

# STEP OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE!



**NICKI MOORE REFLECTS ON HOW GETTING INVOLVED IN THE CDI CAN BENEFIT YOUR CAREER**

## Your Institute needs You



I was recently asked to reflect on my time as a non-executive director for the Career Development Institute and engage in a webinar about my experiences. I have been a career development practitioner for 25 years now, and when I began my training, I had no idea whatsoever about how my career would develop. My best intentions as a trainee careers adviser were ‘to make a difference’ and to ‘help people make the most of their opportunities’. What I discovered in the career development field was a family of professionals who were passionate, innovative, and very generous with their time. I have been fortunate to have been supported by some great mentors and would not have succeeded in the way that I have without their generosity and patience. Through the process of thinking about and recording my video I came to realise just how important the relationship with the CDI has been on my career progression. I thought it might be useful to share this in an article, so that people and particularly new practitioners can understand the importance of getting involved.

My first contact with the professional organisation which represented the career development sector at the time, the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG), was as a student at Nottingham Trent University. A member came in and gave us a talk about becoming a member and I can remember thinking at the time ‘but what has this got to do with me? I am only just starting out!’ I did not get the relevance or importance of becoming a member. In my first role as a practitioner, I drew strength and professional support from my immediate colleagues and this seemed perfectly adequate until I gained my first management position and began asking about best practice. I wanted to benchmark what I was doing, had loads of questions and needed a bigger and more diverse support network. It was around this time that there was a government policy shift, and I was invited to attend an ICG regional network meeting so that I could feed back to work colleagues on the changes. The meeting was a revelation. I met like-minded professionals who wanted to develop their practice and I had a new network overnight. Many of those early colleagues remain an important part of my professional network and have supported and mentored me over the years (far too many

to mention but you know who you are!).

Being an active member of the professional association has provided me with many opportunities. Membership of the East Midlands group raised my profile and when opportunities arose my name was often on the list. Not only did I get to go to some very interesting events and conferences, I also had an opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge through contributing to consultations, leading discussion groups and finally chairing the ICG's Careers Education Committee and becoming a member of the ICG Council. I have often been torn between nerves and excitement when I have approached a new challenge but have always found that there has been someone who has been able to guide me through the challenges or provide useful feedback.

Working alongside national figures in the sector helped me to learn my craft as a thought leader. Writing and contributing to national debates and having an excellent national network positioned me well for new career opportunities that arose, and I soon moved into research at iCeGS where I have been researching and teaching now for nearly 12 years. I am regularly asked how I have managed to develop my career and I always advise people to get involved with their professional association.

The CDI, which evolved from several smaller groups (including the ICG), punches well above its weight. It is a surprisingly small organisation with very few paid members of staff and relies on the support of volunteers to help run its committees, communities of practice, Council and various activities. I have always viewed this

as an opportunity and not as a chore. I have been very fortunate in the excellent support that I have received and there are plenty of people in the organisation who give their time and energies to help develop and advocate for career development.

So, what am I up to now? Some of you may have seen me speak at conferences and events about the CDI's digital strategy. I became a CDI Board member nearly six ago and was asked to take on the digital strategy. I had no idea what I was letting myself in for - I blinked too quickly and became the national digital champion overnight. Am I an expert in this field? No! Have I been challenged by this opportunity? Yes, but I am on an amazing journey, learning a lot and meeting some interesting people on the way. I am also currently leading research and discussion about the potential for career development to become a Chartered profession. Another fascinating and important area of development for the sector as a whole and I am proud that the CDI is leading the discussion. Finally, I have recently taken on the role of Honorary Secretary for the CDI and again this is challenging me somewhat, but I am learning a great deal and am being supported by marvellous colleagues.

My challenge to you? If you have an eye for your own career development, even if you are still very early in the journey, start getting involved in the CDI. We can always use enthusiastic people to support our governance, projects, research, training, and events. Forget imposter syndrome and get involved; you will be surprised where your journey will take you. I can assure you that it will be an interesting, challenging, and exciting one.

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