Why we've all got to be digital careers practitioners

Tristram Hooley, Reader in Career Development, International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby

e: t.hooley@derby.ac.uk **w:** http://www.derby.ac.uk/publications

When was the last time you got through a working day without using a computer? Or the internet? Or Google? Australians, like the rest of the world, are using the internet more and more every year and it has become an increasingly important part of the way in which Australians find, attain, and keep work. Furthermore, just as it dominates our working lives, it also dominates the education system. Wherever you turn in your career, there is the internet staring back at you.

What is more, some people have started to actively gain the edge in their career because they are good internet users. Perhaps they are brilliant at using job search engines, or they've built an extensive online network of contacts who they can call up at the touch of a button, or they busily maintain a blog, Linkedin profile and professional Twitter account to establish a powerful online reputation that has employers seeking them out. The internet isn't just a bit of the scenery of modern life, it is a tool which can be used well or badly.

So in one corner we've got the internet savvy careerists using every opportunity that the new technologies offer them to get ahead. In the other we've got the unthinking internet users blundering around. These people never think about the career implications of what they do online and their poorly chosen words about their boss, and damaging images of social activities lead to this group leaving a whole load of potential career problems floating in cyberspace.

So the internet offers us both opportunities and pitfalls in our careers. Increasingly, it is not an option to opt out and claim that you "don't do the internet". On one hand the amount of information that is out there about you already is amazing. You don't have to put anything on the internet yourself for there to be information available about you. On the other hand being a complete internet refusnik may be seen as an indicator that you haven't kept up or that you lack digital skills.

What distinguishes those who can use the internet to build their career from other people is a set of skills and attributes which I've started to call "digital career literacy". Digital career literacy describes how individuals can make the most of the online environment to build their careers.

Seven C's of Digital Career Literacy

• **Changing:** to understand and adapt to changing online career contexts and to learn to use new technologies for the purpose of career building.

• **Collecting:** to source, manage and retrieve career information and resources.

• **Critiquing:** to understand the nature of online career information and resources, to analyse its provenance and to consider its usefulness for a career.

• **Connecting:** to build relationships and networks online that can support career development.

• **Communicating:** to interact effectively across a range of different platforms, to understand the genre and 'netiquette' of different interactions and to use them in the context of career.

• **Creating:** to create online content that effectively represents the individual, their interests and their career history.

• **Curating:** to reflect on and develop digital footprints and online networks as part of career building.

I've started to suggest that career professionals use the Seven C's framework as a basis for working with clients to help them to make the most out of the online environment. The Seven C's therefore provide us with a tool to actively develop clients' capacity to advance their career through the growth of digital skills.

However, it is difficult to preach it without practicing it yourself. This means that careers practitioners have a role to play in exemplifying effective use of online tools for career building and the importance in doing this is increasingly evident as the role of technology in career development grows. If you don't take the plunge into the digital world, you may find that your capacity to help your clients will diminish.

So, if you don't know your LinkedIn from your Pinterest now is the time to investigate. If you want to continue to help others with their careers, you really need to become a digital career practitioner.

Author's Note:

Additional resources are available for download at http://www.derby.ac.uk/publications.