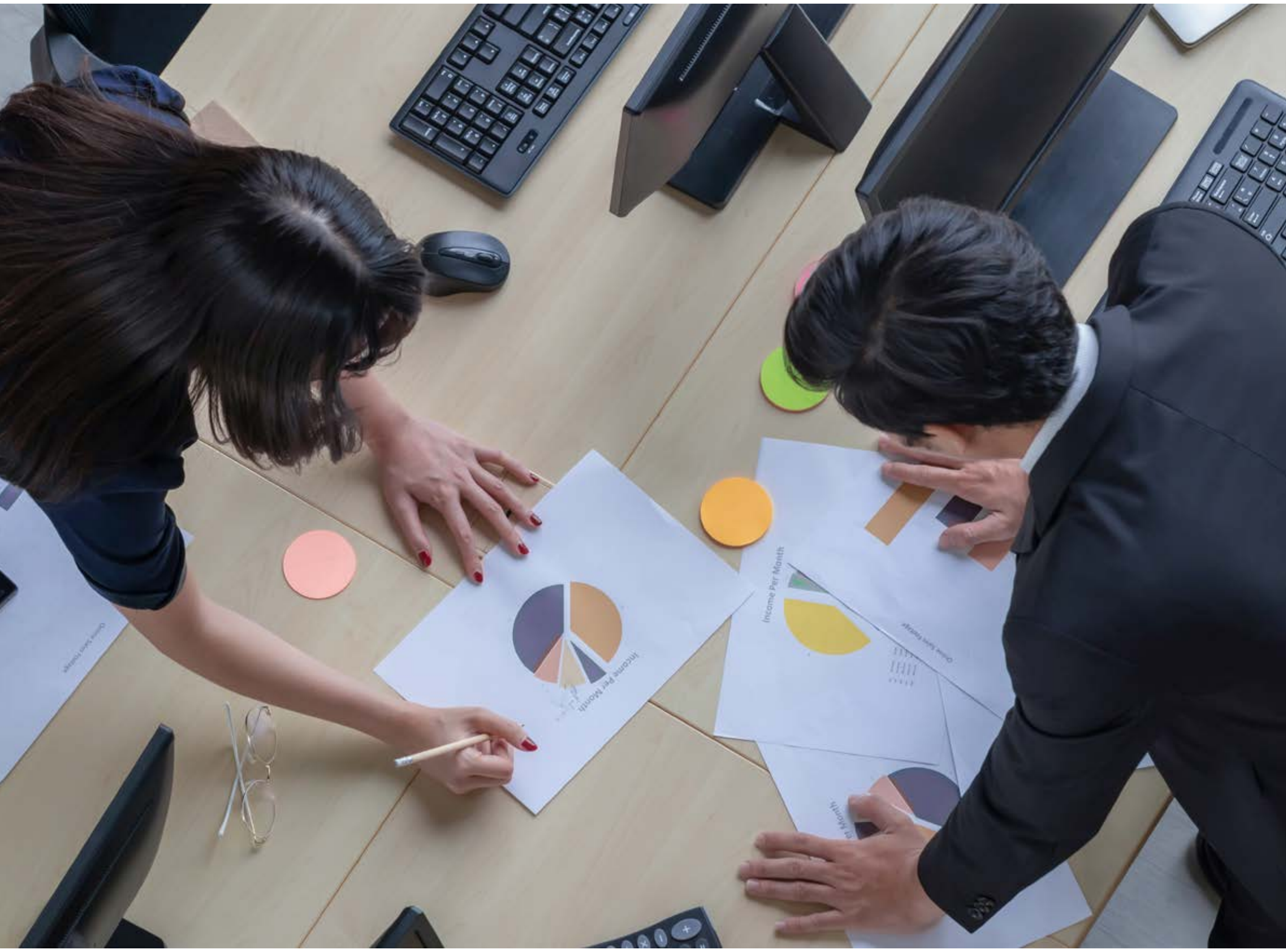
sagentia innovation

Answering C-Suite top level R&D questions to accelerate and de-risk innovation – find out how our experts deliver answers to the big questions.

How are our markets evolving? Do we have a suitable strategy? What's the best way to create and capture value? Should we grow organically or go on the acquisition trail? What risks are attached to all of this?



Sagentia Innovation's advisory team handles big questions like these on a daily basis. Our clients' environments are fast-paced and dynamic, so the information on which to base decisions must be real and relevant to reduce risks and maximise value creation.

To achieve this, many areas need to be monitored and understood in depth. Evolving technologies and investment trends must be tracked, as well as competitor activity. Government initiatives and directives must be understood, as must regulatory requirements and pathways, not to mention considerations related to sustainability, supply chains, manufacturing and more. At the heart of all this is stakeholder needs and trends, from patients and consumers to professional users to purchasing departments.

Organisations have to understand the multiple factors that feed into and influence their business case and strategy. And our advisory team can help. We work with clients to solve various challenges, from understanding trends and developing strategies through to finding the right partners and executing on the right opportunities.

How do we do it? We spoke to two of our Advisory Consultants to discover how they go about answering difficult questions, or defining the questions that should be asked to inform next steps.

Meet Dr Justin Weeks, Principal Analyst

My day-to-day work involves obtaining good quality data, analysing it, and transforming it into recommendations to help inform business decisions around innovation and R&D.

What's your background?
"I have a Master's degree in Chemistry and a PhD in Inorganic Chemistry from the University of Oxford, UK. Rather than following a path in academia, I wanted to utilise my skills and understanding of how to digest and translate science in a commercial context."

What's your role at Sagentia Innovation?
"Our clients use us to digest cutting-edge science and technology research then deliver actionable insights and recommendations for their business strategy.

There are two aspects to our data collection: primary and secondary research.

Secondary research sources include proprietary databases, internet resources, academic literature, market data, patent searching, start-up data, conference proceedings, and venture capital. A wide range of data can describe a client's target space and help us uncover answers.

Primary data collection involves talking to people to gain information. First we identify the correct people to speak to, such as subject matter experts or stakeholders with relevant knowledge. Then we interview them to gain first-hand information. This process reveals nuances and insights that cannot be uncovered with secondary research alone. We often reach out to people without divulging who we're working with to maintain client anonymity and avoid disclosing the topics they are exploring. Our team is good at asking the right questions while removing biases.

Once this primary and secondary data has been gathered it is analysed through the lens of our sector and scientific knowledge to deliver valuable insights and focused recommendations."

What do you enjoy most about your job?
"I like the tangible nature of what we do. The best part of my job is when we deliver key business recommendations to clients and explain them in a way they understand. When the client has fully digested and understood the messages, recognising the value of the information, I feel I have been successful. It's fulfilling to bridge cutting-edge science and tangible real-world scenarios.

Another element I enjoy is mastering clear communication. It's so important to know our audience and communicate in an engaging way at the right level. Are they technically focused, and would a technical workshop help? Or are they more market-focused? Or is our audience the leadership team, who make top-level strategic decisions, and so require an overarching perspective rather than a detailed view? The content is the same and ultimately it's the same message, but we can adapt its delivery and communicate it in various ways by using a lens that suits the client audience.

I also enjoy working with great minds. Our team has clever people with broad and direct experience in our clients' areas of interest. They are used to looking at things in many different ways. It's wonderful when we unite to help solve our clients' questions, do it well, and achieve great client satisfaction."

What challenges do you have to overcome?
"Often clients come to us with quite open-ended questions or problems. It could be anything, from "we'd like to make our product more healthy" to "we need a more sustainable approach". In fact, part of their reason for coming to us is that we can take a broad issue like that and structure it effectively to unlock better questions, which deliver useful answers and actionable results.

Another challenge is that when clients collect data they don't always know how to use it effectively. We are good at taking undigested data, categorising it, filtering it down, and translating it into something that's easier to work with and understand.

In a typical project, we get lots of different entries to a database, categorise them and obtain descriptive data for each category. We then prioritise that data, narrowing it down to 10 to 15 key findings, which can be challenging because there are many different ways you can slice and filter it. Working closely with the client is essential to ensure we take the right direction and don't go into a black box. We ensure the method is logical and that the client can follow it as we filter further down to the next level. Our process uses a lot of scientific logic to ensure we get to the correct answer. Client communication and logic alignment are crucial at this stage."

What satisfaction do you get from your work and why?
"We get a lot of repeat business from clients, which is excellent! It shows they like our outputs which in turn help deliver good business strategy outcomes. In addition, many of our clients enter the next phase of their journey with our product development team. Keeping a project in the Sagentia Innovation ecosystem enables a deeper approach and leads to well-defined product developments. It is satisfying to see a project right through from the initial question and research phase through to a finished product ready to transfer to manufacturing!"

Meet Dr Jolanta Skotnicka-Pitak, Advisory Consultant

My role in Sagentia Innovation's advisory team is to help clients identify key trends in their industries and how they affect innovation and R&D strategies. I work in early-stage strategy and front-end innovation research to build tangible strategy goals, value propositions and business cases.

What's your background?
"I have a PhD in Analytical Environmental Chemistry from Krakow University of Technology, Poland and University at Buffalo, USA. I also have a degree in waste management. Before I joined Sagentia Innovation two years ago, I spent nine years at a FTSE 100 consumer goods company as an R&D Innovation Scientist."

What do you enjoy most about your role as an advisory consultant at Sagentia Innovation?
"With the client's question(s) defined, and a wealth of data from multiple sources collated, I enjoy the process of transferring the data into a meaningful story that drives focused recommendations. There can be so much data, but by interrogating it, understanding it and translating it we often produce surprising answers that no one could have guessed. Finding these gems is exciting, and it's rewarding to have such a positive impact on our clients' decisions and strategies.

I really enjoy feeling part of a client's business, working as an extension of their team. I get to work with many high-profile companies; their scientists, marketers, and group directors that are at the top of their field. Working with different departments and job functions means I have to adapt how I present the information depending on the client audience.

It's also interesting to work across such a variety of industries and sectors; there is great diversity in the projects. I've learnt that companies in different industries and sectors can have very similar needs, challenges, and questions to answer. They all have two things in common: drive for success and the need to reduce ventures' risks to secure their future path."

What challenges do you have to overcome?
"Sometimes the questions are too big, and we need to work with the client to hone and refine them. If a question isn't specific enough, the resultant data can be harder to decipher, reducing the clarity of recommendations. Sometimes questions are multi-faceted and need to be broken down. The challenge lies in framing the questions in the right way to ensure tangible results."

What tools and techniques do you use?
"We have a broad service offering and use several techniques depending on the client needs. Primary research and proprietary databases for secondary research are key information sources. We also have unique access to the right contacts at universities as well as industry experts.

The list of tools and techniques is extensive, ranging from more widespread tools – SWOT/TOWS, PESTLE, Porter's 5-Forces, roadmapping, and scenario planning – to more complex or proprietary ones. Combining these resources is quite powerful and each project has its own mix. For example, horizon scanning to uncover the 10-year projections for a specific market uses different tools to a value proposition project focused on user needs or technical solutions."

What satisfaction do you get from your work and why?
"Satisfaction at the end of the project depends upon good planning, communication and organisation at the start of the project. Achieving a precise specification is key. If we fully understand where we are going and why, it also gives the client greater clarity, allowing us to deliver something of high value and immediate impact.

It's really satisfying to help clients define and answer their critical questions. Sometimes they go even further into their learning journey with a deeper dive into new questions that arise."

What are the big questions facing your organisation in 2022, and how can we help?

Arrange a meeting with our advisory team to find out more about how we can help answer big question: info@sagentiainnovation.com

About Sagentia Innovation

Sagentia Innovation goes beyond product development and science-backed technology innovation. In April 2021, we brought our separate organisations - Sagentia, Oakland Innovation, and OTM – together as one brand. The result is a fully integrated offering comprising R&D strategy and front-end innovation as well as product and service development. Our team seamlessly delivers the strategic perspective of a traditional management consultancy along with the in-depth technical and scientific rigour of an R&D partner, across a broad range of sectors and challenges.

www.sagentiainnovation.com

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