

Profacts

Providing fact-based factors for success

Profacts is a full-service market research agency that goes beyond pure data delivery to provide its clients with actionable recommendations and consultancy based on facts and figures. Profacts was founded in 2006 by Dr. Stijn De Rammelaere and Dr. Timothy Desmet, who had been doctoral colleagues in Cognitive Psychology at Ghent University. The philosophy of the start-up was to combine academic scientific research knowledge with practical market research experience to create a powerful mix of added-value research solutions. Today, with a current full-time workforce of 25 people, Profacts has experienced strong growth in revenues, employees and clients. We spoke with Dr. Timothy Desmet about Profacts' own factors for success.

You and Stijn De Rammelaere founded Profacts on the strength of your doctoral degrees. Did the creation of the company go smoothly?

Timothy Desmet: Yes, it did. Stijn and I had worked together at the university, and our projects always ran quickly and produced excellent results. So, after several years of post-doctoral work experience, we decided to start a company together. We started with two computers in an apartment in Ghent – and after just one year we hired our first employee. And then it took off, because our employee could do a lot of work behind the scenes while we were out on the road spending time with our clients. For the first several years, we doubled our number of employees each year. And now, this is our seventh year, we have 25 consultants and 15 call-center agents.

Was your first big client a breakthrough?

Yes, indeed. Our first few months, we only had a couple of very small projects, and then, through networking, we were given the chance to present ourselves at a very big client (TeleAtlas in Ghent). They tested us with a small project – and they really liked how we worked and the report we delivered at the end. So, in a very short time, we became their main supplier for market research. From there, we began to get clients through word-of-mouth referrals – which is, of course, the best kind of 'advertising'.



Timothy Desmet & Stijn De Rammelaere

You're also using innovative technology in the market research field.

People are not fully conscious of what drives their behaviour: they think they are answering your survey questions honestly, but there are also emotional, implicit drivers at play, which they are not aware of. Therefore, we've started to use neuromarketing technologies in our research, and one technique is eye-tracking. We analyse gaze plots to see exactly where their eyes were looking as they watched a TV ad, for example, and heat maps to see how much attention they were paying. And this gives us more accurate – and often different – results than traditional research methods.

“We want to grow, but sustainably, so that we maintain our high quality standards.”

Timothy Desmet, Managing Partner, Profacts

What are your goals?

We want to grow, but sustainably, so that we maintain our high quality standards. Flexibility and interactivity are two of our strengths – we use a project team structure in which four or five people manage a project from the briefing to the presentation of the results. And our clients like this approach – they know who to contact and that person is always knowledgeable about the entire project. I don't want to sound immodest, but our ultimate goal is to be the best market research agency in Belgium.