	Peatland Code Register		Peatland only restored in one pilot project so far
		Sponsorship funding	Peatland Code Register		Funding for pilot projects only at this stage				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsorship catalogue</li> <li>Twitter to raise awareness among business stakeholders/customers &amp; LinkedIn to get new leads &amp; feedback</li> <li>Brokered meetings with CEOs and philanthropists</li> <li>Event stands</li> </ul>	Peat-free pledges	Website counter		Approaching 1000 pledges				
		Meetings via LinkedIn and event stands	Meeting minutes		Meetings held with CSR leads but did not lead to decisions, so now focussing on CEOs (see below)				
		Meetings via broker	Meeting minutes		In progress				
		Catalogue produced	Catalogue online		Done October 2015				

# Enhance your Impact

## 5 things you need to get right if you want to successfully engage with publics and stakeholders for impact

Conventional wisdom tells us that researchers that involve stakeholders and publics heavily in their research are more likely to deliver impact. Arnstein's famous "ladder of participation" suggests that anything less than citizen power is tokenistic and manipulative, but new research from an international team (cited below) suggests that there a number of situations where you might want to purposefully opt for a less participatory approach.

The researchers cite examples of highly co-productive processes that have gone wrong, and point to examples from the UK's Research Excellence Framework impact case study database where lower levels of participation led to major impacts. Rather than always aiming for as much participation as possible, they argue that researchers should select the type of participation that is most relevant for achieving the sorts of impacts they want to see, in the specific contexts they are working in. They identify 4 types of participation, based on who initiates and leads the process (researchers or stakeholders/publics) and how closely researchers work together with stakeholders and publics:

**1. Top-down, one-way communication and/or consultation:** participation is initiated and led from the top-down by researchers who consult publics and stakeholders (but retain decision-making power) or simply communicate messages and impacts from the research to them. This may be appropriate where an impact has already arisen from the research and cannot be changed, but needs to be communicated

to those affected

**2. Top-down deliberation and/or co-production:**

participation is initiated and led from the top-down by researchers with decision-making power who engages publics and stakeholders in two-way discussion about the research, enabling the researcher to better understand and explore suggestions with stakeholders before delivering impacts. A more co-productive approach would typically include deliberation, but the impact would be jointly developed and owned by both the researchers and stakeholders/publics. Despite this, it would still be the responsibility of the research team to ensure that decisions are implemented on the ground to generate impacts

**3. Bottom-up one-way communication and/or consultation:** participation is initiated and led by stakeholders and/or publics, communicating with researchers, often via grassroots networks and social media, to persuade them to open the research process to scrutiny and engagement. Those leading the process may consult with other publics and stakeholders to better understand and represent their views and demonstrate buy-in and support, and so increase their capacity to influence the research

**4. Bottom-up deliberation and/or co-production:** participation is initiated and led by stakeholders and/or publics who engage in two-way discussion with other relevant publics and stakeholders to generate impacts. The impact may be achieved by a single stakeholders/publics or a small group thereof based on knowledge gained through deliberation, or the impact may be co-produced, owned and implemented by the whole group

The team argue that the key factors determining whether or not researchers are able to deliver impacts through stakeholder and public engagement are: how challenging the **context** is for the researchers to work with



stakeholders/publics and generate impacts; how well the engagement process is **designed**; how effectively **power** dynamics between the research team and different stakeholders/publics is managed; and whether the research team adapted their engagement to relevant time and spatial scales.

Based on these factors, the research identified **5 things you need to get right if you want to successfully engage with publics and stakeholders for impact**:

1. Take time to fully understand local context to determine the appropriate type of participatory approach and adapt its design to the context
2. Get all affected parties involved in dialogue as soon as possible, to develop shared goals and co-produce outcomes based on the most relevant sources of knowledge
3. Manage power dynamics, so every participant's contribution is valued and all have an equal opportunity to contribute

4. Match the length and frequency of engagement to the goals of the process, recognising that changes in deeply held values (that may be at the root of a conflict) are likely to take longer than changes in preferences
5. Match the representation of stakeholder interests and decision-making power to the spatial scale of the issues being considered (e.g. a local committee to site a park bench shouldn't be setting national policy priorities but there's no point in organising a national process to decide where to put the bench).

Reed MS, Vella S, Sidoli del Ceno J, Neumann RK, de Vente J, Challies E, Frewer L, van Delden H (in press) A theory of participation: what makes stakeholder and public participation in environmental management work? *Restoration Ecology*



# Do your design skills undermine your credibility and impact?

Since the advent of PowerPoint, researchers have been doing visual design on an almost daily basis, usually not very well. Most of us will have felt the effect of poor design: the sharp intake of breath when you turn a page to find the World's Most Complicated Diagram, which would probably have been highly informative had it not intimidated you into turning the page again so quickly; the desperate desire to do something useful rather than experience Slow Death by PowerPoint slides packed full of tiny text and no pictures; or the urge to RUN AWAY from the 1990s personal website with flashing coloured buttons and star GIFs that make you feel like you're on the deck of the Starship Enterprise.

To be credible, your audience needs to perceive that you are believable, according to Daniel O'Keefe's 2002 book, *Persuasion: theory and research*. To be believable, you need to be perceived as a credible source with a credible message. Most researchers assume that it is self-evident that they are a credible source and only focus on their message. In doing so, they may unwittingly undermine the credibility of their message in the eyes of their audience.

In 1952, two Yale University psychologists, Hovland and Weiss, demonstrated how the persuasiveness of a message is influenced by its source. Their experiment, using an Army orientation film, showed that exactly the same message, communicated by two different sources (one presented as trustworthy, and the other presented as untrustworthy), was perceived by participants to have significantly different levels of credibility. A body of research has built on this, showing that there are three dimensions that determine the perceived credibility of a source:

- **Expertise** is the extent to which the source is perceived as being knowledgeable, experienced, authoritative and skilled;
- **Trustworthiness** is the perceived integrity of

the source, and may be influenced by a researcher's institutional affiliation in addition to their personal characteristics and message. This has been shown by many studies to be the most influential of the three dimensions; and

- **Dynamism** refers to the way that the message is delivered. In a spoken context, this refers to the charisma, clarity and confidence with which the message is delivered. In written form, this is about concise clarity, and visually, this is about the use of design to communicate energy and confidence, for example through the use of colour, font and imagery.

If we have done original, significant and robust research, and know that we have expertise in our subject area, then we've already ticked the first box. However, we cannot assume that our audience will automatically then perceive us to be trustworthy or dynamic. Audiences will make subjective and often unconscious decisions about the most important of these three dimensions, trustworthiness, based on the look and feel of your message. They will do this in a matter of seconds, and if the judgment is not favourable, it will be very difficult to retain or regain their attention.

Researchers typically pay little attention to the visual information that audiences use to judge their trustworthiness. Admittedly, researchers can probably get away with wearing less professional attire than most professions, but particularly when speaking to stakeholders and publics, looking scruffy or like you're on holiday may detract from your perceived trustworthiness.

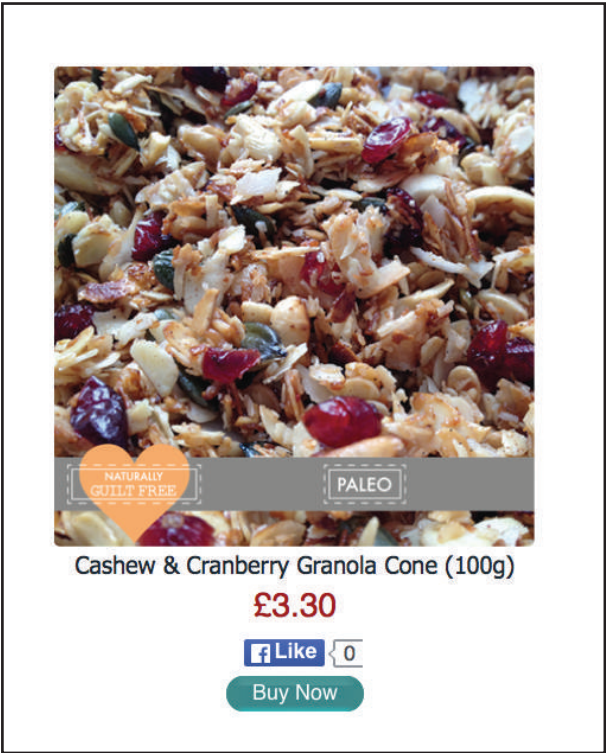
It is harder to get away with amateurish design if you want to be perceived as a credible source with a credible message. This is a deeply unpopular message with many researchers who (rightly) argue that they should be focusing on excellent research, rather than wasting time dressing their work up with nice pictures. Clearly our focus as researchers should be on the quality of our research, first and foremost. But if you have done world-leading research, giving a little bit of thought to design could make your hard work travel significantly further.



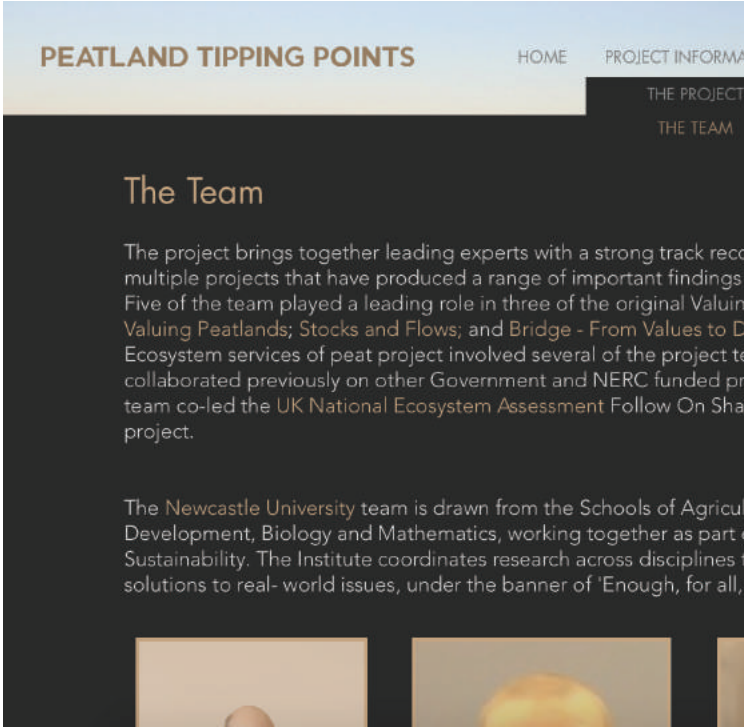
Take this example: which of these research project websites do you think you would be more likely to explore? The one on top was made by a researcher with no design expertise. The one below was designed by Anna Sutherland, Fast Track Impact's In-house designer, in collaboration with the same researcher, Fast Track Impact's Mark Reed.



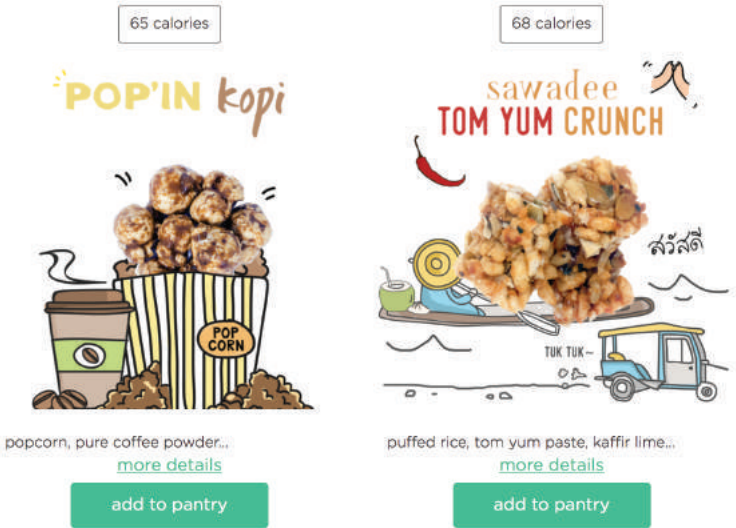
Alternatively, compare these two competing websites making health claims about snacks.



The chances are, that when you instinctively gravitated towards the professionally designed website, you made a number of sub-conscious decisions about the credibility of the site based on its colour scheme, fonts and images.



The majority of people judge the website on the left to be more attractive, informative and reputable, partly due to its more appealing pictures, fonts, and colors.



These first impressions take seconds to form, and significantly influence people’s decisions to continue interacting with your work or move on. If you are trying to appeal to stakeholders and publics, this could make or break your ability to achieve impact. Although design is only one component of website credibility, poor design can very quickly turn people off your work and make it harder to engage effectively with them online.

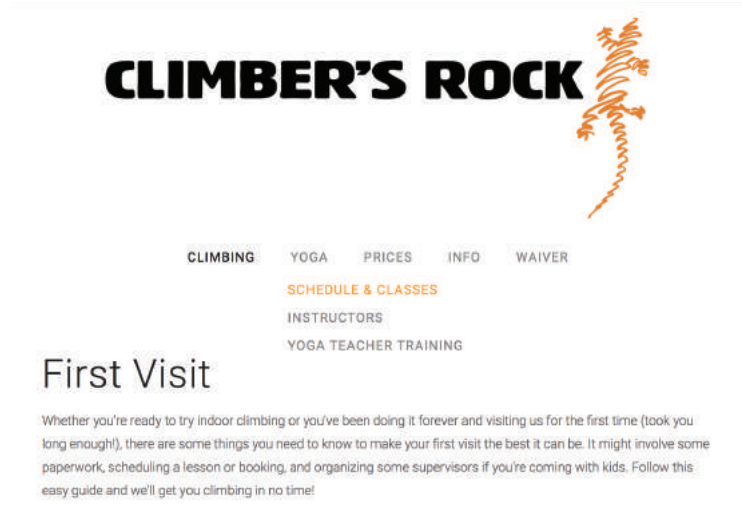
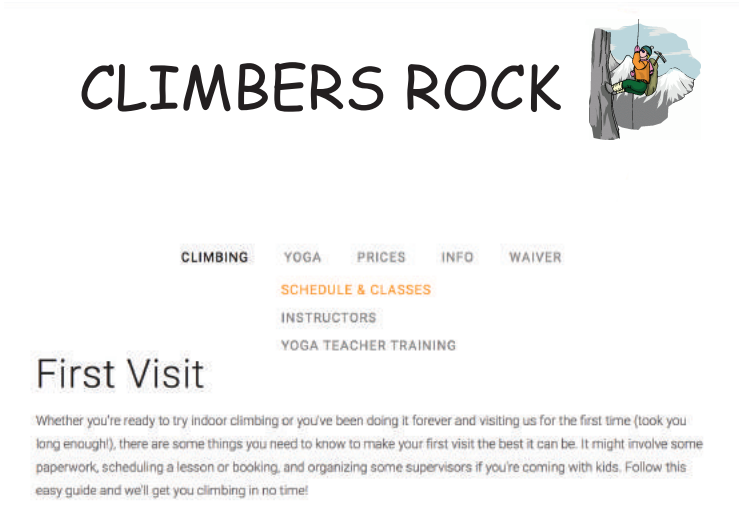
When it comes to making a credible website or presentation, the small things matter. Font may seem like a small thing, but we immediately feel the gravity or lack of it when we contrast Times New Roman with Comic Sans. More subtly, research has shown that project logos with parts of characters intentionally blanked out reduce perceptions of trustworthiness but increase perceptions of innovativeness.

In this example, Paul Lowry and colleagues, writing in International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction in 2014, gave 220 people a range of websites with the same content but more or less credible logo and website design.

Across all the websites they tested, they found that professionally designed websites with credible logos were most trusted. Here is one of the hypothetical websites they made – which version would you trust?

If you chose the bottom right image, you would be agreeing with the study participants. Whether we like it or not, design matters if we want our research to travel and have impact.

Fortunately it is easier and cheaper than ever before to add professional design to our websites and presentations. There are numerous website design platforms with customizable templates for you to make your own website. If you don’t have time to do that, or want something more unique and tailored to the specific audiences for your research, then it may be more achievable than you think to work with a professional designer. Services like Fast Track Impact’s Design for Impact give you access to the full professional design process for a fraction of the cost you would normally pay for professional design.



“Although design is only one component of website credibility, poor design can very quickly turn people off your work”



# Help! My stakeholders aren't interested in my research

The two most common reasons why stakeholders may not be interested in your research are that:

- Your research is too narrow, niche or specific to be of significant interest; or
- Your research does not fit with the ideology of the decision-makers.

If your research is too narrow, then you probably need to broaden your work. You will need to do some investigation into the issues that are of particular relevance in your area, so that you strategically broaden the coverage of your work to issues that are pertinent to the interests of the relevant audience. There are two ways you can do this:

1. You can broaden your work yourself, either by asking new research questions or drawing of the evidence of others publishing in the area; or
2. You can team up with other researchers working in your field to create a collaborative impact initiative, in which you create joint policy briefs and offers of help to industry, Third Sector and others. This latter approach tends to work best if there are others within your institution that you can team up with, to avoid issues of competition.

Overcoming an ideological clash is typically more difficult. This is most common in policy circles, but can happen elsewhere too. In policy settings, the most common first solution is to approach an opposition party that has a good chance of winning power in the next election, and getting evidence-based policy ideas into their next manifesto. Some researchers take a more adversarial approach, creating alliances with pressure groups that are opposing the Government, businesses or other organisations that will listen to the findings of their research.

An alternative approach is to take the research to another country that is experiencing comparable issues. In the UK, that could be England Scotland,

Wales or Northern Ireland, or it could be a country on the other side of the world. In some cases, you may have to create a collaboration with a research team from that country first to generate evidence with them that builds on your former work to have the credibility required to be taken seriously by decision-makers in that country.

If you are really having problems and are prepared to invest some serious time and energy into this, then there is another option available to you. You can make a “pincer” movement from the bottom up and the top down to communicate evidence from your research to the people who can affect change within the organization that is not listening to your work. First, working from the bottom up, find people lower down the organizational hierarchy who you can help, based on your research and other capabilities, focusing on what they need and how you can make their jobs easier, but not hiding the nature of the work you are doing, and the fact that it may be ideologically contentious for the organization. Gradually, as you build trust, find out who are the more senior, middle-ranked people in the organization with some decision-making power and access to the main decision-makers at the top of the hierarchy. If an internal colleague can introduce you to them, based on a long-term relationship of trust built on useful work you have done to help them, there is a good chance that the new colleague will trust you by proxy. As a result, you are much more likely to be given the opportunity to talk about your research than you would otherwise have. Also, as a result of the work you have done already with your colleagues, you will have a much better idea where the ideological sensitivities lie, and how you might be able to frame your work in a way that is less contentious.

At the same time, the second half of the “pincer” movement is to work from the top down. This is much harder for most researchers to do themselves, and may require help from an intermediary who already has the ear of the decision-maker. This means that the first step is to find out who has access to the decision-maker, and who the decision-maker goes to for new ideas and advice. Depending on who these people are, it may be possible to reach them and communicate your research in ways that will resonate with them. They are then much more likely to be able to frame your work in a way that is ideologically palatable to the decision-maker. If they then seek advice from their team or ask their team to implement a decision based on your research, they are not going to be greeted with skepticism or concerns from their staff, because they already know about and understand your evidence.

# 4 points to transform your next talk so you transform your audience

No matter how terrified and unconfident you may feel, it is possible with a few tips and some practice, to present your research with real impact. Honing your presentation skills can help you make more of an impact on your academic peers as well as opening up opportunities for non-academic impact. Bad presentation skills can squander opportunities for impact and alienate the very people who might have benefited from our work.

Some researchers make talking to businesses and policy-makers look easy. The rest of us look on in awe, desperately wondering how we could create such succinct and relevant messages based on our research. Many of us conclude that it is “easy for people who do that sort of research”. However, most of these people started in a similar position to us; they just focused for a while on an aspect of their research that had the potential to be useful to that audience, and spent some time thinking about how they could communicate it powerfully.

Researchers have to do public speaking on a regular basis, but most of us are never given any proper training. There is no replacement for professional training from a voice coach or similar, but there are four things that all researchers can very easily do without any extra training, so we don't just get our message across; we transform and mobilise our audiences.

## 1. Have purpose

The first minute of your talk is make or break time. Based on what you say in your first minute, your audience could either be hanging on your every word, or pretty much dismiss everything you say in your whole talk. To engage your audience, there are just three things you need to do in your first minute:

- a) **Establish your purpose and the benefits your audience will get from listening to you:** most of us know that we need to start a talk with our aims. I'm suggesting you should just have one single purpose that people can instantly understand and remember, and very quickly explain the tangible benefits that your audience will get as a result of achieving this purpose (even if those benefits are just learning something new). Finally, put yourself in the shoes of your audience and ask yourself why your purpose and the benefits you've identified, are likely to be important to them. Then actually explain why the benefits of listening to your talk are so important to your audience
- b) **Explain who you are and why your audience should listen to you:** you don't have to be the world expert in your topic, but there must be some reason you are talking and not some random stranger picked off the street. What sets you apart from that random stranger? What credentials do you have? Why are you passionate about this topic? There is a fine line between establishing credibility and boasting, and you need to be careful not to alienate your audience by giving them your CV. However, there is good evidence to show that audiences are more likely to listen and learn from speakers that they deem credible, so it is important to establish this in the first minute of your talk
- c) **Sign-post what is coming next:** people like to know where they stand. You shouldn't spend much more than a sentence doing this (don't spend half of your talk going through your plan and explaining what you're going to do). Just explain the key sections or steps you will go through to reach your purpose, so your audience feels able to relax into what is about to happen







A man in a dark suit is shown from the chest up on the left side of the frame. He is pointing his right index finger towards the right. A black microphone is visible in the bottom right corner. The background is a solid dark red color.

## 2. Connect

The best speakers empathise with their audiences, and their audiences identify with them. Opening a channel of empathy with a stranger can be a huge challenge; doing this with a room full of people you don't know is much harder. However, there are four quite straightforward things you can do to establish empathy with any audience:

**a) Know your audience:** do your research so you know who is going to be in the audience and why they have come. Be aware that there may be quite different segments of your audience who are looking for different things from you. If you are not able to research your audience, then take some time before you speak to sit next to someone in the audience and find out why they are here and what they are hoping to get out of the event. You will have to assume that their answers are broadly representative of the rest of your audience, but at least you are not going in blind. Once you know something about your audience, you can adapt what you say in your opening minute to make sure you've explained the benefits in a way that makes it clear why these should be important for this particular audience

**b) Use powerful stories:** we all know the power of stories to convey complex concepts in memorable ways, but not all stories have equal power. First, think of a few stories that are relevant to the one single purpose you identified in your first minute. They may be directly relevant or they may be a metaphor that you feel



sums up your purpose powerfully. Personal stories help open a channel of empathy, showing that despite being up on stage you are just a person with weaknesses and passions just like them. Stories that demonstrate some degree of vulnerability, show that you trust the listener, and they are then more likely to warm to you and trust you themselves. If you can, try and include something unexpected in your story, to catch your audience's attention, help them remember your story and make it more likely that they subsequently share the story with others. If you can paint a visual image with your story, whether in the mind's eye or through pictures, your audience is more likely to be able to recall your story, and if the image effectively illustrates your story, it will add real impact to what you are saying. Finally, engage to some extent with your audience's feelings. This doesn't need to be anything particularly dramatic, but stories that rouse some sort of emotion are more likely to stick than stories that leave your audience cold. If your story is strongly linked to the core purpose of your talk, then by remembering your story, your audience will remember your purpose, and from there, much of the content of your talk.

- c) **Ask "you-focused" questions:** asking your audience directly to put themselves in your shoes can be a powerful way of establishing a channel of empathy with them. This may be difficult for many research-based talks, but with a bit of imagination, it may be possible. For example, "What would you do if..." or "What would you think if I told you..."
- d) **Use empathetic body language:** it is possible to become a more empathetic speaker simply by making your body language more open and approachable. Consider choosing clothes that do not emphasise any differences between you

and your audience (for example I often remove my suit jacket when training PhD students), avoid closing your body language, and adopt a positive and energized posture that shows your audience that you are putting in effort and really value them. You will often discover that your audience starts to mirror the emotions you are projecting through your body language, and will start to feel more open, trusting, interested, and energized by your talk.

### 3. Be authoritative and passionate

A lot of people avoid looking authoritative for fear of looking intimidating, but these are two very different things. Someone who is genuinely authoritative will typically embody a quiet confidence that does not need to boast or intimidate. Similarly, many people avoid being too passionate for fear of sounding like a salesperson or politician. Someone who is genuinely passionate about their subject however, will typically exude their passion without even trying and their audience will find their enthusiasm infectious.

There are 3 very simple things any speaker can do to demonstrate authority and passion:

- a) **Be aware of your feet:** look at yourself consciously next time you give a talk, and see what your feet are doing. Some people pace; others step backwards and forward as they speak. Some people sway; others do a bit of a dance as they speak. All of them do it subconsciously and without realizing it, have a subconscious impact on their audience. As we move around, we are likely to distract our audience from what we're saying, look less confident and create a sense that our words are insubstantial. On the other hand, speakers who have their feet firmly on the ground in one place are perceived to be focused, confident and substantial. This doesn't mean you have to stand like a statue, but

you need to use movement strategically.

Choose a “home” position where you can introduce your talk and your core purpose (usually this is somewhere fairly central). Then have a number of “stations” around the stage (for example to the left and right of your screen) where you can move between points, to keep your audience’s interest and make clearer distinctions between points. Then at the end, return to your “home” position to make your conclusions and fulfill the purpose you set out to achieve.

**b) Be aware of your hands:** what you do with your hands can be similarly distracting and undermining if you are not aware of them. Putting your hands in your pockets may suggest a level of informality that makes it look like you’re not serious. Clasping them behind your back may make you look suspicious, like you’re hiding something. So what do you do with your hands? Simply clasping them in front of you is a safe bet if you’re nervous, but you will probably look nervous as a result. Using lots of flamboyant hand gestures may be very distracting for your audience. Draw a TV shaped rectangle in front of you, and keep all hand gestures within that rectangle. Avoid any kind of aggressive gesture, such as pointing, preferring a small number of open and inviting hand gestures. Now, your hands aren’t ever going down to your sides and drawing people’s attention away from your face; all of your gestures are bring people’s eyes back to your face and your message. By using confident but muted gestures, you look credible, in control and confident, and can use your hands to add emphasis to your points and convey your passion.

**c) Use emphasis to make every word and sentence count:** if you’re going to say something, make it count. Make every single word count. If you find yourself

trailing off, mumbling or skipping over words or sentences because they are not important, don’t say those words. Cut out the unnecessary words and sentences and then speak every single word in every sentence with equal conviction. Now, once you’ve learned to make every single word of every single sentence in your talk really count, consider how to put emphasis on key point of each and every sentence, to demonstrate to your audience why it matters. You may want to use pace, slowing down and spelling out key points, or pausing before or after a key point, allowing it to sink in. You could use volume (sparingly) or vary your tone of voice more than you naturally would in conversation. Many researchers object at this point because it all starts to feel a bit fake. The last thing we want is for our audience to think we are insincere. However, most audiences expect people to speak slightly differently when they are on stage than they do in conversation, just as your family expects you to speak differently to them than you do to your colleagues at work. Your audience is far more likely to appreciate your more interesting and engaging style than it is to complain that you didn’t sound exactly like that when they spoke to you in the break.

## 4. Keep it simple

The most common mistake that researchers make when presenting is to make their talk too complicated. Most of us can be forgiven for falling into this trap because our research is usually by definition fairly complex. However, the most successful communicators have spent time thinking how they can communicate their complex research in a way that is deceptively simple, and they will do so around a single key message, which they make as memorable as possible:



- a) **Find a single memorable message** linked to the core purpose you identified in the first minute (in some cases it will be the same thing)
- b) **Present your key message early and revisit it from many different angles:** if it is not presented during the first minute, then it should be presented in the first section of your talk. Then revisit it from different angles throughout your presentation, using metaphors, stories and images where you can, to make your point stick in people's memories.
- c) **Link all your subsequent points back to your key message:** having a single key message doesn't mean you can only speak about one thing in your talk. However, it is important to remember that most people will only remember a fraction of your talk, and you have put in effort already to make sure that they remember the most important point. If you then clearly link each of your subsequent points back to your key message, then your audience is much more likely to remember these points when they recall the key point. Rather than having to remember many different stories and plot-lines, they only have to remember a single story and plot-line that logically flows from the memorable story or image you used to introduce your talk.

The art of presenting is under-taught and under-valued in academia. However, by learning and practicing a few simple techniques, you will be surprised how much more effective you can be. Creating a talk that truly inspires change will take time, but many of your greatest opportunities to achieve impact from research may arise from the power of your talks, and the distance they start to travel.

## 3 options for busy academics whose research could make money

*Discovering that your research has commercial value is a mixed blessing for many researchers. Many researchers who come up with valuable Intellectual Property (IP) as a result of their work feel overwhelmed by the options they are presented with. Not wanting to abandon academia for business, many researchers do very little with the opportunities that arise, and as a result squander the chance to generate impacts from their work. However, you don't have to change careers to exploit your IP. There are three ways to get as much impact as possible from your ideas, without having to give up your day job. We spoke to Stephen Oyston, Business Development Manager for N8 AgriFood at the University of York to find out more.*

He explained that there are several ways to commercialize your ideas or "intellectual property" (IP) to realise impact from research. Each one has its ups and downsides and the decision to go down one path over another will depend on the nature of your ideas, your institution, your personality and the level of commitment you are comfortable with. In all cases you should talk to your Technology Transfer Office (TTO) to assess the commercial opportunities of your IP and look at the potential commercialization mechanisms available to you. This will involve looking at potential applications and users of your IP, developing a commercialization plan and taking some initial steps.

The three typical routes available are:

1. **Making your ideas available for others to use on licence:** many academics worry that if they negotiate with companies, their best ideas may get bought up and then shelved

by corporations that want to protect their existing products from your new ideas. The good news is that you don't have to give up the rights to use your work if you grant them a **non-exclusive licence**. With this arrangement, you can license your IP to as several different companies, and increase the likelihood that one of them manages to bring your ideas to market. Be careful though; if a company asks you to **assign** your IP to them, talk to your TTO and look at your options, or you may lose all rights over your IP. Your TTO will deal with the contracts. Then a third party pursues your impact, with minimal effort from you. Easy.

2. **Targeting a dream partner who can take your ideas to scale:** this option takes a little bit more work, but not a lot. The problem of licensing your ideas to anyone who is willing to pay for the privilege (the non-exclusive license in the point above) is that these companies may not have the capability to develop your ideas to their potential. Even if they are capable of developing your ideas, they may have a different timescale to you and have quite different ideas about the sorts of impacts they want to see from your IP. Instead, consider working with your TTO to find a dream partner who shares your passion and priorities, and has the capabilities to develop your ideas in ways that will give you the impacts you most want to see. If you want to retain the right to develop your IP yourself in future, you need to go for a **sole licence**. A sole licence enables you to target a single organization you would like to develop your ideas, and you both have the right to use the IP. An exclusive licence allows the licensee to develop the IP in the confidence that no one else can access the IP. This can strengthen a research collaboration with your dream partner but caution is required. You will need to ensure you have chosen the most capable organisation to realise the potential of the IP.

3. **Spin out companies** are the hardest work, but if you are prepared to invest some time in the beginning, your TTO can help you put a team in place to run the business for you, so you don't have to quit the day job. You may be able to set up as a not-for-profit company

enabling you to invest profits in charitable work linked to your research. The spin out route gives you the greatest amount of control over realising the impacts you want to see from your research. However, many businesses need to raise capital before they can launch, which may expose your personal finances to risk if you take loans, or compromise your control over the company if you bring in investors. If you go down this route, you will need to work closely with your TTO to develop your ideas, as your institution will have a vested interest.

However busy you are, it is worth spending time negotiating the right deal if you want to commercialise your IP. Third parties and potential investors may have quite different motivations to you, so it is essential to have a really clear vision of the impacts you want to see arising from commercialisation before you go into any negotiation with commercial partners. Flexibility is necessary in any negotiation, but your TTO can help you get a deal that works for business, impact and your time.





# PRESENTATION TIPS

"Work out what made you connect with the last presentation that impressed you and learn how you can empathise better with your audience."

Jenn Chubb, University of York, UK

"The continuous feedback you need for a top-notch presentation is found in the eyes of your audience. Make sure you have eye contact, and be prepared to act on the response you get."

Olle Bergman, Coach, Sweden

"Stand by the door as the delegates walk in and shake hands with them all. They won't feel intimidated by you, and you can tell yourself you're speaking to people that you've already met."

Mark Wilson, Balsan Carpets, UK

"Only using images forces you to commit a much simpler story-line to memory, and ultimately makes for a more enjoyable presentation."

Prue Addison, University of Oxford, UK

# PRESENTATION FAILS

"I was once told by a colleague that they missed my 'stand-up presentation style'. I'm taking it as a compliment: be enthusiastic!"

Jenn Chubb, University of York, UK

"Grandiose title WILL lure people to your session but result in heckling."

Michelle Bowman, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Canada

"My favourite feedback was 'I loved breaking the ice with your balls' after an icebreaker where we tossed balls."

Andrew Scott, Andrew Scott Training, UK

My biggest fail was when Mt Etna erupted 30 mins before my first ever international science presentation (in Taormina, Sicily). I was nervous anyway and couldn't compete with an erupting volcano!

Martha Clokie

"I often say to my audience that I'll use hyperbole to get key messages across in a short space of time. The occasional big fail happens when they don't hear the disclaimer."

Paul Cairney, Professor of Politics and Public Policy, University of Stirling, UK

"Whilst extolling virtues of our new IT to an audience of applicants, the screen flickered and failed. Always check your equipment."

Andrew Thomas, University of Aberystwth, UK

"Engage without prejudice: find what you have in common to break down barriers when your values differ."

Chris Cvitanovic, University of Tasmania, Australia

"Take a sip of water when you get asked a difficult question to give your brain time to work on an answer."

Charles Martinez, Research Solution Sales, Elsevier BV

"To combat nerves, imagine that you are a host rather than a presenter. Your job is to take good care of your guests, put them at ease, make them feel welcome and give them what they need."

Deborah Mullins, Deborah Mullins Training Ltd, UK

"Before you start speaking, look around your audience and smile. Show them you are relaxed and they will relax."

Henry Leveson-Gower, New Economic Knowledge Services, UK

"Think constantly about the kind of impact you want to make with whom, how, where, when and why, and skip the academic jargon and academitis."

Linda Baines, Independent post-doc, UK

"It was the biggest talk of my career and I was really nervous. I had my talk written out on pieces of card, which (sadly) I did not number. It was in the days of overhead projectors, and when I got up on stage, I placed my cards on the table next to the projector, and the projector fan blew them up into the air like confetti."

Klaus Hubacek, University of Maryland, USA

"We tried to do a 'speed science' public engagement activity in a pub and the punters who thought it was going to be 'speed dating' were a bit disappointed when a bunch of academics rocked up talking about their research."

Lizzie Tait, Robert Gordons University, UK

"Be early. I was delayed once and ran into the conference just as I was being introduced to the crowd. Adrenaline pumping, all my prep went out the window and I rattled off a 10 minute presentation in 5 minutes to an amused crowd. The irony was that the talk was about nature's ability to reduce mental stress."

James Byrne, Wildlife Trusts Wales, UK

"Don't try to make a joke unless you are confident you know what the punchline is. I stumbled while pointing out the irony of hosting the Horticulture and Potato Initiative (whose acronym is HAPI) on Blue Monday (the third Monday in January, reported to be the most depressing day of the year), to deathly silence."

Faith Smith, University of Auckland, New Zealand





# REF Tips

## 3 reasons why you should care about the Research Excellence Framework (REF) if you're not working in the UK

This section of the magazine is dedicated to the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF), which is how the UK Government assesses the quality and impact of research done by Higher Education Institutions and distributes "quality rated" (QR) funding to those institutions. For UK researchers and their institutions, REF has significant funding and reputational consequences. But why should non-UK researchers be interested in it? Here are three reasons why you should care about REF if you're not working in the UK:

1. REF has operationalised a widely accepted and measurable definition of impact based on its significance and reach. This provides a really useful, structured way of thinking about the impact of your research: first, ask yourself how you can make your impact more significant and meaningful for the people you want to benefit from your work; and then ask yourself how you can expand, replicate and scale up your impact
2. As a result, UK researchers are now leading the world in terms of the impact of their work. You can argue about whether they are leading in reality or just in terms of their ability to articulate their impact. They point however, is that the impact of UK research is now more visible than ever before. If you want the impact of your research to be more visible, then there are many lessons you can learn from REF about how to evidence and write up your impacts in convincing ways
3. Research funders around the world are considering how to measure and communicate the impact of the research they fund. Get ahead of the game by learning from the successes and mistakes being made in the UK

# How to enhance the reach of your impact

Impact is made up of two things: significance and reach. Put simply, if my research saves someone's life, I've made a significant impact; if my research saves millions of people's lives, the impact is no more significant, but now it has reach as well. Although this is a fairly simplistic example, it illustrates the point well. If you're not able to demonstrate something significant from your work, you might as well not even start thinking about REF. Tweaking something minor isn't going to set people's imaginations on fire, even if you do it on a global scale. If you start by trying to do something significant however, you can always consider how to achieve reach if it works on a small scale. One of the benefits of focusing on generating significant impacts to start with, is that impact becomes less intimidating. I don't have to change the world any more; I can just change my home town or community.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are a number of examples of top 4\* scoring impact case studies in REF2014 that were restricted to a single town or city (e.g. Mapping Mediaeval Chester or the DECIPHER-ASSIST programme to reduce the number of young people smoking in Cardiff), organization (e.g. Jobcentre Plus or Hampton Court Palace) or part of the UK (e.g. the use of flags in Northern Ireland or the creation of new language laws in Wales). What the majority of these cases have in common though, is some argument for transferability beyond the case study context, for example to other areas experiencing conflicts similar to Northern Ireland or to towns like Chester elsewhere in the UK.

Based on these case studies, it is possible to argue for three ways to enhance the reach of a case study:

**1. Theoretical reach:** Once you have established a significant impact with limited reach, consider the extent to which it could be transferred or extended to similar contexts elsewhere, estimating the potential benefits based on the assumption that benefits would be

similar to the original context. The reach in this case is theoretical, and the strength of the theory will depend on how robust the assumptions are. If the bar is going to be raised in REF2021, it may not be a wise strategy to focus on this, based on the few successful examples of theoretical reach we saw in REF2014.

**2. Piloted reach:** It is more rigorous and persuasive to actually test some of the assumptions of theoretical reach, to see if significant impacts can indeed be achieved in comparable contexts elsewhere. This will typically take the form of some type of pilot where work has been done in similar cities, organisations or communities elsewhere, and it has been possible to document significant impacts in these contexts. Although the impact has not reached national or international reach yet, it is much more plausible to argue that this is possible on the basis of pilot data. In some cases it may be possible to take this a step further if it has been possible to embed new practices or ideas in the work of an organization that has national or international reach, and is prepared to state its goal of achieving reach based on the research in credible terms.

**3. Actual reach:** finally, there are a few short-cuts to achieving actual reach faster than you might expect. The first short-cut is to find an organization that is seeking similar impacts, who you can help with your research and other capabilities, who can in turn work on your behalf to promote impacts based on your work e.g. from the business, Third Sector or policy world. Alternatively, find other groups similar to those you have worked with initially, targeting progressively larger groups e.g. from working with a small minority group that is only prevalent in your local area to working with a range of larger and more widespread minority groups. Work with your initial groups to identify larger groups via their networks and get their help to pitch the benefits in ways that are likely to appeal to those new groups.

## How to design a workshop to discuss what makes a top-scoring REF impact case study in your subject area

The Research Excellence Framework in 2014 laid out clear criteria for what makes a strong non-academic impact in terms of significance and reach. What was less clear was the extent to which these criteria would be interpreted differently in different subject areas. In particular, interpretations of reach differed significantly across subject areas, partly as a result of the epistemologies underpinning the disciplines involved, and partly as a result of relative scoring between case studies that all faced similar constraints or advantages, with all panels wanting to showcase a smaller number of the best impacts in their areas by giving them the highest scores. For example, it was perfectly acceptable in anthropology for a case study to demonstrate both significance and reach in a single settlement in a single country, whereas in medicine you might as well not both submitting a case study if there wasn't some sort of international dimension.

For this reason, it is essential that teams of researchers have a good idea of what is likely to be considered a strong impact in their subject area. The best way of doing this is by comparing and contrasting high and low-scoring case studies from REF2014. Although HEFCE tried to avoid making scores public, it is possible to identify 120 case studies that were given top 4\* scores across 19 Units of Assessment (based on institutions that scored 4\* for all their case studies in a given Unit of Assessment). All of these case studies are available via the Fast Track Impact website at: [www.fasttrackimpact/resources](http://www.fasttrackimpact/resources). The problem is that it is not possible to identify 4\* case studies for many Units of Assessment. The same applies for the lower scoring case studies: we know some case studies that scored 1\* but these are not available via any published list online, and for many Units of Assessment it is not possible to identify case studies that we know definitely scored 1\*.

For this reason, you will need to analyse the publically available data from REF2014 yourself to identify high versus low-scoring case studies, if you want to learn from what worked last time round. Here's how to do it.

1. **Identify top scoring institutions for your Unit of Assessment (UOA):** download the REF2014 results, filter for your UOA (columns E or F), then filter so it only shows you the impacts (column J), and then filter for 4\* (column L), showing only the institutions from your UOA that had the highest percentage of 4\* impacts. Now for those institutions, look across the table (columns L-P) to find institutions that only had impacts scored at 3\* or 4\*
2. **Download a selection of impact case studies** from the top scoring institutions via <http://impact.ref.ac.uk>. You may want to select impacts randomly, or you may want to go through more selectively, identifying impacts that are closer to the areas your group specialize in
3. **Repeat for low scoring institutions** so you can compare and contrast high and low scoring impacts
4. **Discuss examples:** print copies of the high and low scoring impact case studies, labeled clearly, and in your next UOA meeting, let everyone choose a high and a low-scoring example. Given them 10-15 minutes to quickly read a case study each (focusing on summary and details of the impacts so you're not there all day) and then ask the group (or small groups if there are many of you) to discuss the key factors that they think distinguish between high and low scoring impacts. Get your group(s) to distill the key principles that they think are most useful and disseminate these more widely, so that anyone who wasn't present can benefit.

Compare and contrast high and low scoring impacts





## How much was an impact case study worth in REF2014?

By Prof Mark Reed and Dr Simon Kerridge

When the UK Government integrated impact into the Research Excellence Framework in 2014, it signaled how seriously it took the societal and economic impact of the research it funds.

Higher Education Institutes received on average £308,000 (£44,000 per year between 2015/16-2021/22) for the most significant and far-reaching impacts. Given that many of the people who were responsible for leading these impact case studies earn salaries less than this, for most people, that's taking things pretty seriously.

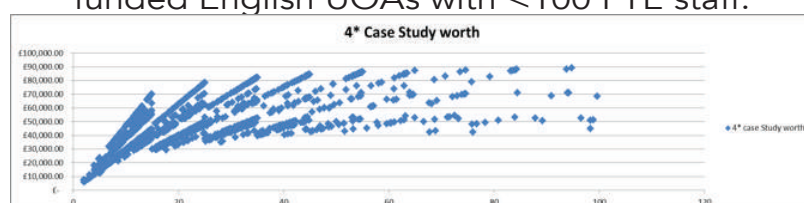
We looked at Units of Assessment in REF2014 where a University had all its case studies graded as either 3\* or 4\* and found that:

- A 4\* impact case study was worth £44,048 on average (range: £12,971-70,946) in 2016/17 (Table 1)
- A 3\* impact case study was worth

£11,813 on average (range: £3,415-29,186) in 2016/17 (Table 2)

The formula for calculating annual recurring payments for each of these case studies between now and the next REF may vary, but we can expect similar levels of funding per case study per year between now and 2021.

It is of course also possible to calculate the value of 3\* and 4\* case studies from any submission where QR funding is allocated (using the QR sterling value, the number of case studies and the quality profile). Using the method described in the extended version of this article (on the Fast Track Impact blog), we can determine the worth of a 4\* case study for any given submission – giving us the full range for English HEIs of £6,005-£90,490. This is per year for 7 years until the REF2021-informed funding kicks in. Note that these values include, where applicable, the London weighting (although the highest is actually from outside London). You can see this spread in the scatter graph below showing funded English UOAs with <100 FTE staff:



In contrast, a 4\* research output was typically worth between £5,000—20,000 (see the extended version of this article on the Fast Track Impact blog for our workings). In general case studies are worth far more than research outputs for all but the smallest submissions. Generally speaking, a case study was worth around 5 outputs at higher FTEs, with more variation at lower FTEs.



Table 1: Quality Rated (QR) funding allocated by HEFCE in 2016/17 per 4\* impact case study, based on the case studies from Units of Assessment where 100% of the impact sub profile was graded at 4\*

Institution	UOA	UOA name	Number of case studies	2016/17 QR allocation per case study (£)
Birkbeck College	04	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	4	39892
Goldsmiths' College	35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	4	30820
Imperial College London	13	Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials	10	46607
Kingston University	29	English Language and Literature	3	48857
Queen Mary University of London	35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	3	46631
Royal Northern College of Music	35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	2	42077
London School of Economics	22	Social Work and Social Policy	6	50216
London School of Economics	27	Area Studies	3	44053
London School of Economics	36	Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library and Information Management	2	47080
The University of Leicester	36	Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library and Information Management	5	12971
The University of Nottingham	03	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy	8	41679
The University of Nottingham	25	Education	3	46735
The University of Sheffield	25	Education	2	41321
The University of Southampton	03	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy	4	65212
University of Southampton	35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts	3	58627
University of Warwick	06	Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science	2	47633
University of York	22	Social Work and Social Policy	4	47875
The University of York	23	Sociology	3	37996
University College London	22	Social Work and Social Policy	2	40854
University of Bedfordshire	29	English Language and Literature	2	27023
University of Bristol	01	Clinical Medicine	9	70946
University of Bristol	02	Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care	8	70505
University of Bristol	18	Economics and Econometrics	3	35337
University of Bristol	26	Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism	2	25932
University of Durham	25	Education	3	46546
University of East London	04	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	2	41088
University of Exeter	27	Area Studies	2	43657
University of Hertfordshire	30	History	2	36030
University of Newcastle	29	English Language and Literature	4	48191
University of Oxford	22	Social Work and Social Policy	4	39041
Mean				44048
Min				12971
Max				70946
SD				12091

Table 2: Quality Rated (QR) funding allocated by HEFCE in 2016/17 per 3\* impact case study, based on the case studies from Units of Assessment where 100% of the impact sub profile was graded at 3\*

Institution	UOA	UOA name	Number of case studies	2016/17 QR allocation per case study (£)
Birmingham City University	36	Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library and Information Management	2	8414
De Montfort University	36	Communication, Cultural & Media Studies, Library and Information Management	1	16214
Edge Hill University	20	Law	2	9974
Leeds Beckett University	04	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	2	7538
Liverpool John Moores University	20	Law	2	4987
Middlesex University	04	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	2	8888
Oxford Brookes University	29	English Language and Literature	2	11034
Queen Mary University of London	08	Chemistry	2	18453
Roehampton University	30	History	2	11770
University of Bath	11	Computer Science and Informatics	3	18830
University of Keele	30	History	2	9533
University of Leeds	31	Classics	2	4504
University of Leicester	04	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	4	10805
University of Leicester	15	General Engineering	3	23537
University of Leicester	22	Social Work and Social Policy	2	8549
University of Liverpool	13	Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials	3	18830
University of Liverpool	20	Law	3	9499
University of Nottingham	16	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning	3	14819
University of Westminster	04	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	2	8795
University of Wolverhampton	30	History	2	9833
University of York	13	Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials	3	17496
University of Cambridge	32	Philosophy	8	3415
University of Lincoln	36	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management	2	4804
University of Plymouth	11	Computer Science and Informatics	1	29186
University of Worcester	29	English Language and Literature	2	5630
Mean				11813
Min				3415
Max				29186
SD				6384

What does this all mean for UK researchers? Whatever our motives for generating impact from research, our employers are partly motivated by the financial rewards now linked to impact, and the associated league table positions based on “impact excellence”. The extent to which this translates in any meaningful way into incentives for researchers depends on the way each institution chooses to use that funding. Most Universities top-slice their QR funding to some extent, and in some cases, decisions about spending QR funds are being taken centrally without any input from faculties or schools, let alone the researchers involved in generating the impacts. In Kent, the policy is to allocate the QR funding to the schools that ‘earned’ it, based on their staff FTE submitted to the various UOAs. However there is a ‘central charge’ levied on school allocations in order to determine their budget, so a top slice - but based on activity rather than allocation.

Some of us are pleased that at last, impact is being valued highly enough to be rewarded in this way. However there are also concerns about the power of these financial incentives to create game-playing tactics that will bring



the academy into disrepute. We share both these feelings. Arguably, it is only because of the financial and reputational rewards associated with the REF that impact is now so widely (although far from universally) integrated into workload models and promotion criteria across the sector. These incentives are clearly motivating many researchers to engage with impact who had never fully considered the effect of their research before. However, it is these very incentives that are leading some researchers to chase impact for purely career-based motives, which has the potential to result in negative unintended consequences. As the rewards become greater, we must become ever more vigilant to these behaviors, and do all we can to build research cultures that value impact intrinsically, whether or not the benefits can be submitted to REF or are likely to score highly.

Mark Reed holds the HEFCE N8 Chair of Socio-Technical Research at Newcastle University. He is a recognized international expert in impact research with >130 publications that have been cited over 9000 times. He has won awards for the impact of his work as a research Professor and Research Manager for an international charity.

Simon Kerridge is Director of Research Services at the University of Kent, vice chair of CASRAI and immediate past chair of ARMA. He was a panel secretary for the criteria setting phase of the REF and led the Kent REF2014 submission. He was also part of The Metric Tide team that advocated against metrics for impact assessment.

Read the extended version of this article:  
<http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/single-post/2017/02/01/How-much-was-an-impact-case-study-worth-in-the-UK-Research-Excellence-Framework>

...at last, impact  
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## 3 things HEFCE's consultation has told us about the role of impact in REF2021

The role and shape of impact in the next REF got a lot clearer with the publication of HEFCE's consultation on the second Research Excellence Framework in December 2016.

There were no big surprises, with the focus on how not whether to implement Stern's recent recommendations. However there are a few significant points we can glean from the consultation:

- 1. Institution-level case studies could play a major role in the next REF,** accounting for 10-20% or up to 25% of impact scores in two different proposals being consulted upon. However, this proposal has the potential to achieve the opposite of Lord Stern's intention to better capture interdisciplinary and collaborative impacts if it is perceived as a "showcase panel" to which institutions only submit their most iconic case studies
- 2. Larger units may only be allowed to submit one case study for every 12-20 staff they submit.** Less research intensive Universities (that were more selective in the staff they submitted to REF2014) could have to find twice the number of case studies they needed in 2014 if they want to make a submission in 2021. For example, a unit with 80 academic staff that only submitted their 10 best researchers could have done so with two impact case studies in REF2014 but may need to find four case studies to be able to make a submission to REF2021. This may incentivize the submission of low grade and in some cases "unclassifiable" case studies that are not based on credible research in order to enable submissions to be made. Small units may only have



to submit one case study, revealing their scores

3. Limits may be placed on the proportion of case studies that can be resubmitted from REF2014, and only cases where additional impacts have occurred may be eligible. The news that case studies from REF2014 will be particularly welcome for those whose case studies received low grades because they were still in progress. A significant proportion of case studies fall into this category. One significant group is policy impacts that had often passed into law but without evidence of the law yet being implemented or achieving results on the ground.

Find out more about what we have learned from the HEFCE consultation about the role of impact in REF2021, including how institutional case studies may be backfiring on Stern on the Fast Track Impact Blog:  
<http://www.fasttrackimpact.com/blog>

“As the rewards become greater we must become ever more vigilant ...and do all we can to build research cultures that value impact intrinsically”

We'd love to hear from you if you have ideas about issues you'd like us to cover, or if you have questions you would like to have answered by Prof Reed in the next issue.

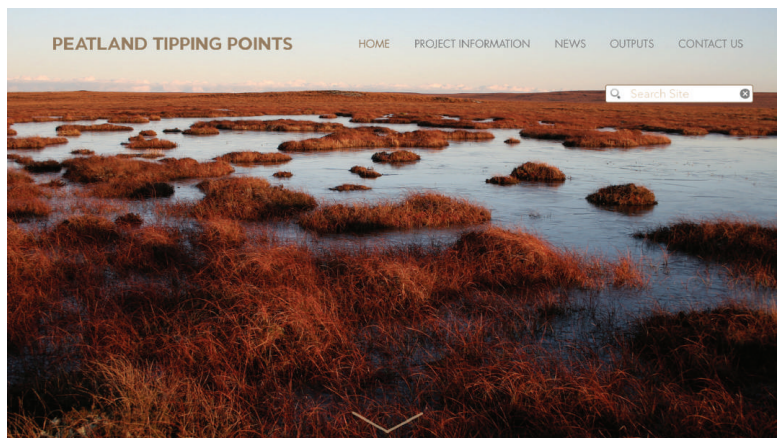
In particular, if you have an amazing productivity tip you'd like to share with other researchers, get in touch and we will try and feature as many of your ideas as possible.

Contact [pa@fasttrackimpact.com](mailto:pa@fasttrackimpact.com)

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