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GENERAL

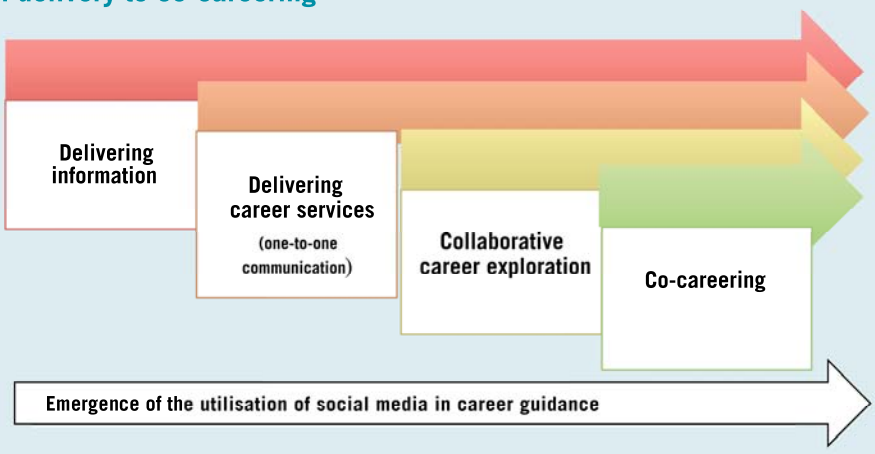
The rise of social media in career services

Social media is regularly in the 'news' for good and for not so good reasons. In career development social media can be used by organisations to further develop a common understanding with clients. For many, social media is simply a collection of online tools that enable communities to share information, communicate and socialise. Social media provides new opportunities for career practitioners, but it also creates a demand in terms of new competencies. Following on from NCGE's recent webinar that covered areas including using ICT tools and Social Media in guidance, in this article Jaana Kettunen explores the use and importance of social media in and for career guidance services.

The rise of social media in career services

Social media has recently been gaining a foothold in the field of career guidance and has become part of many career practitioners' daily practice. Recent research on practitioners' experiences provides insight into how social media is currently used in career guidance. In its narrowest form, it is simply an information distribution tool without opportunities for communication or interaction. In its broadest form, it is used for cooperative knowledge building and meaningful communal discussion on career issues.

From information delivery to co-careering



Typically, social media is used in career services merely to deliver information, for which it is fast and effective, allowing practitioners to reach large numbers of people instantaneously. However, some practitioners are concerned about the professional use of social media as an information source, emphasising that active and safe participation on social media requires honed skills and the ability to seek, choose and evaluate complex online content. There are ethical concerns regarding the accuracy and currency of information, especially which practitioners themselves present and share online.

Social media is also used more broadly for career services, where not only information delivery but also one-to-one communication takes place. This can occur asynchronously, involving a delay in the receipt of messages, or synchronously, where people communicate simultaneously in real time. The ability to write online is essential since most communication on social media still takes place in writing. Ethical concerns regarding online privacy make it essential to understand the privacy settings of the various applications and services used.

A third, and broader still, application of social media is for collaborative career exploration. Methods and activities that foster collaborative processes in career learning among peers are highlighted. While the ability to discuss matters online is essential, practitioners also emphasise that structure, active support and guidance are necessary for discussions to facilitate knowledge-building. The kind of collaborative interaction being built by the group and the respectful and supportive treatment of others should be agreed upon.

The fourth and broadest use of social media is for co-careering, where shared expertise and meaningful co-construction of career issues among community members takes place. Creating and maintaining an online presence is key, and this must be mindful and well-managed so as to present a genuine image of oneself within the discussion communities.

Social media competency in career guidance

Social media challenges traditional interactions and practitioner–client guidance relationships. There is a shift away from control by experts to a blend of expert and socially-constructed knowledge. Since social media skills and competencies are often secondary considerations, they are poorly developed in training and there is therefore an urgent need to update both pre-service and in-service training curricula. Social media currently plays a significant role in reforming career practices and related work cultures and thus it is increasingly important to support career professionals in their understanding of the various social media tools and the innovative ways in which these can be incorporated into existing practices. The current challenge for the profession is to decide how best to use these technologies.

Reference

"Career practitioners' conceptions of social media and competency for social media in career services" is openly available here:

http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-7160-1

The Author

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