

**Brief #4:**  
**Do practitioners prefer self or hands-on matchmaking?**

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**Background:** Although many researchers and practitioners would like to connect with and learn from each other, they face severe time constraints and are part of very different social networks. These considerations motivated research4impact's creation of its fully-interactive, LinkedIn-style online platform r4impact.org. Launched in March 2017, the platform allows members of these groups to create profiles as well as reach out to others directly through the site. In early 2018 research4impact also began offering hands-on matchmaking in which we offered to connect practitioners and researchers.

**Main Finding:** Here I compare how many practitioners engaged in self-matchmaking by contacting researchers directly through the site versus the number who requested hands-on matchmaking. As of this writing, self-matchmaking was available for 21 months (March 1, 2017 through December 1, 2018) whereas we actively advertised the hands-on matchmaking for 3 months.

As shown below, practitioners very clearly prefer hands-on matchmaking. Upon speaking with several who created profiles on the site but did not reach out to any researchers themselves, a common concern was that although they are very interested in connecting with those who are competent, available, and trustworthy, it is hard to ascertain that kind of detailed information strictly from the profiles. The problem is not that the profiles (and the platform) are ill-designed, but instead something more fundamental: some of what practitioners want to know is not the kind of candid information that researchers are likely to share in an online setting and/or be willing to update regularly. For instance, researchers are unlikely to list all of the research-related tasks and topics they are both competent in and also *not* competent in.

These experiences underscore how building successful working relationships between practitioners and researchers often requires a human touch in addition to new technology.

*Practitioner Demand for Self-initiated and Hands-on Matchmaking*

Number of practitioners reaching out directly to researchers (via r4impact.org) over a 21 month period	2
Number per month	0.1
Number of practitioners requesting hands-on matchmaking over a 3 month period	37
Number per month	12.3

Check out [www.r4impact.org/how-it-works](http://www.r4impact.org/how-it-works) for more on what we're learning about researcher-practitioner relationships!