


Researchers

Joshua Blumenstock
University of California, Berkeley

What do you get when a Visa exec comes to an IPA conference? It'll bust your paradigm shift right out of the box.

Continuing CGAP's blog series on practitioners' takes on our [Impact and Policy Conference](#) in Bangkok, Gordon Cooper, head of Emerging Market Solutions at Visa shares [his perspective](#). There to moderate a panel on financial inclusion, he talks about what it was like to come from the private sector into a room full of academic researchers:

You see, I'm a regular on the conference circuit. But the gatherings I'm familiar with operate in a different world. Dominated by private sector business types, these events are identifiable by conveniently predictable, if often vacuous, buzzwords; everyone's got an out-of-the-box paradigm buster to share.

After Mr. Cooper (on the right in the photo) learned he was a "practitioner" (who knew?)  he quickly dove into the conference, talking to researchers like [Josh Blumenstock](#) (left in photo), whose presentation showed how mobile money flowed around Rwanda on the day of a natural disaster, research with obvious application to private sector companies in the money transfer business. (See a plain language summary by Josh, including a video visualizing the transfer patterns, [here](#).)

Mr. Cooper points out there's a wealth of information available without getting on a flight to a conference:

Judging from my day at the conference, there's a ton of great material out there (not all of it RCTs, or even quant, no doubt). It could be of real relevance to existing and would-be providers, so long as they knew about it! So, my first thought on how this academic research might have greater impact is this: get the word out.

He points out that there are resources out there for practitioners but the links between the two worlds aren't as strong as they could be:

IPA has a great [searchable database](#) of publications they're involved in – but how many existing and prospective demand-side providers have the URL bookmarked? If the task at hand is to get the people who offer financial services to step up their

innovation game in end-user product design (reasons for optimism [here](#); the nature of the challenge [here](#)), we need to share the treasure trove of existing academic research far and wide.

Mr. Cooper makes a good point, academics are producing lots of good data-based insights of use to practitioners, how can we get the word out better? Read the full post [here](#), and post your recommendations below on how to bridge the communication gap between evidence and practice.

January 25, 2013