

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Experience matters: The role of academic scientist mobility for industrial innovation

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**Research Summary:** A learning-by-hiring approach is used to scrutinize scientists' mobility in relation to the recruiting firms' subsequent innovation output. Our starting point is that among firm hires, individuals with university research experience—hired from universities or firms—can be particularly valuable. However, conflicting institutional logics between academia and industry makes working with academic scientists challenging at times for firms. We suggest two solutions to this difficulty: hiring “ambidextrous” individuals with a mix of experience of university research and working for a technologically advanced firm, and a strong organizational research culture in the recruiting firm reflected by the presence of a scientist on the top management team. We track the mobility of R&D workers empirically using patent and linked employer-employee data.

**Managerial Summary:** An important way to make organizations more innovative is hiring individual researchers with the right types of skills and experience. We show that individuals with university research experience beyond their final degree are particularly likely to help boost firm-level innovation output after hiring compared to R&D workers with other types of skills and experience. However, to obtain good returns to innovation from hiring such individuals, firms need a university research-friendly organizational culture when hiring individuals with university research experience, from either firms or academia.

## KEYWORDS

econometric evidence, innovation output, organizational research culture, scientists' mobility, the science–technology relationship