Careers and Informed Choice Forum

28 November 2014

Summary Notes

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Of interest to area-based careers advisers, local authority partners, Local Enterprise Partnerships, colleges and training organisations, digital and data professionals.

Careers and Informed Choice Forum
Summary Notes

This document is a summary of the main points discussed during the **Career and Informed Choice Forum** at the Westminster Conference Centre on Friday, 28 November 2014, which the Skills Funding Agency organised with assistance from techUK. The event featured the following items:

- o an introduction from the Skills Funding Agency
- o a presentation on the National Careers Service's approach to digital services and the new customer journeys it has developed
- o a 'hackathon', using Open Data sources to build innovative apps (some of these were used to demonstrate how to analyse and present public sector data in an engaging way)
- o break-out sessions to review the new National Careers Service's website and user journeys, followed by a panel discussion and Q&A on the topic

The event explored the role of data as an enabler for better career advice services and for more empowered and informed citizens. Its objective was to discuss and gain feedback from a wide array of stakeholders interested in skills and career choices. In particular, the forum focused on how to maximise the reuse of data across the whole skills sector and ensure that services correctly address the needs of users.

Disclaimer: please note that this write-up and any messages it contains are developed for the Skills Funding Agency and do not constitute techUK's official views.

1. **Welcome and Introduction by Frank Bowley, Deputy Director, Vocational Education Analysis, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)**
   Frank noted there is already a lot of data on skills and career choices publically available. He noted for example, 90% of the Skills Funding Agency's datasets are

already published on data.gov.uk and there are plans to add more than five million data records on further education (FE) enrolment. It was acknowledged that the problem with data is that it is only valuable when it is properly analysed and presented. It was concluded that there is a need for better collaboration and understanding of what information users (employers, course providers, citizens, agents) need to make sure that their skills are useful and that individuals have more responsibility in their own skills development.

2. Presentation on the User Insights for an improved National Careers Service from Sam Bestwick, Head of Citizen Digital Service, Skills Funding Agency

Some key statistics on the National Careers Service's website include:

- o 4.97 million visits in the last quarter
- o 81% of visits were for no more than three minutes
- o 10% of visits were for over 10 minutes
- o 60% of visits were by returning users

These trends suggest that if a user is registered, he/she is more likely to consume more content. Thus, it is important for the digital service to build relationships with users to ensure that they return and are continuously engaged.

There are three challenges, common across government's digital projects and services:

- o users want a better online experience
- o government needs to do more with less – in the context of the Agency, one aspect of this means a greater emphasis on employer ownership
- o all investment must comply with the Cabinet Office's Digital by Default standard

It was acknowledged that there were opportunities to integrate the National Careers Service's digital service with other government websites. The future digital service

landscape of the National Careers Service and the Agency will move to one which is much simpler and clearer for the user, and fully integrated through the GOV.UK website.

The Agency's digital development programme is following the Government Digital Service (GDS) model of iterative design. This focuses on user testing and rapid development, with a discovery phase followed by alpha and beta launches before the live phase.

Based on this model, from July until October 2014, the National Careers Service digital service was in discovery phase. For their own discovery phase, the Agency chose a standard research approach that uses existing data and insight to develop 16 citizen personas. The research included web analysis, talking to frontline staff, conducting one-to-one research with users and validating existing personas.

Through these personas, the Agency has developed user stories of what citizens need in terms of service design and content. These personas do not replace the need to talk to users, but rather sum up what the standard user types should be at the end of the discovery phase. Throughout the life cycle of the service we will validate these personas continually, based on user research. Through this approach, the Agency can develop digital services that focus on users' needs.

The user journey highlighted that visitors use multiple entry points to access the National Careers Service website, such as Google and GOV.UK. Once on the website, there are three key parts of the user journey that correspond to three user questions, common across all personas:

- o Diagnosis phase – Where am I now?
- o Assessment phase – Where am I going?
- o Future Actions/Tools phase – How do I get there?

We can subdivide these stages further into more questions and responses, all derived from a user perspective.

Despite these common elements, we should personalise each user journey based on the unique customer needs.

Although digital services are the primary channel to ensure a holistic service for the individual, these digital services should be fully integrated with:

- o advisory services across multiple channels such as webchat, phone, face-to-face, email
- o assisted services, such as areas in which users need additional support
- o content for intermediaries such as advice to schools, help for parents/guardians, partners' content and tools

The digital service of the National Careers Service is focussed on the content and the user journey to access this content.

3. Demonstration of web applications developed during the 'hackathon', Julia Higginbottom, CEO, Rewired State

Next, the event featured overviews of the web applications scoped out during the 36-hour 'hackathon', which BIS commissioned to run alongside the Forum. Participants included young developers ranging from freelancers to university and sixth-form students. The ideas for apps/products included:

Coursesearch

This website pins all the courses available from the National Career Services database on a map, and enables geographic search based on specific interest areas such as computing, engineering and postcode. The product could be developed further to enable users to ask more meaningful/complex questions during their searches. There are also possibilities to incorporate other datasets to account for the

cost of relocation, cost of living and enable 'self-learning' of the search engine to make it more enhanced. A mobile app could be developed which would use the geolocation feature of the mobile device to automatically include location in the search.

WhatNext?

This app and website provide an end-to-end solution to the job listing, search and application process. The website is aimed towards businesses who want to offer apprenticeships and advertise an opportunity, whilst the app is directed at people applying for apprenticeships. Businesses can pay a premium to have their listing featured across the main menu of the app. It allows users to create their own profile, save searches, find jobs that are geographically close, add reviews of an apprenticeship (also connecting through Facebook) and connect with Skype to host virtual interviews. The website is enabled by software called OS-class, which manages the listings, and shows statistics. The developer highlighted the possibility of connecting the app profile with the user's LinkedIn profile, synchronising any updates.

Headway

This app performs course searches based on geographic proximity and user popularity. Through its integration with Facebook, a user can see what courses his/her friends/social media contacts have attended and their comments. The app provides users with a social experience and is seen as an effective way to engage a younger audience.

CourseHunter

This app enables users to receive alerts and find nearby job/apprenticeship opportunities that match their skills profile. To find opportunities, the app uses signals sent through 'ibeacons' (small, inexpensive wireless sensors that institutions can install). At the time of the event, the developer was also working on another app that uses 'gamification' to engage users to gain qualifications.

An API for the National Careers Service course directory data

One group presented how they converted Excel data from the National Careers Service course directory to create a database and an application programming interface (API) on it. The API makes accessing data and building apps a lot easier, enabling heat-mapping analysis of local employment rates, the sectors of employment and the value of remuneration for example. The next step of this project would be to build more complex application processes into the API, which would allow users to sign up to courses and book interviews. The developers highlighted that they were also working on a second API, which would search Twitter and Facebook for opinions from people who have completed the course, as well as its performance statistics on the Ofsted and FE databases.

Some overall recommendations and observations regarding the Agency's data and, more generally, government data, emerged as a result of the hackathon:

o It is important to open up the dialogue with developers to ensure that available data is relevant, high quality, up-to-date and accessible through open APIs.
o There is a need to think about developing applications that perform data collection/mining, rather than just focus on service delivery such as a two-direction exercise to get more data and feedback from users.
o A key issue around open data is that government data is not the only available data source; we should also consider LinkedIn, Monster and other sources of career data.

4. Feedback from breakout session and panel discussion

Key points from the breakout sessions' feedback included:

o The importance of a persona and building services around these is recognised. However, personas are quite varied so it is difficult to say generically what should be the high priority points in their user journeys.

- Areas that need greater focus when defining personas include:

  - more of a focus on young people (13- to 16-year-olds)
  - referencing face-to-face and telephone advice as part of the user journey
  - providing skills for people with disabilities
  - providing support for people who are digitally excluded, in transitions
  - training learners to acquire new skills.

- The need to ensure the quality of the data and keep job profiles updated.

- Peer-to-peer feedback was considered useful. There was a view that the data needs relevance every time. There was discussion about Monster, Jobcentre Plus and others linking into the National Careers Service. Third parties carry out some useful work. An example of this is a website called 'Labour insights': http://www.labourinsight.com/.

- It was noted that in the hands of National Careers Service advisers it would add value to their interactions with customers.

- It was observed that Labour Market Information (LMI) for all is available as an API. There was discussion on the multiple users of the data and data reuse. We will always need channels that provide direct contact such as face-to-face and telephone but in the future we could consider digital communications such as Skype as a delivery mechanism when we have their attention.

Breakout session

Of higher importance
- What steps can I take towards employment
- Inspirational content pushed out over social channels.
- Live talks/forums over social channels.

- Help with 'life events'.
- Employer case studies/articles.
- I want help planning my career.
- I want to find courses or colleges.
- Also from SFA (Apprenticeships, 24+ loans and so on).
- I need help understanding my skills.
- Job profiles.
- I want to/ should I go to an event or careers fair.

Of lower importance
- Give me employer assessments.
- 'Thought leaders'/motivational speakers.
- Link with personas (help with life events).
- Signposts to advice.

The main issues raised during the panel discussion included the following:

- It is important to put data in the hands of citizens to enable the innovative use of datasets and improve digital public services.
- Data collected by other bodies than government needs to be recognised and used when appropriate to improve insights. However, there are still many issues surrounding this external data that need resolving, such as ownership, data validity, and privacy.
- Digital services should be developed in collaboration with users and partners (such as employers, third parties, other support agencies, school). In particular, the National Careers Service website could act as a digital platform that fosters collaboration between citizens, employers and other interested parties. At the same time, it is important to remember that the Agency's core offering exists beyond digital. The Agency needs to ensure that all its channels are integrated– enabling and empowering citizens with relevant careers advice.

The hackathon served to highlight the need to not only reuse government data, but also ensure that it is authoritative, reliable, detailed, accessible and long-lasting, so that a dataset is not commissioned just as a pilot only to be discontinued. Moreover, many of the possible apps and tools that were presented at the hackathon could be of great value to careers advisers. Participants therefore expressed hope that some of the apps/product ideas will be taken forward to highlight the 'art-of-the possible', in particular addressing a niche user group and delivering a product at a very low cost.