



## Brigette Shutkowski



My worklife as a Career Consultant began whilst working as an Occupational Therapist – combining career planning with the rehabilitation work I was doing with clients with mental health issues whose key task was really about navigating the transition from being ‘unwell’ back to career, work and life.

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Through this work I realized that I had in fact stumbled across what would in fact be my most comfortable niche. Nice piece of happenstance! Occupational Therapists have a natural affinity with individuals’ narratives and journeys – so it was a perfect fit.

Since 2004 I have worked with the Careers New Zealand team in Auckland, involved with service deliveries and client work. Although I have a key team I work with, I also work across teams and across the country. My current work portfolio is diverse.

- ◆ direct work with clients: face to face, phone and web technology, group workshops.
- ◆ supporting our career guidance team to ensure the provision of high calibre and appropriately focused services to our target communities.
- ◆ mentoring new staff as they develop their career practitioner roles.
- ◆ career education – working in a project team to devise frameworks and resources for working with year 7 & 8 schools; in the secondary school arena – working with chosen schools to provide intensive support as they review their career education programmes.
- ◆ having input into resources that will sit on our website, through providing a career consultant perspective.
- ◆ project management – leading a team developing online career mentoring to those in career influencer roles.

Technology and project work have had a huge impact on my career practice. I have been privileged to be part of the thinking and teams who have stepped outside of and beyond the traditional delivery of career guidance/development to increase accessibility and deliver to a broad range of clients. The range of resources and greater breadth align with two beliefs close to my heart. First, I embrace my previous manager’s notion that people need a menu of options to choose from – there is no ‘one size / approach fits all.’ Second, being a change or shift agent is a great thing, and alongside this is the need to hand over and demystify the magic of what we do – to equip people to replicate this magic for themselves, and in the future without my help.

For the past few years I have worked in some very innovative and frankly cool teams to develop some exceptional packages and resources and increase accessibility and availability for anyone seeking guidance on their career path. Working on the Phone Guidance team – provided a personal challenge of going back to basics with the basics! – learning to connect with clients effectively from a distance. I refined my micro counselling and guidance skills – especially the ability to really listen and to summarise and I received extremely positive

feedback on this work. I discovered that you don't have to be sitting face to face with another human being to connect well and achieve some amazing work.

Webchat Guidance and extending the use of our web technology has been another fantastic voyage. Collaborating with like-minded, adventurous colleagues we dared to step into a new space and create something innovative and client centred online.

When we first went online, we did not know if the people would come and even if they did whether would they find value and want to engage. The short answer was yes!! The evidence speaks for itself. Social media is gaining momentum and becoming imbedded in business as usual, throwing up intriguing challenges and opportunities. An open mind and a sense of possibility have helped me jump into this space. Feedback indicates that our counselling and guidance skills and knowledge are right up there and being used in a refined, adapted, meaningful way, linking them with technology that allows clients to reflect and get direct visual feedback on their process both at the time and on completion. The typed webchat exchange is recorded, which is useful to the client to review and also for our organisation to ensure high calibre quality standards.

I also work with career influencers. I help others to help others with their career development, in a work or family context. The other day I gave a brief presentation to a group of 65-94 year olds about career conversations. This age group has an important role to play in guiding the upcoming generations. They picked up some simple ways to initiate career conversations with their grand and great grandchildren and show their interest.

There is enormous passion and energy in the voluntary sector to give back to the community. Another aspect of my current role is to train and support volunteers like the women at Dress for Success to use and develop their skills as career mentors.

Working in careers presents both challenges and opportunities in the current environment. So it is essential to work collaboratively and be open and willing to take a chance on new possibilities, engaging in a new way without abandoning knowledge and core skills.