

## What skills are needed to manage personal career development in the digital age?

Have you ever found really interesting materials whilst searching the internet and then lost them again? This used to happen to me a lot and lead to a great deal of frustration and a waste of precious time. You may, like me have watched young people, colleagues and family members making 'friends' on Facebook and sharing images and wondered who was really reading and looking at these 'posts'. It is a fact. The internet has quickly become an integral part of our lives. We use it for shopping, reading, listening to music, communicating, sharing information and of course for research. It is becoming common place to use the internet for researching and planning meals, holidays, and even personal relationships. Of course, careers are no exception and the internet offers all sorts of possibilities for people to develop and manage their careers.

The internet is not always the perfect solution to our career development challenges. A while ago I was searching UTube for some film clips which I could use in a careers lesson for young people. I found a wonderful video in which a woman spoke eloquently about her job in veterinary science. She spoke of her own route into this rewarding job and the qualifications which she had needed. It took me a while to realise that the person on the video was talking about her job in the United States and that her route and qualifications were irrelevant in a UK context. It made me realise that sometimes the information which young people find on the internet can be less than helpful. They need the knowledge and skills to interrogate online information and make decisions about whether or not the information is really relevant.

I have also watched with some concern as my own children have posted pictures on their Facebook sites. I know that as an employer I will often do an online search for people who are applying for jobs with our organisation. I have questioned the wisdom of posting 'selfies' and photographs of social occasions knowing that potential employers will be making judgements about people's suitability for jobs based on what they find out about them online. I have decided to include more information about managing online presence in my teaching practice because I know that some people could miss out on important opportunities by having inappropriate pictures and information about themselves on the internet.

My work colleague, Tristram Hooley<sup>1</sup> has helped me to understand how the internet has brought new possibilities to the world of career development. He notes that the internet is:

- **a careers library** through which individuals can search and source information, for example information about what different jobs involve or how much people earn,
- **a marketplace** where individuals can find and apply for opportunities in learning and work and to attend a college course,
- **a space for establishing and maintaining contacts and networks**, for example through social media sites like LinkedIn or Twitter,
- **a media channel** through which individuals can raise their profiles and manage reputations, for example through personal websites or blogs.

As a career development professional I find this fascinating. This new context for career development has a number of implications for me as a teacher, career development practitioner and career counsellor. It also leaves me with some anxieties! For example as I write this article I note that I have used a number of terms which in the past might have been noted as 'jargon' or 'popular speech'. I have had to learn a new vocabulary: posting, friending, selfies, surfing, and digital media. I have had to learn some new teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Hooley, T. (2012). How the internet changed career: framing the relationship between career development and online technologies. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC)*. Issue 29 (October 2012)

approaches: integrating digital technology into the teaching environment. I have also have to think about how I support career counsellors to operate in this new world. It is clear to me that if career counsellors are to teach their clients how to become 'digitally career literate' then we really need to get good at these skills too! This is part of our own career development! I am currently reviewing how I use social media to promote my expertise and skills and I have decided I am going to create an online CV using digital media so that I can advise students how to do this themselves.

Fortunately Tristram has helped us to think about the competences which we need to operate as effective career counsellors in this new digital world. He sets out a framework of seven skills: the seven Cs of digital career literacy:

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|----------------------|---|
| <i>Changing</i>      | the ability to understand and adapt to changing career contexts   |
| <i>Collecting</i>    | the ability to find, manage and retrieve career information   |
| <i>Critiquing</i>    | the ability to evaluate, analyse the provenance of and assess the usefulness of career information  |
| <i>Connecting</i>    | the ability to make contacts, build relationships and establish networks online that support career development   |
| <i>Communicating</i> | the ability to interact effectively across a range of different platforms and to understand the 'netiquette' of different interactions and to use them in the context of career |
| <i>Creating</i>      | the ability to create online content that represents their interests, skills and career history   |
| <i>Curating</i>      | the ability to develop, review and edit their online presence   |

On a personal level, I have worked very hard at improving my digital career literacy. This has focussed on a number of specific activities:

In the first place I have concentrated on my online presence. This activity is both a 'connecting' and a 'communicating' activity. I have come to realise that it is wise (and not self-obsessive) to 'Google search' my name. I now do this regularly as I want to make sure that the information about me helps to promote me effectively as a professional in my discipline. You can influence this but you need to know who is talking about you or sharing images of you online! This includes your own posts. I also make sure that people can find me easily if they want to ask me a question about career development. I am a member of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and I have a Blog but I manage all of these carefully. It is a simple procedure and I recommend that you start doing this straight away!

Secondly I have concentrated on my collecting, critiquing and curating skills. I am now able to undertake effective 'searches' on line and no longer lose those useful and important documents. I use a 'social bookmarking site' called Citeulike. This is similar to a personal online library and by using this I never lose those useful documents no matter where I am in the world. I have also begun to use sites such as 'Dropbox' and 'Google' to save, share and collaborate on documents.

As I write this article, I am thinking about the sort of advice I would give any new career counsellor. We are all so busy and have so much to do and learn but I think one of the most important things to do is to undertake an audit of your own digital career literacy using the 7Cs framework and then make a personal plan of how you are going to improve this

important part of your practice. This will ensure that you are in the best position to help your clients.