

Guide for academics to ensure successful industry academia collaboration projects



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These guidelines provide key insights on initiating research projects with companies and ensuring a smooth, impactful collaboration from start to finish.

While designed for The Finnish Research Impact Foundation's Tandem Industry Academia collaboration projects where researchers work partly at the company site, the recommendations are relevant for a wide range of industry-academia projects.

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Finding a partner company

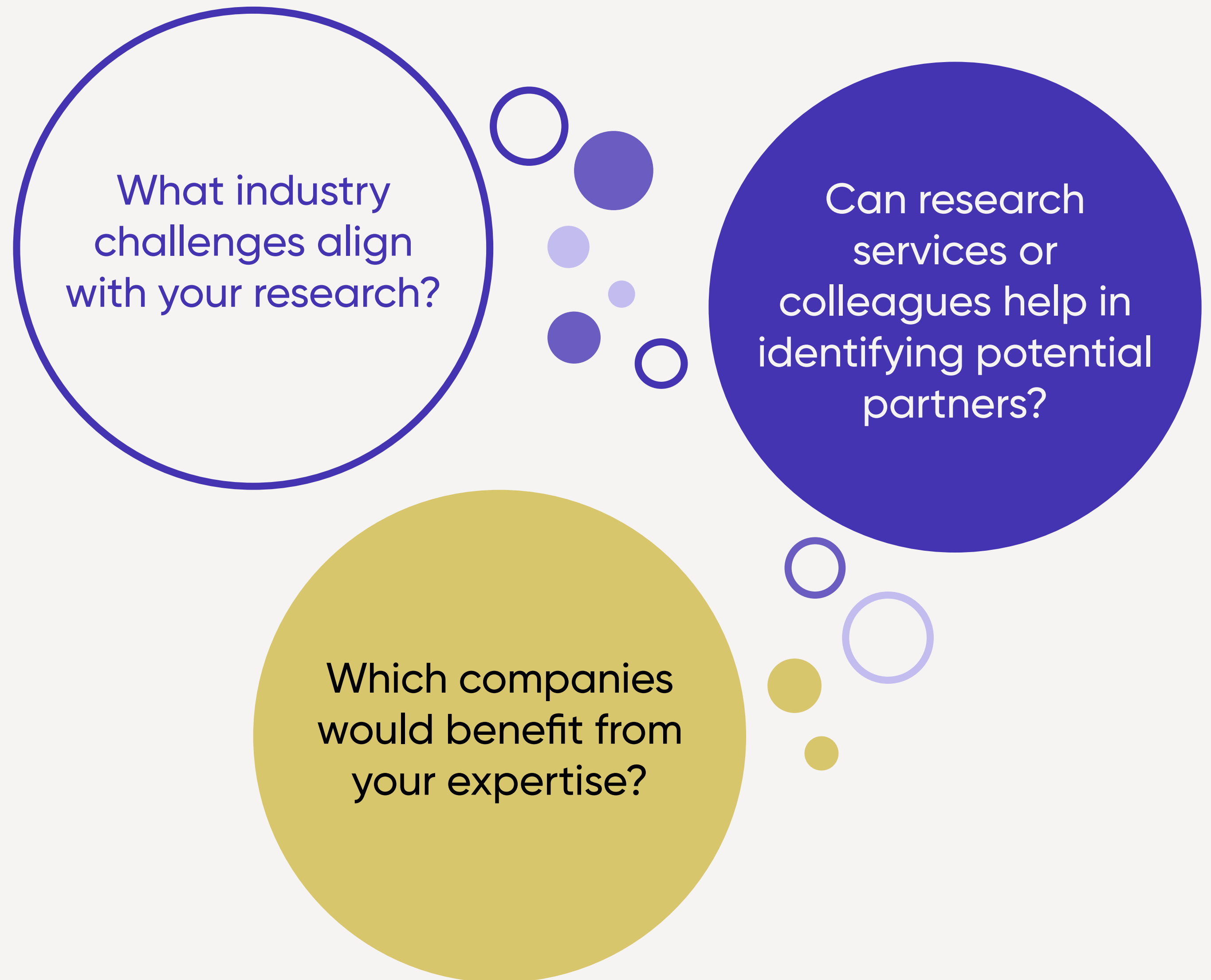
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When looking for a partner company

Consider which businesses align with your research interests while also benefiting from your expertise.

Gaining insight into the company context is essential. Take part in industry events and conferences and follow discussions on online platforms. Understanding the challenges a company faces helps in identifying mutually interesting research problems.

Your institution's research services have connections with companies with experience and interest in collaborating with academia. Don't hesitate to contact them when looking for a suitable partner company.



Tailor your message to highlight company benefits.

Avoid academic jargon, focus on business impact.

Be patient, partnerships take time.

Reaching out to potential partners

When reaching out to a company, clearly communicate how it would benefit from the collaboration. Avoid academic jargon and focus on making your proposal understandable.

Finding the right partner takes time, so be patient and prepared for setbacks. Not every company will be interested, and rejection is part of the process.

Approach discussions with ambitious yet realistic plans that align with both your research goals and the company's priorities.



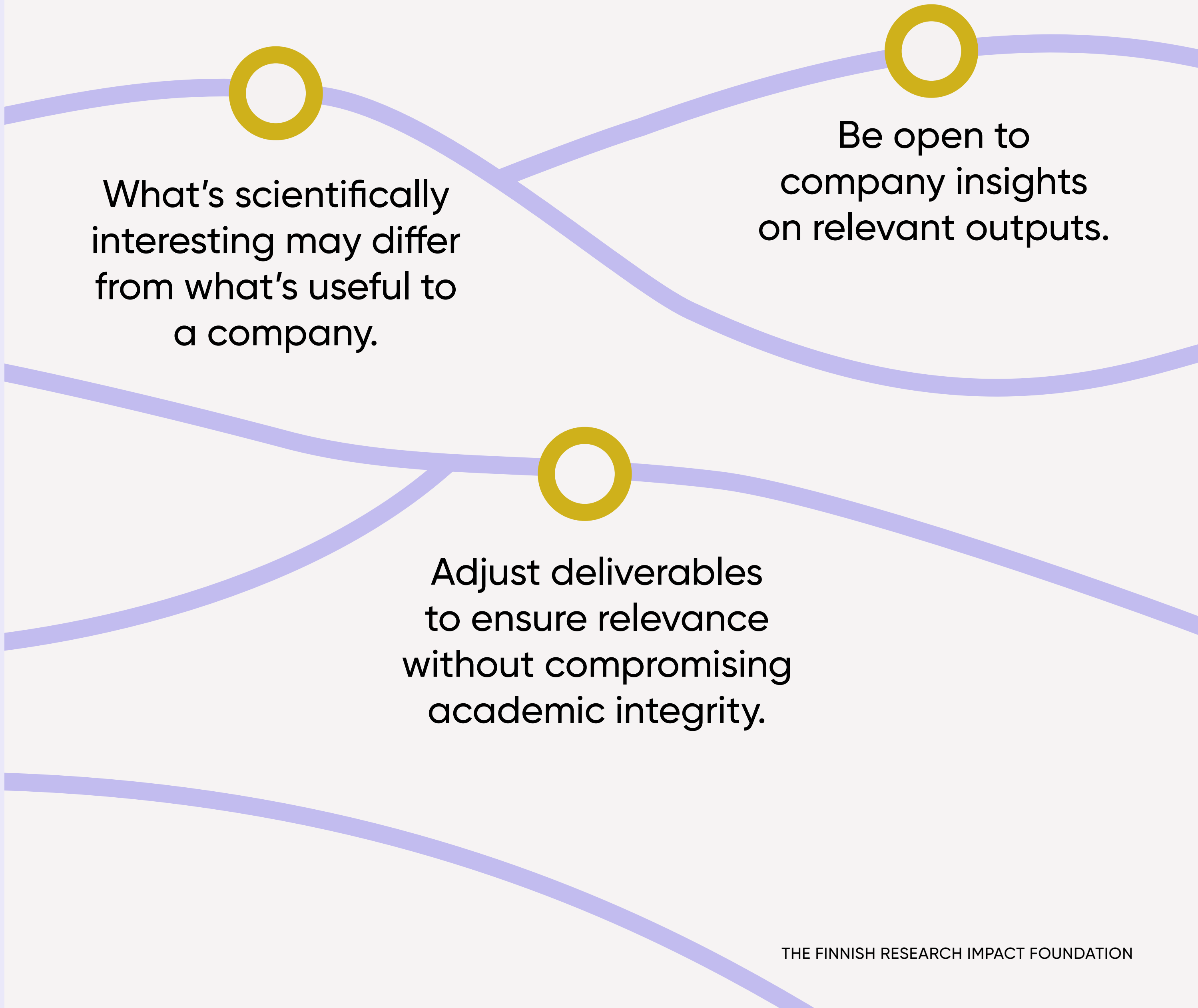
Practical tip: Companies may not respond to email inquiries. Calling after your initial email increases your chances of an opportunity to sell your idea in person.

Tailoring your plan

If the initial discussions lead to planning a joint project, it is essential to remain open to the company's perspective, ensuring that the plan accommodates both academic and company interests.

While academic research often prioritizes novel insights and publications, companies focus on practical applications and solutions to specific challenges. To bridge this gap, it is important to identify aspects of your research that align with the company's interests.

This does not mean compromising the integrity of your research but rather adapting how you communicate and apply its results. By considering industry applications and being flexible in your approach, you can create a project that is mutually beneficial.



What's scientifically interesting may differ from what's useful to a company.

Be open to company insights on relevant outputs.

Adjust deliverables to ensure relevance without compromising academic integrity.

Ensuring smooth and impactful collaboration

- 1 Aligning expectations
- 2 Managing uncertainty
- 3 Information sharing and publication of results
- 4 Adapting to the company environment

Aligning expectations

Academic researchers are often drawn to emerging questions that arise during the research process. Companies, on the other hand, tend to have more focused interests.

To ensure alignment, it is essential to review the project plan together and clarify the objectives. Maintaining regular and open communication throughout the project helps to address potential ambiguities early and ensures that the research remains mutually beneficial.

Establish clear objectives at the beginning of the project and confirm that both parties have a shared understanding of them.

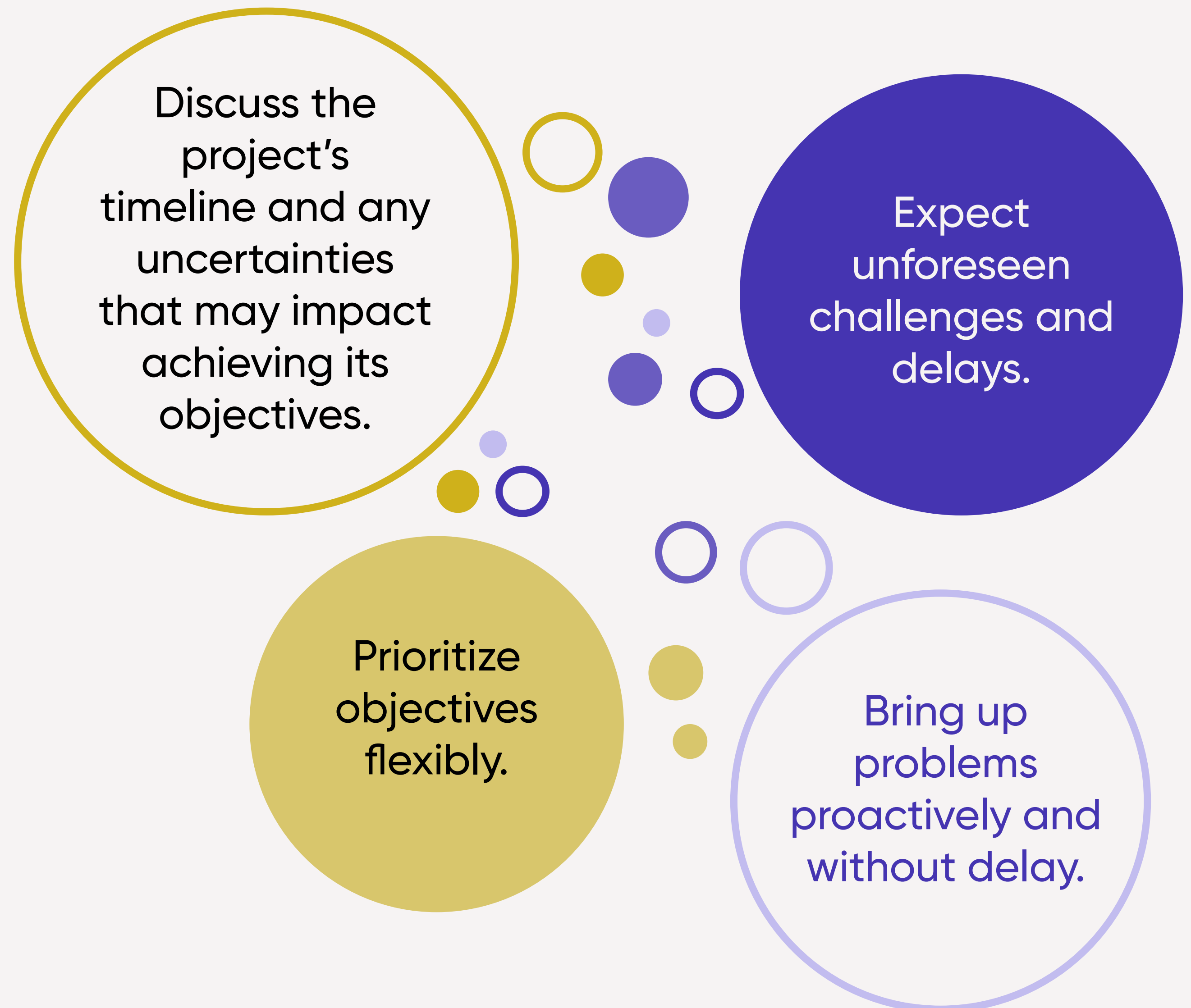
Ensure ongoing communication throughout the project.

Define publication rights and data sharing early.

Managing uncertainty

Research takes time and projects are inherently unpredictable. However, even when predetermined goals are not fully achieved, projects are considered valuable, as they generate new insights and learning opportunities.

Site visits and discussions at the beginning of the project provide understanding of expectations and constraints. When challenges arise, addressing them openly allows the team to explore solutions. Setting clear priorities in the beginning helps in managing challenges without jeopardizing key outcomes for either party.



Clarify confidentiality agreements and publication schedules.

Ensure mutual approval for information sharing.

Be prepared for delays in publishing results.

Information sharing and publication of results

In academia, open discussion and knowledge exchange drive research forward. Companies are often more cautious in sharing knowledge.

While research results are generally public, companies may request a delay in publication for competitive reasons. If patents are being considered, related findings must remain confidential until the patent is filed.

Mutual approval should be ensured before publicly sharing project-related information. Discussing the publication schedule at the start of the project ensures alignment on what can be shared and when.

Adapting to the company environment

Working in a company differs from the academic setting, and it can take time to adjust to new practices. Researchers and company employees may speak different “languages”. Without a clear understanding of the company’s context, it can be challenging to translate academic findings into actionable insights.

Participation in team meetings and internal discussions helps in understanding how problems are framed and what challenges are most pressing at the company. Gaining insight into the business context helps researchers to envision how their findings can be applied in practice.



Learn the company's culture and communication style.

Set mutual expectations for integration to the company's work environment.

Participate actively in meetings and discussions.

Maximizing the benefits of the company period in Tandem Industry Academia Projects

- 1** How researchers can get the most out of their time at the company
- 2** How companies can make the most of the researcher's presence

Tips for researchers

How researchers can get the most out of their time at the company

Engage actively

Participate in team activities and embrace opportunities to contribute beyond your immediate project.

Adapt to new ways of working

Learn the preferred communication channels and etiquette in the company and stay open to the company's organizational culture.

Be proactive

Actively seek networking opportunities and take initiative to connect with colleagues.

Communicate effectively

Share updates on your progress regularly and inform colleagues about your schedule and availability.

Tips for companies

How companies can make the most of the researcher's presence

Prepare in advance

Ensure administrative processes are completed before the researcher's arrival.

Invest in induction

Familiarize the researcher with the company and relevant procedures.

Integrate the researcher into daily activities

Involve the researcher in team meetings where appropriate and leverage researcher's expertise to provide insights beyond the project scope.

Foster networking opportunities

Facilitate connections across teams to broaden idea exchange.

Share research outcomes internally

Engage the organization with project findings through e.g. seminars.



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