

**Making Sense of the Fragments:**

Careers and the Knowledge Economy

**By Charles Leadbeater**

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## **My not so brilliant career**

It is difficult for me to write about careers without initially taking an autobiographical approach. I grew up in a household where structured, bounded careers were a mark of respectability and success. My father had the same job for 20 years and walked home for lunch. My eldest brother worked for IBM for all his life. When he started working for IBM its approach to human resources – paying the moving costs for every relocation, a lifetime employment guarantee – seemed utopian. Perhaps no surprise then that I craved a fairly structured career, with employers that had a recognised brand, when I was young. After university I started a ten-year career with the Financial Times newspaper: it was a structured, predictable and bounded career. As I move up from being a reporter, to becoming Labour Correspondent, Labour Editor and then Industrial Editor, I learned new skills, in writing and management. After a stint running the Tokyo Bureau, I became an executive, running various departments of the paper. The FT was a place where people started working in the “prices room” at the age of 16 and retired at the age of 60 after a lifetime’s service.

After ten years the FT became too bounded a place for me. I feared the day they asked me to become Insurance Correspondent. Charting my way up the ladder became more difficult as I got higher: fewer jobs to go up for, more to go sideways or down. So in my early thirties I jumped ship to another newspaper, The Independent, hoping to learn new skills by working for a “white” broadsheet in a highly competitive market. It became a nightmare. As I got more senior and my title became longer and swankier – by the end I think I was Deputy Executive Assistant Editor which meant I was in charge of distributing new chairs – my job became more boring and so did I. I had misunderstood what it meant to be a manager in the weakest player in a highly competitive market. I imagined the status and power would make the job exciting and challenging. But it felt like pushing a large stone uphill each day. Worse still I had managed to misunderstand myself: I realised too late that I did not want to be a manager. I really liked working for myself, often on my own, coming up with ideas.

So for the last ten years that is what I have tried to do. I left the Independent to become an independent. I work for myself as a self-employed writer, adviser and consultant and I follow just three rules. First, get the ideas right and the money will follow. If I am not really interested in what I am doing I stand no chance persuading

anyone else. Focussing on the money often leads down a dead end: any business needs to be sustained by a flow of distinctive ideas. The same is true for individuals. Second, that means that any project is worthwhile so long as one learns something from it. Getting the right mix between earning money and learning is critical. Often one learns most from activities that pay least because these are where innovation takes place, in marginal as yet unexplored spaces. Third, it is impossible to learn, or to get much done, unless you can collaborate with other people. I want to work for myself but not on my own. In my experience learning and innovation come from collaborating with people who have ideas different from your own.

But these rules developed from patterns imposed retrospectively on a fragmentary career over the past ten years involving speaking, writing books, journalism, a period as a venture capitalist, government special adviser, university teacher and so on. At times this meandering career seems highly precarious: my business card has no title, nor organisation. I dread people asking me what I do and where I am from, because the answers are so alarmingly vague. At other times this chaotic career seems completely obvious and far more coherent than anything that had come before, based on a closer bond between work, family and identity. In retrospect I know realise that my initial, apparently structured career actually became rather chaotic and desperate as I scrambled up the ladder to find the next rung. The unstructured career I have since, made up of a mix of activities, however feels far more coherent because it seems to have an underlying sense of purpose.

I mention all this because these personal experiences are reflected in what I have to say about the changing nature of careers and so the changing demands upon career guidance.

Before thinking about the appropriate models for Careers Scotland's services I want to take a step back and consider five main themes which are reshaping how we think of careers and then use these to draw out some of the implications for how people make decisions about careers and the kinds of support they might need. I hope this will provide some grounding for my thoughts about how more personalised services might develop in future.

## **Human capital and the knowledge economy**

Our economic prosperity and society's future well-being will not depend on our industrial prowess, military might, natural resources, cheap labour, financial capital nor even the scale of our investment in science. Our future will turn on how we develop, attract, retain and mobilise creativity from all sources within our society and apply it systematically in all walks of life, from health and education, to arts and business, science and industry. Our children will not forge, mine, hew, plough and weld; they will design, imagine, direct, perform, judge, advise and serve.

Products, processes, technologies and even scientific ideas are easily copied as barriers to trade, travel and communication crumble. It is getting harder to stay ahead of the game, as China becomes the world's factory and India the centre for business services. Both are producing newly qualified and skilled people in huge numbers – between them about 7m college graduates a year – and at very low cost.

A global knowledge class will increasingly aspire to qualifications with global credibility. One sign of what might be to come is the growth in enrolments for the Chartered Financial Analyst qualification, roughly equivalent to a postgraduate finance degree, which has become the currency of the financial services industry. The CFA is examined by the American association of financial professionals, the CFA institute. CFA candidates need only pay \$1,455 and turn up to one of the 274 test centres around the world to get the qualification, having studied for it at university or under their own steam. Enrolments rose from 20,000 in 1995 to 120,000 in 2005. In 2005 forty universities around the world were teaching the CFA which ten years earlier had been a purely US qualification. A financial analyst in the Phillipines can hope to get the CFA after an education costing perhaps \$15,000. The same education in the US might cost ten times that. The Phillipines analysts will be available down a computer, just like their US equivalents, but for perhaps \$16,000 a year, instead of several times that sum. What is already happening in finance will spread to other fields.

That is why both individuals, companies and regions must build their future on what cannot be easily copied: the distinctive culture which breeds a capacity for creativity.

That raises huge questions about how both as individuals and as a society we make choices about how to invest in human capital and creativity. The most important assets for the creative economy lie with people: their skills and creativity. To build up the creative assets of the economy as a whole means encouraging people in their millions to invest more and more wisely in their own human capital. Encouraging people to make the best decisions about how to develop their skills and approach to work will be critical not just for them as individuals but for society as a whole.

That means the connections between careers and the acquisition of knowledge will become ever more critical. Human capital, the raw material of the knowledge economy, is being created in part by the individual investment decisions of millions of individuals. How individuals make these decisions thus becomes more critical, not just to their well-being but to society as a whole. It is thus vital that education develops a lifelong capacity and appetite for learning by encouraging children to see themselves, from early in life as investors and participants in their own education. A top down, target driven system of education may secure – at a cost – proficiency in the basics of literacy and numeracy – but the downside will be that it stifles discovery and curiosity led learning.

As economy activity becomes more knowledge intensive, so accrediting knowledge, and proving your capability has become more important. Careers have blossomed in all walks of life, reflected in and driven by the expansion of formal, higher education. Education now starts earlier, lasts longer than it did and has become more formalised.

Once in work people find that their career is increasingly defined by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. In the past, perhaps, someone's career was defined by the organisation they worked for and the framework of stages and promotions it provided, which determined what people had to know at what stage of their career. The older people were the more they knew: older experts taught younger upstarts. But the speed of technological change means that young people are now more adept as some aspects of work than their seniors. Keeping our knowledge and human capital current and constantly renewed is vital. Careers should not be seen as stocks nor as stores of knowledge. A successful career depends on a flow of knowledge, as elements of older knowledge fade away, with newer elements migrating in.

How people invest from early and throughout life in the acquisition of knowledge is now vital to a successful career. Once organisations would have guided people to this knowledge. But in a more informal, mobile labour market more of these decisions now have to be taken by individuals as human capital investors.

### **Uncertainty**

These individual investment decisions are being made in a setting of heightened awareness of uncertainty. Industrial, organisational and occupation structures seem more fluid, thanks to new technology, business models and globalisation.

Supermarkets are banks and petrol retailers. Mobile phone companies want to be media companies. In England social workers and teachers are now employed by the same public bodies. People used to work at the same time, in the same place, doing roughly speaking similar tasks. Now we work at different, times and places, doing different things. In such a fluid world it becomes more difficult to know which skills will be deployed in future, which will become irrelevant and which need to be built up. Outside the public sector at least, the bounded career within a single organisation, is far less common. Even inside the public sector organisational change is the norm.

This fluidity means that career decisions need to be open to revision and a decision may not be appropriate for very long. Making a good choice – one that lasts - in such circumstances might become increasingly difficult. Instead a good choice might be one that provides a consistent sense of direction and opens up options for the future.

At the very least this uncertainty means that young people in particular probably need far better information – more fine grained, colloquial and yet rigorous – to help them make choices about which courses to study and where. A one off, well thought out plan may prove less useful than a clear sense of direction that can be adjusted and adapted as conditions change. Planning needs to be seen as a continual process of adjustment rather than a one off event. Providing people with tools to self-assess and plan in this way – including support from peers, collaborative filtering, new search tools, mentors and professionals – will be critical.

The knowledge economy means the choices people make about how to invest in the creation of their own human capital have become more important. But these decisions are more fraught and difficult than they were.

### **Advice and ideas from all over**

The potential sources people can turn to for advice and ideas have multiplied. In most fields professional knowledge has continued to expand, becoming more theoretical, denser and divided into many different specialisms. No one does biology anymore after their first degree. Biology is split into many sub-fields. The same is true of many other careers, encouraged in part by the expansion of higher education.

Yet alongside the growth of professional knowledge, informal, Pro-Am knowledge has grown as well, thanks to rising educational attainments, cheap computers and communications and the extended life span. More educated and knowledgeable people have more time to pursue areas of knowledge that are of interest to them. Knowledge and shared interests are a vital new source of social capital and community.

In the last few years amateur astronomers have innovated cheap digital telescopes that allow them to see stars that only Jodrell Bank could identify thirty years ago. In 1995 there were about 122 people trading on the forerunner to eBay. Now there are 122m. eBay's growth is in large part due to putting easy to use tools in the hands of users – like eBay's rating system - and letting them get on with trading together. As formal top down politics has become more professionalized and managerial, so grass roots political campaigns led by Pro-Am activists – Jubilee 2000 is a prime example – have sprung up.

The biggest competitor to Microsoft's dominance of the market for computer operating systems comes from Linux, a programme developed by an open source collaborative of perhaps 140,000 computer users, with a core of perhaps 2,000 programmers, who have contributed their time, ideas and effort for free.

When I started out as a national newspaper journalist almost twenty years ago we allowed readers to contribute to the paper through two narrow windows. They could

write a letter to the editor, which we might publish, usually cut in half. Or if they were famous and well connected they could write a piece for the comment pages. We did not allow the readers anywhere else in our otherwise closed world: their job was to sit back and read and tell us how clever we were.

These days Big J journalism finds itself surrounded by a vast army of Pro Am journalists writing online web logs, known as blogs: 19m of them, with 80,000 being created every week. Readers, at least some of them, want to become writers and publishers and they have the tools to do it. They want to have a voice. The response of some journalists – mirrored in other professions – is to recoil defensively. A more productive response is that the domain of comment and news has expanded enormously. Big J professional journalism still has a critical role but within a vastly expanded arena in which more people can have a voice. The most innovative news organisations will find ways to work with this distributed army of newshounds and commentators, not shun them. In the four hours after the July 7<sup>th</sup> bombs in London the BBC received 20,000 emails, 360 stills photographs and 20 pieces of video footage from participants.

What this distribution of knowledge mean for how we think about careers?

First, more people will find it rewarding to follow a shadow, Pro-Am career, a personal project or journey, that runs alongside their formal, public career. A Pro-Am career is important, at the very least, as an insurance policy – an option – when one's formal, public career runs into the sand. People in their forties and fifties who have found their first, formal, public career has run out of steam are increasingly turning to Pro-Am activities to sustain them. In a world in which public and organisational careers are more unstable and fragmentary, a shadow Pro-Am career can provide a sense of integration and coherence, purpose and ballast, to someone's life. That sense of order and purpose might once have been provided – at least for men – by an organisational career. In future other sources of passion and interest will have to sustain people when organisational life comes and goes.

Second, preparing people early for these choices, perhaps to be made later in life will become more critical. One of the most important factors affecting careers is the

extension of the life-span. A woman born in 1850 would have had precious little time to between her youngest child leaving home and her own death. That woman's counterpart born in 1950 might well have 35 years of healthy life ahead of her after her youngest child leaves home. Many of those years may well be taken up with caring for elderly relatively or a spouse. What kind of career should we be preparing people for when living to 90 becomes the norm? Scottish society will only cope with the demands of an aging population with vast amounts of unpaid care. How should a capacity for caring figure in our career planning?

Third, career guidance professionals will not be immune to the trends affecting other professions. Are career guidance professionals competing with these new peer-to-peer, Pro Am sources of knowledge or hoping to mobilise them? In health and social care the creation and mobilisation of highly distributed sources of knowledge will be vital to relieve pressure on professional, institutionalised services. The future front line of health care is in bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms, not in hospitals and surgeries. In health patients and potential patients will be expected to self-manage and self-assess their conditions more, often through peer-to-peer collaboration. In social care a shift to individualised budgets will likely also put a new onus on peer support and guidance.

The careers service appears to face a different challenge. Many careers decisions are already taken informally, based on social networks. The challenge in some ways is to draw people out of these informal networks to encourage them to think more openly and critically about their careers. One role for careers professionals would be to help structure these peer-to-peer discussions, providing criticism, support and tools.

The future of all public services – health, education, social care and careers – will depend on getting the right relationship between formal and informal, professional and peer, sources of knowledge and advice, to encourage people to take responsibility for their own choices. This means seeing clients and clients seeing themselves as co-creators of the service, not passive recipients. A pure professional service delivery model would be inappropriate.

## **Personalisation**

Underlying all these issues is a deep seated desire for personalisation. People want to live distinctive lives, with “cultural capital” – hobbies, interests, pastimes, that make them distinctive, who they are. We want to invest in lifestyles that support that sense of who we are: authors of our lives. That conditions our attitude towards service: we want to be attended to as individuals. Expectations of entitlement to personalised service - when and how we are attended to – are rising.

And yet in some ways the materials we make our identities from have become more fragmentary as well. As Salman Rushdie puts it, identity is an edifice made of scraps: a working life made up of projects and short term jobs; relationships that are prone to break up and so on. Perhaps we defend our sense of identity so fiercely because it is so fragile. What does this desire for personalisation mean for the way services are designed and delivered? A travel analogy might help.

First, basic personalisation makes sense for users who know they want to go on a journey, the destination and preferred mode of travel. They want access to the services to help them enact these decisions. Expectations of service will become increasingly personalised: people will want services on-demand, where and when they want them. That means providing timely, accessible services, in forms that suit the user. This kind of personalisation works best for relatively standardised units of service with clear delivery processes.

Second, there are users who may know they need to go on some kind of journey and they might have a general idea of the eventual destination but they are unsure of how to get there, what might be entailed and the route. Users like this often have more complex needs that need unpicking and understanding before recommendations can be made. That process requires a degree of intimate consultation and conversation to unlock the user’s voice and preferences. This may be particularly true of people who have got into a crisis – an elderly person who has had a fall at home, someone who has lost their job in their 50s – who want a public service to help get them back on their feet: recuperation with the aim of independence rather than long term dependence on a service.

Third, there are people who are more like independent travellers. They want a bit of support and guidance but mainly they want to arrange everything for themselves. They do not want to be dependent upon a service no matter how personalised and responsive it is. They want to self-manage. A classic example from health is diabetes. The average diabetic spends perhaps three hours a year in consultations with doctors but thousands of hours a year self-managing their condition. The biggest gains in terms of quality of life and demands upon the health system come from equipping them to become better at self-managing their condition. That means providing them with easy to use tools to self-assess, diagnose and treat, rather than a personalised service.

Fourth, are those people who do not want to travel, where the task is to excite an appetite for travelling. The aim here is to get people to the stage where they feel they want to consider travelling, looking at the careers equivalents of brochures. Journeys have many different stages, uncertainties, deadlines and anxieties. At the end you might find yourself in unfamiliar surroundings with people speaking a foreign language. That is how planning a career, especially a mobile career that might require the repeated acquisition of new skills, might appear to some people. The director of education in Gateshead once explained to me that she was in favour of children moving from one school to another for lessons because : “It is difficult getting people here to think about moving ten miles to look for a job. An education that encourages immobility is useless when the labour market demands mobility.” This means we need more personalisation as prevention: equipping people with tools to plan their careers and most importantly encouraging people to form the appetite to think about their careers in new ways. That curiosity about careers needs to be built up from early, in families, peer groups and schools. As in all public services, demand for remedial and acute crisis care later in life will be reduced by effective early investment in prevention. A preventive careers service would instil the skills and appetite for adaptive career planning from early so reducing the need to provide a service later in life.

### **The career: what next?**

The idea of the career seems more vital than ever, and yet more problematic. The same may be true for career services.

More people want careers – with formal qualifications – in more fields, based on the structured acquisition of knowledge. In the past blue collar workers had jobs, and white-collar workers had careers. Now many more jobs require the sustained acquisition of knowledge, not just white-collar jobs. Some management thinkers believe organisations will become increasingly structured around the knowledge of their staff, almost as guilds: the agglomeration of the talents and careers of the people who make them up. Becoming part of an occupational group, based on skills, is a vital way to signal employability, a way to persuade people that you can do the job. There is no sign that work is becoming less important as a source of income, status and social standing. Careers are a vital route through which people integrate into society, as citizens. We tell the story of who we are and what contribution we make through the kinds of skills we have. Young people increasingly worry about “getting on track” earlier on their careers through work experience. Careers are more, not less important to people.

Yet at the same time careers seem more fractured, fragmented, less predictable. Harold Wilensky writing in 1961 described a career as “a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered sequence.” But neat and ordered value chains have become disorganised and career paths increasingly disorderly. These days a career is something you have to design yourself. It requires improvisation as much as planning. Once upon a time going into a new post in an organisation one would be told how to do the job by the outgoing incumbent. Now with flexible work practices the rules are made up as you go along. External guides and yardsticks become less important than they were in the passage from novice to expert. As a result internal yardsticks for career success – personal growth, satisfaction, learning – should become more important. More careers will be marked by continual adaptation and shifting identities. Professional and social networks, our performance in the market will determine how our career progresses rather than our performance within bounded organisations.

The challenge is how what we experience as interruptions, setbacks and failures can become adaptations, experiences we learn from? Learning is only possible if it is to some extent cumulative, with one experience building upon another. However that

requires a degree of career continuity beneath the disruptions of shifting jobs and employers. How does a career that might look fragmentary come to be seen – often in retrospect – to have a pattern, even an order to it? How can people better equip themselves to discern this pattern and order looking forward, as something they try to build rather than something they discern with the benefit of hindsight?

The experience of work for more people, living longer lives, with more life stages, will be that work is more portable, discontinuous, surprising, dependent upon individual initiative and social contacts. If you can find an order out of fragments of work experience in a flexible labour market then you have a career. If you cannot then your work will not feel like a coherent personal journey but like a meandering, sometimes chaotic scramble. Men may have once had linear careers. But most women never have. Their careers have bent and adjusted to the demands of family, children and spouses. In future more women may have linear careers, akin to those of men. However it is likely that many more men will have careers far more like those of women.

Making sense of these fragments requires more investment and thought. Connecting a personal journey – who we are and what we want to be – to the jobs, titles and positions we hold in organisations – is becoming more difficult. When the public side of that equation fragments how does the personal side maintain a sense of coherence, other than through strong personal values and ambitions (a lesson most women learned long ago)?

This sets some of the challenges for an effective careers service: exciting people to want to plan and invest in careers that will be sustained by a powerful ambition for personal growth and learning, social networks and communities of practice, rather than clear external and organisational yardsticks. Good choices will be those that open up further options later in life. An ability to reflect, improvise, discern patterns and order from amidst fragments, will be critical.

A careers service that helps to slot people into organisational positions as they leave schooling is as much an anachronism as the kind of career Wilensky described. The fragmented careers we will have in future will be self-designed but we can become

better designers, with advice, tools, room for experimentation, spaces to share our ideas. Helping people to help one another sustain self-designed careers will be the future task of the careers professional.

### **A modern careers service**

This analysis provides two different but potentially complementary vantage points for viewing the future of a careers service such as Careers Scotland.

The first vantage point is to see Careers Scotland as a modern, high-quality, responsive service provider to compare with other leading service providers in the private and public sector. That means it has to deliver timely, accessible, effective service, consistently and reliably, using a variety of channels and tools to provide self-service, assisted service and in depth help when appropriate. High quality service providers – hotels, banks, airlines – consistently deliver high quality, attentive service, that underpins their brand. High quality service organisations make attention to customer service a mission they pursue with determination and great attention to detail.

Careers Scotland is clearly moving in that direction, through the adoption, integration and development of the Career Planning Journey and the Differentiated Service Delivery Framework, backed with training, staff development, investments in technology and new premises, which allow new contact centres and service offerings.

Clearly Careers Scotland has further to go along this route particularly with the adoption and adaptation of this model by front line staff some of whom may find these models overly complex and rigid. Finding the right balance between transactional, self-help and assisted services is also critical. Better marketing, outreach and easier access would draw in more people to services.

The second vantage point is to see Careers Scotland not as a service but more as a campaigning organisation, with a mission to change the culture of Scotland, to get people thinking about their futures, skills and opportunities more creatively, reflectively and systematically, regardless of whether they use Careers Scotland's services. In this guise Careers Scotland's role would be to spread better career

thinking and planning across Scottish society but not necessarily by providing more services to people. The challenge for this campaigning organisation would be to change how people think and behave – to shape the way they make decisions in their everyday life – rather than directing them to a professional service that would deliver a solution. To use a medical analogy: more over the counter medicines and fewer GP prescriptions. This more distributed, campaigning and preventative approach is already being developed in other public services, including policing, health and social care. It is not blue skies thinking to imagine Careers Scotland adopting elements of this approach: other public services are already well down this road, witness the Scottish Executive's response to the Kerr report on the future of the NHS, which envisages a far more localised community based service with an emphasis on prevention. The crucial measures of success in this model are not Career Scotland's service delivery targets but the extent to which it equips people with better tools and support, often from peers, to make better decisions.

Decisions about careers are being made all the time across Scottish society, in more and less, informed and reflective ways, through conversations with peers, friends, family and acquaintances. As a service organisation Careers Scotland can only directly serve a minority of these decisions. But as a national campaigning organisation it might influence many more people and equip others with tools and support that allow them to make better decisions about their lives. People generally like talking about their lives and plans. Many popular television programmes are about how people can make over their homes, gardens and lives. Of late these have included programmes about work, business and learning: The Apprentice and Faking It among them. Bookshop shelves groan with self-help books about lifestyle and recipes for more effective ways to work. The public sector careers service needs to connect with this constant flow of informal discussions: that means infiltrating into the places they take place and the language they use.

What might that mean concretely? What follows are no more than suggestions which Careers Scotland should explore more systematically.

- (i) A new communications strategy not to promote Careers Scotland as an organisation but to promote career thinking, framing career planning as an aspirational, enjoyable, easy activity with direct pay offs. A national TV programme with career planning at its heart – Making It - would give young people the chance to pursue the career of their choice. Not only would a popular television programme help to frame how decisions are made but by getting people talking it would increase pressure on politicians to give more priority to careers services.
- (ii) A new emphasis on motivation. The first step of the Career Planning Journey – engagement – is the most important and the most difficult. Motivating more people to think more creatively and thoughtfully about their careers is vital. Most effort seems to go into what happens after a client has walked through the door. The big issue for Careers Scotland is how to reach the majority of people who would never think of going near a careers centre. At the moment it seems that most people think about their careers in moments of crisis or frustration. We would want to encourage that thinking to happen more frequently and without the spur of crisis. Peer to peer influences may be critical in this regard as they are in most changes of behaviour: people are more likely to give up smoking or join a campaign if one of their close friends has done so. An alternative would be to develop a Career Miles scheme which rewarded people in some ways for career planning. Teachers at the school in Kent have developed a computer game LitNum, which has won national awards, which teaches literacy and numeracy by children playing a game. Career planning should be fun: people like to think about themselves, possibilities and the future. Yet going to see a career counsellor can seem to be a bit like going to see the Career Doctor.
- (iii) Provide new tools for self-screening and self-assessment. Millions of people now self-assess themselves for tax. Preventative breast screening is nationally available. Could we develop much simpler and enjoyable self-

assessment tools for careers, modelled on quizzes in women's magazines, sudoku puzzles or computer games. One suggestion would be to develop a pack of cards which people could use to visualise their strengths, weaknesses and ambitions.

- (iv) Investing earlier, in schools and nurseries, in the creation of stronger life planning and learning to learn skills. Learning to learn is now a well-established set of practices that encourage people to become more reflective and resilient learners. These are precisely the kinds of skills people need for career planning.
- (v) Recruit and develop more peers and mentors. People already turn to their friends and peers for advice about jobs. As a result advice and ideas about careers often reflect the narrow range of these social networks. Professional careers services exist in part to provide a more open alternative source of advice. A challenge for the future will be how to combine the strengths of peer advice – people turn to their peers and trust information that comes from them – with the strengths of professional advice – open and critical. Careers Scotland should be actively recruiting cadres of peer, who could act as its ambassadors, para-professionals and mentors. One of the first options Careers Scotland should be able to give someone is the opportunity to talk to someone like them, with relevant experience in facing similar issues. It should be matching peers among its client base, not just providing a bilateral service professional to client. All professional services models have inherent limitations: to produce more output you have to employ more professionals. Thus the equation that ore education means more teachers; less crime means more police. This bedevils public services because public sector productivity inevitably lags behind that of the private sector. Online technology, contact centres and resource guides can increase the leverage and reach of professional knowledge. Workforce reform, including mobilising peer-to-peer support is another route. For example, unpaid care will be vital to the future of social care for example. Scotland employs six thousand social workers, in a social care workforce of more than 130,000 care workers, with perhaps 250,000 people involved in unpaid care for relatives. Most social work is not done by qualified social workers. The more we can mobilise well

informed, trained and motivate peers the further the reach of professional knowledge.

These two models – Careers Scotland as a service and Careers Scotland as a campaign - are not mutually exclusive. Careers Scotland cannot be taken seriously as a campaigning organisation if it is not delivering good services. Self-help tools need to be designed with professional knowledge of career planning. A wider campaign to give more prominence to career planning will encourage more people to use Career Scotland's services. A campaigning approach would help to provide the organisation with a larger story and purpose about its role within Scottish society. That would help to motivate staff and so have a knock on effect on services. At the moment going to see a career guidance counsellor might seem to some people like a visit to a career doctor: something you only do when you are ill. We need to make it more like a visit to the gym: something to do to keep fit and may enjoy.

Nevertheless it is also clear that adopting a hybrid mix combining elements of both models poses significant challenges. Career professionals would have to give up some of their “power” to define the problems people face and the solutions. The discussions within Careers Scotland about the relationship between the CPJ and the DSD model are extremely arcane. There seems to be a danger of professionals over complicating issues that most people would regard as common sense. The language Careers Scotland uses to describe its approach does not connect well with the way that clients think about the issues facing them. There is a huge danger of professionals talking to one another in a language only they understand to define clients' problems in ways that are unintelligible to many. In a campaigning approach professionals would have to work and through a much larger body of non-professionals, as is common in social care. A campaigning organisation would need a new mix of skills in communications, marketing and public engagement. Careers guidance professionals do not necessarily have the skills needed to reach a mass audience. Careers Scotland would have to operate through partnership with other organisations – not just schools, GPs and community groups, but retailers, pubs, clubs and media organisations. That would require it to take a more relaxed approach to the use of its brand. Indeed its goals will sometime be best served by not talking about careers at all.

Sceptics will point to two different kinds of risk with this approach. The first is that Careers Scotland could dissipate its sense of purpose and fritter its sense of identity as a professional service organisation. A campaigning approach might generate lots of activity but sceptics question whether it will produce measurable results. A service is at least quantifiable: numbers of clients seen, advice given, forms filled out. However these are all measures of output not outcomes. Careers Scotland should be measured against outcomes and experiment with different ways of reaching these outcomes. A second quite different risk highlighted by some is that a campaign might prove too successful and as a result the careers service might be overwhelmed by demand. That would be a good problem for a careers service to have and it could be avoided by developing as part of the campaigning approach self help tools and systems of peer mentoring. Neither of these risks is unmanageable.

Let me end with two analogies that might help to position where Careers Scotland finds itself. The first is from gardening. When Careers Scotland was created from an assemblage of 80 careers service providers it was like inheriting an unruly, overgrown garden. The adoption of service models such as CPJ and DSD has brought some order to the garden: a path has been laid, vegetables are in neat rows, a greenhouse, flower beds and a lawn. No gardener would underestimate what has been achieved. However it transpires the neat walled garden exists in a vast landscape, some of it highly fertile, other parts barren. The gardener cannot and should not hope to tame the wilderness. That would be a ridiculous ambition. However it might be possible to bring more order to it, to make it more habitable in part, easier to navigate and safer. Careers Scotland understandably has been mainly concerned with tidying up its garden but it time it needs to venture into the wilderness beyond.

The second is the cautionary tale of public libraries. Public libraries are venerable institutions that in their day were vital shared resources especially for the working class. However in the last 15 years libraries in the UK have seen visitor numbers fall dramatically and book issues fall further. Yet more people than ever are reading, thanks in part to cheaper books available from Border, Tesco and Amazon. In the last five years libraries have been further disrupted by the rise of online sources of information, advice, navigation and support from the likes of Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia and Google. The library used to operate in a fairly controlled and

orderly chain of scholarly production of research, writing, review, publication, criticism and storage. The library was a vital outlet for this scholarly supply chain. The Internet has disorganised all of that: information, ideas and publications are coming from many more sources and being distributed through many more channels. Many libraries now find themselves in the wrong places, open at the wrong times, with the wrong staff, skills, services and buildings to attract new users. Recruitment into librarianship is plummeting, especially into public libraries and the average age of managers of public libraries is rising. The more marginal libraries seem to become the more difficult it is for them to attract investment. They will not disappear, but they are likely to continue to decline and wither. The public careers service is not immune to some of the forces which have so disabled libraries. It cannot afford to be timid or complacent about its future.