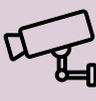


Information underpins everyone's career development. When we think about our career we need to find out what jobs and industries are out there, what we would have to do to access them, what courses are available and what others have found when they have followed the pathway that we are considering.

Once upon a time finding this kind of information was a major challenge. But the advent of Google and other forms of internet search and discovery have put the world at our fingertips.

The internet changes how we pursue our career in a host of ways. It is a ...

 <p>Library Where we can discover career information (of varying quality)</p>	 <p>Media channel Where we can tell the world about ourselves to advance our careers</p>	 <p>Meeting place Where we can network with others and gain help and support in our careers</p>
 <p>Marketplace Where we can trade our skills and knowledge for jobs, courses and other career opportunities</p>	 <p>Surveillance camera Where employers and others can find out about us (sometimes without our consent)</p>	 <p>Arena Where we can argue for changes in the way that education, work and career are organised</p>

All these different functions of the internet generate career information. Some of this is high quality, reliable information based on meticulous research; other information is 'fake news'. All of it is produced by an agency or an individual for a reason that may not be immediately apparent to those who are consuming it. So, how can we be sure that individuals, and the educators and career professionals who support them, are able to make careful use of career information?

What is career information?

Career information can cover a wide range of different types of information. It can include statistics, official government information, case studies, stories, anecdotes, pictures, audio and video. Broadly speaking, any information that might help you to make decisions about your career, or to act on those decisions, can count as career information. We could view things like housing prices and bus timetables as career information if they help us to decide whether we could live or travel to a workplace. More usually when we are discussing career information we are referring to information about courses, qualifications, industries, jobs and salaries.

We can break down the different reasons why career information is produced (Table 1):

Each source of career information has advantages and disadvantages. Being a critical user of career information is about assessing the merits of the information that you find, being aware of its limitations and combining different sources.

Table 1

<p>Purposeful data collection</p>	<p>Data that is actively collected by the government, researchers or other agencies to try to understand what is going on in the education and labour market</p>
<p>Naturally occurring data</p>	<p>Information that is produced 'naturally' through the operation of the education and labour market (eg listings on jobs boards)</p>
<p>Syntheses</p>	<p>Discussion of what is happening in the education and labour market that draws on other sources (eg newspaper articles about jobs and the economy)</p>
<p>Social information</p>	<p>Information produced by individuals and shared around (eg information you saw on Facebook or that your uncle shared with you at dinner)</p>

The role of career websites

Career websites like *myfuture* are important because they provide a trusted source of information that allows individuals and career professionals to quickly find their way to information that is going to be both reliable and useful. Such websites usually bring together a range of different information sources and should have processes in place to ensure that the information that they provide is accurate and up to date. You can read more about how *myfuture* sources its data on the website.

The sort of information that you should expect to find on a career website is as follows:

Self-awareness information	Opportunity awareness information	Decision-making information	Transition (recruitment) support information	Career building information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills checklists and audits• Qualifications• Personal conduct and attitude• Selling your skills to an employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupational profiles• Sector information• Labour market trends• How to find opportunities• Courses and learning opportunities• Funding sources (for training)• Vacancy information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing key decision points• Decision-making styles and approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Getting work experience• CVs and making applications• Interviews and selection processes• Managing rejection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being effective at work• Getting promoted• Dealing with redundancy and career change• Managing challenges (eg stress)

Career websites will also often offer career assessments and other forms of automated tools that help individuals to work out what kind of information is likely to be useful and of interest to them. *My career profile* on *myfuture* provides a good example of this, and asks people about their interests, skills, education and training, study, feelings about the conditions that they would like to work in, knowledge about career, values, enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and their dream job. The answers that users give to these questions help to refine the career information that is provided by the site. This kind of personalised service provides individuals with relevant and manageable amounts of information and allows opportunities to revisit and reflect on career decision-making.

A career website can be an invaluable resource as the information is quality assured, and can be tailored to fit the interests, skills and circumstances of the individual, avoiding information overload.

Using career information and websites in career development

The internet has increased individuals' capacity to self-serve when they have career development needs. This trend is to be celebrated as it increases individuals' access to career support, but there are still important roles for career professionals to:

- 1 **Stimulate engagement with career websites.** Most people do not know about the range of resources that exist online. Career professionals have an important role in helping to raise awareness of these resources and explaining when different resources might be useful.
- 2 **Develop individuals' digital career management skills.** We have already raised concerns about fake news, bias and information overload. Career professionals can help individuals to develop their digital career management skills. They can teach their clients and students how to recognise high quality resources and give them tools to interrogate the veracity and relevance of different resources. It is important not to assume that individuals, even young tech-savvy individuals, can naturally make effective use of online career resources.

- 3 **Integrate online resources into face-to-face provision.** Online resources provide a wealth of material that can be used in face-to-face career development provision. This might include using information held online in teaching or guidance sessions; directing students to follow up material covered in counselling or teaching sessions online; building in time for exploration as part of taught sessions; and a range of other forms of integration.

The evidence suggests that online career resources are most effective where they are integrated into wider provision. Career professionals and educators should view career websites as a key resource that can enrich their delivery of career learning and help clients and students to extend their career learning beyond the hours when they are in direct contact with career professionals.

