

Mental Nutrition®

Thinking flexibly. Speaking confidently.

Report of the 2008 e-Career Awards

Promoting career
information excellence on
organisations' websites

Research and report by
Dr Ann Villiers,
Mental Nutritionist®

www.mentalnutrition.com

www.selectioncriteria.com.au

Copyright *Mental Nutrition*® 2009

This report can be shared in its entirety, unchanged.

This report may be quoted with the following acknowledgment:

Source: *Report of the 2008 e-Career Awards*, Dr Ann Villiers, *Mental Nutritionist*®, www.selectioncriteria.com.au

Disclaimer

The material contained in this report is general in nature and is not intended as advice on any particular matter. The author expressly disclaims all and any liability of any persons whatsoever in respect of anything done by any person in reliance, whether in whole or in part, on this report.

Dr Ann Villiers, *Mental Nutritionist*®

Dr Ann Villiers, learning guide, professional speaker and career management coach, is Australia's only *Mental Nutritionist*® specialising in sense-making mind and language practices that help people build flexible thinking, confident speaking and quality connections.

Ann has studied sense-making for more than twenty years, drawing on careers as a senior public service manager, educator and business woman. Author of *How to Write and Talk to Selection Criteria*, (4th edn.), *101 Interview Questions* and numerous articles on www.selectioncriteria.com.au, Ann fosters quality applications, professional attraction, selection and retention processes and productive career management.

Note to agencies

Agencies included in this report may request a summary report which gives the overall rating (Gold, Silver, Bronze) and assessment observations. To request a report contact Dr Villiers on 02 6254 5023 or email avilliers@mentalfnutrition.com.

Agencies not included in this report may request an analysis of their Career Website.

If you would like Dr Villiers to make a presentation based on this report, please contact her on 02 6254 5023 or email avilliers@mentalfnutrition.com.

Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	4
Why e-Career Awards?	6
Methodology	9
How easy is it to locate Career Information?	11
One-stop-shop for Career Information	12
Job vacancy information	15
Access to corporate information and branding	18
Information clarity and accessibility	20
Final comments	21
Attachments	
A: Career Website assessment criteria	23
B: List of Career Websites examined for this research	24
C: Services available from Dr Villiers	26
End notes	28

Executive Summary

In the arena of career development, and specifically career management and job opportunities, Australian organisations face significant issues. We are repeatedly told that:

- there is a skills shortage.
- younger employees are attracted to organisations that offer career and professional development opportunities.
- applicants continue to find applying for public service jobs arduous and confusing.
- more effort needs to be put into attraction strategies.
- people will likely have a portfolio career.

This study examines government agency Career Websites to assess to what extent information is being provided about careers. The term 'Career Website' is used in this report to refer to the section of a website that provides information about career and job opportunities. The term Career Information is used throughout, including where the actual information is about job vacancies.

The focus of this report is on government Career Websites in two jurisdictions – the Commonwealth and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Three job websites were also examined to determine if they provide models of good practice:

Defence Jobs
APS Jobs
Jobs ACT.

A total of forty-four Career Websites was assessed using criteria related to five areas:

- Home page identification
- Career information
- Job vacancy information
- Corporate information
- Clarity and access.

Based on these criteria and a rating scale, Career Websites were judged as Gold, Silver or Bronze.

The results of the assessment are set out in Table 1. Four agencies - all Commonwealth agencies - received a Gold rating for their Career Website:

Australian Federal Police (AFP)
Australian Customs Service (Customs)
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Overall, 50 per cent of all agencies' Career Websites surveyed were rated as Bronze. Most Commonwealth departments were rated at the Bronze level. ACT departments were split

between Silver and Bronze. Nearly 50 per cent of Commonwealth agencies received a Silver rating.

Table 1: Career Website ratings

	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Commonwealth Departments	0	5	12
Commonwealth Agencies	4	9	6
ACT Government Departments	0	4	4
Total: 44	4	18	22

This research has established what makes a quality Career Website. Quality Career Websites:

- Take a one-stop-shop approach.
- Make it easy to locate career information, corporate documents, and essential job vacancy details.
- Have multiple navigation paths to information.
- Provide information in diverse formats – written, audio, video.
- Provide information about career paths.
- Help applicants to understand selection processes and prepare a quality application.
- Provide self-assessment tools.
- Provide readily identifiable contact points.
- Provide information about working conditions, benefits and professional development.
- Provide comprehensive, informative job vacancy specifications.
- Write in a friendly, courteous manner.
- Set information out logically, with limited layers of information.
- Use branding and explain how staff will contribute and make a difference.
- Cater for the needs of specific groups of applicants, including people with disability.
- Use search engines that deliver key documents.

Based on this research a set of questions is provided to assist with reviewing a Career Website so that agencies can identify where improvements can be made.

The aim of these Awards is to promote Career Information excellence. If this report stimulates thinking and discussion, and if it results in agencies improving the quality of career information, then the research will have done its job.

Why e-Career Awards?

Various aspects of government activity are subject to award processes, such as:

Annual Reports

e-Government.

Such awards draw attention to good/best practice, quality effort, worthy results.

In the arena of career development, specifically career management and job opportunities, Australian organisations face significant issues. We are repeatedly told that:

- there is a skills shortage.
- younger employees are attracted to organisations that offer career and professional development opportunities.
- applicants continue to find applying for public service jobs arduous and confusing.
- more effort needs to be put into attraction strategies.
- people will likely have a portfolio career.

How organisations make sense of themselves to job applicants makes a difference as to whether applicants apply. If the process is too complicated or doesn't make sense, if there is little indication of career paths, if it's too hard to find essential information, then people simply won't bother.

The ANAO Performance Audit Report No 31, *Management of Recruitment in the Australian Public Service* notes that agencies need to be more creative and innovative in their attraction and recruitment strategies.ⁱ Websites are one avenue applicants use to learn about an agency and job opportunities. The main question addressed in this research report is: How effectively are agencies using their websites to inform and attract applicants?

The APSC *State of the Service 2007-08* Employee Survey identified a range of attributes that attracted employees to their current job. The top three attraction attributes APS-wide were job security, interests/experience matching the responsibilities of the job or the business of the agency, and geographical location.ⁱⁱ Also included in the top attributes were:

- Ability to contribute to making a difference (63% rating it as important)
- Future career opportunities in the agency (63% rated it as important).ⁱⁱⁱ

Mention is also made that those under 25 rate future career opportunities and developmental/educational opportunities in the top three attraction attributes.^{iv} Based on these reports we might expect agencies to use their Career Websites to:

- Highlight how staff can contribute to making a difference.
- Describe career opportunities and pathways.
- Outline developmental and educational opportunities.

- Assist applicants to prepare quality applications for specific jobs.

‘Job’ and ‘Career’ are terms that are used with distinct meanings in this report. The term ‘job’ is used here to refer to a paid position requiring a group of specific attributes and skills that enable a person to perform tasks in an organisation.

A ‘career’ is a broader concept. The National Steering Committee for Career Development defined career this way:

“A lifestyle concept that involves the sequence of work, learning and leisure activities in which one engages throughout a lifetime. Careers are unique to each person and are dynamic: unfolding throughout life. Careers include how persons balance their paid and unpaid work and personal life roles.”^v

Part of that sequence of work is the progression people make within and between organisations. In this report, the term ‘career’ is primarily used in this sense as it relates to a career in a public service. A career path can include promotions, movement between jobs, sections, subject areas, occupations and agencies, and a range of professional development.

Public services promote the concept of a career public servant. To what extent is this reflected in Career Websites? Increasingly people of all ages are encouraged to manage their careers. Organisations that assist in this process are likely to be more attractive to applicants of all ages.

This study examines government agency Career Websites to assess to what extent information is being provided about careers. The term ‘Career Website’ is used in this report to refer to the section of a website that provides information about career and job opportunities. The term Career Information is used throughout, including where the actual information is about job vacancies.

The focus of this report is on government Career Websites in two jurisdictions – the Commonwealth and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Comparison with what other organisations practice is helpful in identifying the scope for providing quality Career Information. Some companies invest considerable effort and creativity in the careers section of their websites. Examples are:

Flight Centre <http://au.flightcentre.jobs/>

A one-stop-shop career centre covering:

- Why work at Flight Centre
- Who we are
- Career opportunities covering what we look for, and the recruitment process
- News and events
- A day in the life of a travel consultant
- Photographs and a corporate video.

National Australia Bank

http://www.nab.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/nab/nab/home/about_us/1/

This career centre includes a job search facility and career path facility that drills down into particular occupations. For example 'Marketing' gives comments from staff and identifies marketing roles and current opportunities.

AMP Career Centre

<http://www.amp.com.au/vgn-ext-templating/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=48cdf2c98c04d110VgnVCM1000002930410aRCRD>

This career centre provides a one-stop-shop with company profile, information about work and people, and includes video staff profiles.

These examples indicate how creative and informative a Career Website can be in providing useful, friendly, accessible information using a range of formats.

Two other examples that provide quality Career Information are Ace Day Jobs, (<http://www.abc.net.au/acedayjobs/>) offered by the ABC and the ANU's SkillSoup Podcasts (<https://academicskills.anu.edu.au/podcasts.php>). While SkillSoup caters primarily for students, it illustrates the variety of useful information that can be captured in short interviews.

This research set out to establish if government Career Websites are equally creative and informative. Increasingly government agencies are recognising the possibilities of using web 2.0 technologies. A seminar held by the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) in December 2008 introduced government web managers and IT professionals to these technologies and highlighted some uses. (<http://www.finance.gov.au/e-government/better-practice-and-collaboration/events/2008/web2ingovernment.html>)

While it's not essential for Career Websites to use these technologies, the contrast between those that do and those that don't is becoming increasingly obvious. It's time for HR professionals and any people involved in Career Website planning and development to become familiar with the options available to them.

The aim of these Awards is to promote Career Information excellence. If this report stimulates thinking and discussion, and if it results in agencies improving the quality of career information, then the research will have done its job.

Methodology

The e-Career Awards focus on Commonwealth and ACT government Career Websites. Websites included in the survey were all Commonwealth government portfolio departments, all ACT government departments, and eighteen Commonwealth government agencies.

A total of forty-four Career Websites was assessed using criteria related to five areas:

- Home page identification
- Career information
- Job vacancy information
- Corporate information
- Clarity and access.

Details of these criteria are given in Attachment A.

A scale 0-4 was used for each of the criteria.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 0 | Means there is very little or nothing to match this criterion |
| 1 | Means there is some minor coverage of this criterion |
| 2 | Means this criterion is mostly covered |
| 3 | Means there is full, comprehensive, high quality coverage of this criterion |

Based on these criteria and the rating scale, Career Websites were judged as follows:

- | | |
|--------|-------------------------------|
| Gold | Means a score of 13 - 15 |
| Silver | Means a score of 9 - 12 |
| Bronze | Means a score of less than 9. |

Three job websites were also examined to determine if they provided models of good practice:

- Defence Jobs
- APS Jobs
- Jobs ACT

The results of the assessment are set out in Table 1. Four agencies - all Commonwealth agencies - received a Gold rating for their Career Website:

- Australian Federal Police (AFP)
- Australian Customs Service (Customs)
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

This may, in part, reflect the specialised nature of the agencies, making it easier to provide Career Information. The specialised nature of the work may also mean recruiting quality applicants is particularly critical to business outcomes.

Overall, 50 per cent of all agencies' Career Websites surveyed were rated as Bronze. Most Commonwealth departments were rated at the Bronze level. ACT departments were split between Silver and Bronze. Nearly 50 per cent of Commonwealth agencies received a Silver rating.

Table 1: Career Website ratings

	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Commonwealth Departments	0	5	12
Commonwealth Agencies	4	9	6
ACT Government Departments	0	4	4
Total: 44	4	18	22

Analysis of the five areas identifies what separates quality Career Websites from those that are uninformative, difficult to navigate, unfriendly.

Quality Career Websites:

- Take a one-stop-shop approach.
- Make it easy to locate career information, corporate documents, and essential job vacancy details.
- Have multiple navigation paths to information.
- Provide information in diverse formats – written, audio, video.
- Provide information about career paths.
- Help applicants to understand selection processes and prepare a quality application.
- Provide self-assessment tools.
- Provide readily identifiable contact points.
- Provide information about working conditions, benefits and professional development.
- Provide comprehensive, informative job vacancy specifications.
- Write in a friendly, courteous manner.
- Set information out logically, with limited layers of information.
- Use branding and explain how staff will contribute and make a difference.
- Cater for the needs of specific groups of applicants, including people with disability.
- Use search engines that deliver key documents.

How easy is it to locate Career Information?

In examining the home page two considerations were examined:

- How easy is it to locate career or job information; and
- What is the link called.

All except a few agencies had a direct link to Career Information on their home page. The link was generally easily located in menus, either horizontal at the top of the home page or listed in a vertical menu to the right or left of the home page.

A range of titles was used to indicate Career Information. The most common titles were:

- Careers
- Employment
- Recruitment
- Jobs
- Job opportunities.

While the heading 'Careers' is used by nearly one quarter of the agencies surveyed, the information provided under this link was not always consistent with the heading. Lack of heading consistency also applies to other titles. For example, the heading Recruitment could link to a page headed Employment Opportunities, or the heading Jobs could link to a page headed Careers. Many Career Websites linked mainly, or only, to current job vacancies.

Suggestions for improvement

- Ensure that the Career section is clear and easily located on the home page.
- Use 'Careers' as a heading, but only if the support information is about careers.
- Check that headings and link names are consistent.

One-stop-shop for Career Information

The section of the Career Website devoted to Career Information was assessed to determine:

- How comprehensive the information is.
- Whether links are made to broader public service careers.
- Whether specific groups are targeted.
- Whether some effort is made to inspire a sense of making a contribution or difference.

Agency Career Information

Three agencies in the survey provide comprehensive, one-stop-shop Career Information – AFP, Australian Customs Service and CSIRO. ABS provides broad information but it is distributed across two parts of the website – Careers and the section for students under Education.

What distinguishes the AFP, Customs and CSIRO sites is that they take a broad view of what information is relevant to potential applicants. They cover information about career paths, professional development, organisational culture, staff profiles, corporate information, recruitment and selection processes. They are one-stop-shops, with multiple navigation paths, for people seeking to understand these organisations and the jobs they offer, as well as the work that staff actually do.

An advantage these agencies have is that most staff perform specific roles and are drawn from particular disciplines and skill sets.

DFAT provides an overview of careers, with broad information about what generalists, generalists overseas, and specialists do.

Some agencies target specific occupations within their Career Information. For example, the ACT Department of Education provides detailed information for teachers. Agencies that recruit specific professionals, such as ambulance and fire brigade professionals, could consider offering similar levels of detailed information.

Several agencies provide information for specific professionals. Examples are:

IP Australia – patent examiners

Centrelink – Social worker and Psychologist

CSA – Customer Service Officer positions

ACT Health – various health professionals

Career Websites were examined to see whether they were using more than written text to inform and attract applicants. At a minimum, this means using audio or video to profile staff. While 50 per cent of the websites surveyed provided written profiles of staff, all but four were about graduates. CSIRO provides some video material as well as written

profiles of staff. AFP and Customs profile staff and provide 'day in the life' snapshots. IP Australia offers profiles of patent examiners, and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry offers profiles of trainees.

Little use is made of written staff profiles by ACT Career Websites.

A job website that does use technology effectively is Defence Jobs. While this may be partly a resource issue, using audio and video profiles does not have to be hugely expensive. Hearing and seeing staff talk enthusiastically about what they do is far more engaging than reading a carefully edited written text. These formats also cater for people with disability and who have diverse information processing preferences.

Public service Career Information

Both the Australian and ACT Public Service promote the concept of a career public service. Career Websites were examined to see if they support and promote this concept.

The slogan 'One APS career ...thousands of opportunities' is used on all Commonwealth government newspaper job advertisements. Few agencies use the slogan on their Career Websites. No agency provides information about what a career in the APS could mean and involve. Where Career Information is provided, it is specific to the agency.

The ACT slogan is 'Great careers come with the Territory'. Jobs ACT refers to a range of jobs that are available, provides short testimonial quotes from public servants, an application checklist and browse facilities by all jobs, agency and category. ACT departmental Career Websites do not use this slogan.

We might expect public service job websites to provide information about career paths. While some reference is made to categories of jobs, and job search facilities are provided, neither APS Jobs nor Jobs ACT provides information about what public service career paths mean or look like.

Defence Jobs uses the slogan 'Imagine what you could do in a whole career' and backs this up with comprehensive career information, along with training, application requirements, search facilities and individual profiles.

The APSC's *State of the Service Report 2007-08* gives broad types of work performed in the APS.^{vi} These are:

- Policy
- Research
- Program design and/or management
- Service delivery to the general public
- Exercising regulatory authority
- Legal
- Corporate services
- Administrative support/clerical

This structure could form the basis of an extended coverage of what working in the public service is about.

Specific target groups

Career Websites were examined to identify what specific target groups were catered for. This information varied across the sample, with some agencies providing information for Indigenous applicants, women, trainees, and work experience applicants.

What is clear from the survey is that agencies devote considerable resources to specific recruitment campaigns, primarily graduate programs. Graduate programs are often given full branding, with detailed information about selection processes, professional development, career opportunities, and advice about living in Canberra.

The ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services makes a similar effort for overseas recruiting of care and protection service workers. Jobs ACT gives some focus to enticing Commonwealth public servants to the ACT public service, as well as attracting interstate applicants through the Live in Canberra campaign.

Given potential staff, particularly from outside the public service^{vii}, may be moving to Canberra, interested in professional development, organisational culture, and career opportunities, it is curious that the same effort that is devoted to graduates isn't given to general applicants.

Making a difference

One of the top ten attractors for APS staff is the ability to 'make a difference'. Some agencies suggest that this opportunity is available to applicants in job advertisements, but don't follow through on Career Websites.

Some agencies do refer to 'making a difference' on the websites. Examples are:

- IP Australia: 'Join IP Australia and help shape the future'.
- DFAT: 'Make a world of difference'
- ACT Health: 'Make a difference – join ACT health'
- Jobs ACT: 'Would you like to make a real difference in your community?'

These by-lines are not fully explained to help a potential applicant understand how they would make a difference and to what. Audio and video profile interviews with staff talking enthusiastically about how they make a difference would help make this clearer.

Suggestions for improvement

- If a Careers link is used on the home page ensure that the linked page is consistently headed.
- Provide comprehensive career information so that it is a one-stop-shop for applicants.
- Provide as much information for general applicants as is provided for graduates.
- Provide broader public service Career Information and link to it.
- Diversify staff profiles by using audio and video interviews.

Job vacancy information

This section examines the range of information provided to assist applicants when they are applying for specific jobs. In particular these matters were examined:

- How informative job descriptions are.
- How much information is provided about recruitment and selection processes.
- What information is provided to assist applicants with their application.
- What information is provided about working conditions and benefits.
- Is there evidence that agencies cater for the needs of applicants with disability.

Job descriptions and selection processes

Information provided on Career Websites about jobs and selection processes ranges from the minimal to the comprehensive.

Job descriptions are critical documents for applicants, providing some sense of the context of a job vacancy, the responsibilities and the work-related qualities sought. Local government is a jurisdiction that often provides detailed job specifications to applicants. These job profiles include supervisory responsibilities, delegations, management of expenditure, and key internal and external contacts. Few Commonwealth agencies provide detailed job descriptions that include context, roles, responsibilities, reporting and stakeholder relationships, and selection criteria. Many continue to provide minimal information, in some cases as little as a list of duties and a list of criteria, with no context information.

Many Commonwealth agencies now use the Integrated Leadership System (ILS) or an in-house version as their selection criteria. Some agencies have developed complex Capability Frameworks. Where this is the case, few agencies provide background information or links to the ILS. Where a copy of the Capability Framework is provided, it may be difficult for the non-informed applicant to interpret both how the framework applies and what it means for preparing an application.

ACT departments provide a mixture of job specifications, ranging from minimal to more informative. The Department of Justice and Community Safety provides a useful layout to their job descriptions that offers clear details about the Department, agency, section, organisation chart, duties, competencies and selection criteria.

Material explaining selection processes also varies in detail. Agencies providing quality information often include it in Applicant Information Kits.

Applicant assistance and working conditions

Another type of information that is useful to applicants is suggestions on how to prepare an application. Again, the offerings range from the minimal to the informative. Many agencies provide an Applicant's Kit which welcomes a person's interest and steps the reader through all the phases of the selection process and offers tips on preparing an application. Examples of more informative applicant advice are provided by Australian Customs Service, Medicare Australia, IP Australia, CSA, ACTPLA, TAMS, DET.

Some variation now exists in how agencies want applicants to present their application. Where the process differs from 'standard practice' there is a need to ensure that the information provided to applicants is clear and makes sense.

Given that 'outsiders' have difficulty understanding public service selection processes and public servants perceive the process as complicated, it is in agencies' interests to provide this information.

Several Commonwealth agencies give links to resources that can help applicants. These resources, produced by the APSC, include:

Cracking the Code <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications07/crackingthecode.htm>

Getting a Job in the APS
<http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous/gettingajob.htm>

Not just a job
<http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous/gettingajob.htm>

Customs has produced their own publication *Careers Without Borders, Job Opportunities for Indigenous Australians*.

Where Commonwealth agencies have chosen not to give fulsome advice to applicants, providing links to these documents would be a helpful option.

ACT departments tend to link to Jobs ACT to access job information for applicants.

Most agencies provided information about working conditions and benefits. Most provided a link to Certified Agreements or similar documents, although in some cases this information was buried several layers into the Career Website.

Applicants with disability

Public services are required to have workplace diversity programs and to cater for the needs of people with disability. This survey noted whether agencies made their diversity/disability strategy or policy readily available and what steps they highlighted to cater for applicants with disability.

The APSC's *State of the Service Report 2007-08* includes comments about whether Commonwealth agencies have a workplace diversity program in place. It was found that: "While more than three-quarters of agencies said they had a workplace diversity programme in place, nearly one-fifth of agencies said their programme was still being developed and 4% of agencies did not have one at all."^{viii} This survey found that few Commonwealth agencies included their diversity policy in a readily accessible place on the Career Website.

Few agencies made special mention of catering for applicants with disability. Some included a short section about catering for diversity. None made clear whether information was available in other formats.

The APSC noted that the long-term decline in employment of people with disability in the APS continued in 2007-08 and noted: “It is clear that considerably more work needs to be done by agencies to boost the representation of people with disability in the APS which continues to lag behind their representation in the community.”^{xix} Providing more information, and in other formats, for applicants with disability, would not only help potential applicants, but also show more serious intent about catering for special needs and encouraging applications.

The ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services places considerable emphasis on recruiting people with disability. Their Career Website provides a link to the document *Employment Framework Toolkit for People with Disability* to provide information about the selection process both for applicants and managers. While the Chief Minister’s Department publishes frameworks on employment for people with disability and equity and diversity, links to these documents are not included on ACT Career Websites.

Suggestions for improvement

- Review job descriptions to ensure that the full context is provided.
- Review information about selection processes to ensure that it is friendly, helpful, comprehensive.
- Review information provided to support applicants in preparing their application.
- Include links to APSC publications designed to help applicants.
- Expand the information provided to encourage applications from people with disability.
- Include multiple navigation paths to information.
- Provide more information about the ILS and Capability Frameworks and how they are to be applied in the context of an application.
- Check that links are provided to relevant documents, such as lists of benefits, Certified Agreements, details of working conditions.

Access to corporate information and branding

This section examines how accessible corporate information is to the potential applicant. Specifically it looks at how easy it is to locate documents relevant to an applicant, such as strategic documents, annual reports, organisational structure, specific policy documents.

This section also considers the extent to which agencies express branding or an employee value proposition.

Corporate information

While most websites included corporate documents somewhere, (usually under ‘About us’) only a few included direct links to them from the Career Website.

A few Career Websites gave direct links to relevant policy documents concerning diversity and OH&S. In many cases though, these documents were not even listed under ‘About Us’, nor did a search identify them.

The savvy internal applicant would likely have access to these documents, putting an external applicant at a disadvantage. If applicants have to spend time searching for key documents they may well decide the effort of preparing a fully informed application is just not worth the effort.

Agency names can raise challenges for the external applicant unfamiliar with the public service. Some Commonwealth departments with long names have simplified how they identify themselves. For example, the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research is www.innovation.gov.au, the Department of Energy, Resources and Tourism is www.resources.gov.au, and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government is www.infrastructure.gov.au.

In contrast, the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy is www.dbcde.gov.au and in its Career information refers to itself as DBCDE.

What DBCDE does do that differs from other agencies, is provide corporate information via YouTube. (<http://au.youtube.com/user/AusGovDBCDE>)

Branding

The ANAO in its performance audit, *Management of recruitment in the Australian Public Service*, identified three distinct challenges for agencies, two of which are relevant to this report:

- Implementing more strategic approaches to attraction and branding.
- Improving the quality of recruitment processes.^x

The ANAO recommended that agencies develop branding material that promoted the attributes of the agency. The APSC found that: “Several agencies reported having developed ‘employment value propositions’ or branding strategies to better market the distinctive and competitive aspects of their agencies to prospective employees, consistent with the recommendations of ANAO’s recruitment audit report.”^{xi}

In this survey Career Websites were examined for evidence of a branding position. This could take the form of using the APS brand (One APS career ... thousands of opportunities) or specific agency brand. As mentioned earlier few Commonwealth agencies are using the APS branding, and fewer still have their own branding for attracting, recruiting and selecting staff.

The ACT public service brands its newspaper advertisements and Jobs ACT web site with the slogan 'Great careers come with the Territory'. Individual departments do not make reference to this branding.

Only one agency identified an Employment Value Proposition – Comcare.

(http://www.comcare.gov.au/careers/what_we_offer)

This suite of benefits is listed under 'What we offer' and is also used in newspaper job advertisements. This suite includes Career Pathways and reference is made to a Career Framework. This benefit could be extended by giving more information about the Framework and the key roles people fill at Comcare.

Some agencies use a slogan, such as:

IP Australia: A Career with IP Australia, Nurturing brilliant ideas and careers

DAFF: Grow your career here.

The use of these slogans and logos could be extended into a full branding by applying the slogan to all pages and using text to explain the message. For example, DAFF could provide material that demonstrates how staff do grow their careers, via professional development, and providing examples of career paths.

Noted from this research is what newly created Commonwealth agencies are doing with their Career Websites. Two agencies fall into this category, having been created after the 2007 election. It might be expected that these agencies would have informative, attractive branding to entice applicants. Both Career Websites were rated Bronze.

Also noted from this research is that those Commonwealth and ACT agencies with public service oversight and employment policy responsibilities all have Bronze-rated Career Websites.

Suggestions for improvement

- Provide a section on the Career Website dedicated to links to key corporate documents.
- Check that website search engines deliver key corporate documents.
- Examine branding statements and logos in use and check for consistency and breadth of usage.
- Check branding has been fully exploited in terms of explaining what it means for applicants.

Information clarity and accessibility

In terms of how easy it is to find information, how well it is written and whether it is easy to identify contact points, the following observations are made:

- A few agencies' Career Websites had many layers of information so that it was difficult to quickly find information.
- A few lacked logic in the structure of information.
- Few had multiple cross links and navigation paths. Quality Career Websites had multiple menus.

Some agencies had clearly made an effort to make their information friendly and helpful. Even minor details, such as starting an Applicant's Kit with "Thank you for your interest in working at ..." affects the whole tone of the information.

In general, documents tended to be jargon filled and formal in tone.

While all websites provided a separate Contact Us link, only some included specific contact points for applicants. The quality sites included on all Career pages a contact point, and where appropriate, a specific contact point, such as for graduate recruitment. This makes it easy for the interested applicant to contact an agency.

Suggestions for improvement

- Write text in plain English, minimising or explaining jargon.
- Write in a friendly, encouraging tone.
- Limit the number of layers of information.
- Provide multiple navigation paths to information.
- Check the information structure's logic.
- Include contact details on all pages.

Final comments

This research establishes that government Career Websites are, in general, neither greatly informative nor especially creative. A few provide models of excellence in Career Information and in using a Career Website as part of an attraction strategy. Most would benefit from focused, strategic, development attention.

During the course of this research ANAO Audit Report No 13 2008-09 *Performance Audit: Government Agencies' Management of their websites* was published.

The ANAO report concerns the management of whole websites. *The e-Career Awards Report* concerns one small segment of a website, namely, Career Information.

The ANAO report gives attention to website management, and specifically whether agencies have a clearly stated purpose for their websites, what planning is done and whether website performance is measured. The ANAO recommends (No. 1) that “agencies develop a clearly stated purpose for each of their websites that aligns with the agency’s business goals and periodically review whether they have achieved the purpose.”^{xii}

A question for this report is whether agencies have a stated purpose for their Career Website, given that the target market for this section is different from the rest of the website. Potential job applicants are a key client group for agencies. Many agencies make comments to the effect that ‘staff are our most valued asset’ yet websites do not reflect this attitude towards potential staff.

Examples of purpose statements for a Career Website could be:

- To make it easy for potential applicants to find the information they need to prepare a quality application.
- To attract potential applicants to the organisation.
- To be perceived as an organisation that provides career paths for staff and where staff can make a difference.

The purpose or purposes would be aligned with the agency’s HR and business strategies. It would assist in making decisions on how the site is to be used and what content is placed on the Career Website.

A stated purpose would also assist with monitoring and evaluating website performance. Specific measures are needed to determine how the Career Website is contributing to performance. While it may not be possible to determine a direct causal relationship between the Career Website and broader HR and business goals and objectives, it should be possible to build a picture of whether a combination of coordinated strategies is contributing to attraction, recruitment and retention outcomes.

Based on this research a set of questions is provided to assist with reviewing a Career Website:

- What are our business objectives?
- What are our HR objectives?

- What is the purpose of our Career Website?
- How does that purpose fit with HR and business objectives?
- What is our brand?
- What is our Employee Value Proposition?
- Are these clearly explained?
- Are these used consistently in our attraction and recruitment processes?
- Are we providing information about career paths?
- Are we providing as much information to general applicants as we are to graduates?
- Are we encouraging a public service-wide career perspective?
- How can we use web 2.0 technologies as part of our attraction strategy?
- Have we provided staff profiles in multiple formats – written, audio and video?
- How informative are our job specifications?
- How informative is our Applicant's Information Kit?
- How well explained is our selection process?
- How can we better cater for people with disability?
- Is the information on our Career Website logically set out?
- Are links to corporate documents included?
- Are there multiple navigation paths to information?
- Are contact details provided on each page?
- Should we include a FAQ section?
- Is enough information provided about professional development?
- If we encourage people to think they will make a difference, how well have we explained this?
- What other documents and publications could we link to in order to help applicants?

Attachments

Attachment A: Career Website assessment criteria

Criterion	Questions to consider
1. Home page	How easy and fast is it to locate the career/jobs information?
	How is it labelled? (jobs, employment, careers)
2. Career page and information	How broad or narrow is this section?
	Is it a one-stop-shop for information?
	Is it visually attractive?
	Is there information about career paths?
	Is there information about professional development?
	Is there information about the culture of the organisation?
	Is there information about the roles staff play?
	Are there staff profiles – written, audio, video?
	Is there career information for specific groups?
	Are there links to broader public service career information?
	Does the site inspire a sense of being able to make a difference?
	3. Job vacancy information
Are position details comprehensive? (responsibilities, key relationships, key result areas, selection criteria, etc)	
Is the selection process explained in an informative and helpful manner?	
Are there recruitment processes for specific groups?	
Is information provided about working conditions and benefits?	
Are people with special needs catered for? (ie material available in a range of formats)	
What rating scale is used and is it available?	
Are capability frameworks provided? Do they make sense to a lay reader?	
Are opportunities for work experience listed?	
Is help provided with writing to selection criteria?	
Is a link provided to the certified agreement?	
4. Corporate information within the career section	
	Is there information about what the organisation does, its structure, contact details, history?
	Is a branding position evident?
	Is there information on agency policies – OH&S, Diversity, work/life balance etc?
5. Clarity and access	Are there multiple links and navigation paths?
	Is the material written in clear, plain English?
	Is there a readily accessible means for people to provide feedback?
	Is information provided about who to contact for more information?
	Is the tone one of general helpfulness?

Appendix B: List of Career Websites examined for this research

Job websites

APS Jobs
Jobs ACT
Defence Jobs

ACT Government

ACT Health
ACT Planning and Land Authority
Chief Minister's Department - CMD
Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services - DHCS
Department of Education and Training - DET
Department of Justice and Community Safety - JACS
Department of Treasury - DT
Territory and Municipal Services

Commonwealth Government

Portfolio Departments:

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Attorney-General's
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
Defence
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Finance and Deregulation
Foreign Affairs and Trade
Health and Ageing
Human Services
Immigration and Citizenship
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Prime Minister and Cabinet
Resources, Energy and Tourism
Treasury

Agencies:

AusAID
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Australian Customs Service
Australian Electoral Commission
Australian Federal Police
Australian Public Service Commission
Australian Taxation Office

Centrelink
Child Support Agency
Climate Change
Comcare
ComSuper
Defence Materiel Organisation
Geoscience Australia
Medicare Australia
IP Australia
National Archives of Australia
National Library of Australia

Appendix C: Services available from Dr Ann Villiers, *Mental Nutritionist*®

Keynote speaker

Is making a difference important to you? (<http://www.mentalnutrition.com/>)

Whether it's small or large scale, the desire to make a difference drives business enterprises, associations and governments.

During her keynote presentations Ann draws on inspiring iconic Australian stories to extract timeless wisdom and practical strategies to illuminate what it takes to make a difference today.

These stories will help you learn:

- the character strengths of people who make a difference
- how to build resilience to face obstacles
- how to discover your inner abilities
- the art of influencing people to win support
- how to connect with people from all walks of life.

2009 International Women's Day presentation: "Portraits of Courage"
(<http://www.mentalnutrition.com/daringdames/index.html>)

Visit www.mentalnutrition.com for more details.

Dr Villiers also delivers conference and professional seminar presentations on selection, retention and applying for jobs. Her presentations are informative and provocative, inviting people to reconsider their assumptions and explore self-imposed and possibly unquestioned thinking.

Web Site Career Centres

Web Site Career Centres is a suite of services that provides organisations with specific web-based content that supports a career-focus to attracting staff.
(<http://www.selectioncriteria.com.au/docs/Webcareercentres.pdf>)

This suite offers:

- Advice on developing a web-based Career Centre.
- Production of audio and video staff profiles.

Training programs

Dr Villiers leads and facilitates professional development programs on interpersonal communication skills: influencing, confident communicating, applying for public service jobs, writing to selection criteria and preparing for

interview, and recruiting and selecting staff. Programs can be modified for in-house delivery.

Programs offered through Professional Management Programs, University of Canberra:

- *Confident Communicating*
- *Influencing and Persuading*
- *Impressive job applications and interviews*
- *Recruiting, selecting and retaining staff*

Influencing Skills programs are offered through the APSC, at APS and EL levels.

Publications and tools (<http://www.selectioncriteria.com.au/products.html>)

- *How To Write and Talk To Selection Criteria* (4th edn.) 2005 (book)
- *Gorgeous Daring Dames, How to grow in confidence, clarity & commitment*, 2002 (book)
- *101 Interview Questions*, 2007 (audio CD)
- *Winning Performance at Job Interviews*, 2004 (ebook)
- *How to write to selection criteria*, 2008, (audio CD)
- *160 questions to help audit your recruitment process*, 2008, (ebook)
- *101 Ways to erode trust in public sector recruiting*, 2006, (ebook)

Coaching support

- Selection Criteria Review Service
- Interview Coaching
- Career Management Coaching

Independent Panel Member

Dr Villiers is available as an independent selection panel member.

For more information visit:

www.mentalnutrition.com

www.selectioncriteria.com.au

End Notes

-
- ⁱ ANAO Performance Audit Report No 31, *Management of Recruitment in the Australian Public Service*, 2008, pp. 61-62.
- ⁱⁱ APSC, *State of the Service Employer Survey 2007-08*, 2008, p. 83.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid.* p. 83.
- ^{iv} *Ibid.* p. 84.
- ^v National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards 2004b (http://www.cdaa.org.au/sites/aacc.webprophets.net.au/files/u3/ralianCareerDevelopmentPractitioners_Rev2007.pdf)
- ^{vi} APSC *State of the Service Report 2007-08*, 2008, p. 27.
- ^{vii} *Ibid.* During 2007-08 44.1% of APS employment opportunities were filled by engagement.
p. 33
- ^{viii} *ibid.* p. 41
- ^{ix} *ibid.* p. 56.
- ^x ANAO, *Management of Recruitment in the Australian Public Service*, 2008, pp. 30-31.
- ^{xi} APSC, *op cit*, p. 79.
- ^{xii} ANAO Audit Report No. 13, Performance Audit, *Government Agencies' Management of their Websites*, 2008-09, p. 20.