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UK start-up IN-PART matches universities with industry

JULIE HARE THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM September 21, 2016

It's a matchmaking service with a 70 per cent success rate — not bad given the cultural issues that underplay most relationship-building in the tech-transfer space. IN-PART is a young British start-up that promises to serve as a conduit between rhetoric and reality, or how to turn around low levels of business-university collaboration.

Last month, the University of Western Australia and the Australian National University became the first universities in this country to climb on board in a step they hope will boost the quantity and success of their industry-based partnerships.

IN-PART's co-founder Robin Knight said that with a 74 per cent success rate, his company was attracting the attention of big-name institutions such as King's College London, the University of Cambridge, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Columbia University.

What attracts them is IN-PART's curated, algorithm-driven matchmaking service.

“Universities send us a brief of their latest research or new technology. We have curated an audience of technology users over the past three years. We don't deal with anyone with a public user account, such as Yahoo or Gmail, so we know who exactly is going on to the platform,” Dr Knight said.

The former post-doc in virology at King's College said every new user was heavily vetted to make sure they were not consultants or salesmen.

“Once they have been approved we then get in-depth information on their particular area. They might, for example, be in oncology, but specifically in immunotherapy. Using natural language processing which strips out all the key words from the university technology, our platform then matches them ...

“It's a bit like a dating site using next-generation algorithms and smart techniques to establish who should be interested in who.”

The IN-PART community is made up of more than 600 businesses and 70 universities.

“With \$127 million of the National Innovation and Science Agenda being allocated to incentivise research performed in partnership with industry, now is a great time for Australian universities to increase their outreach to an audience ... keen to work with them,” Dr Knight said.