

Project „digiskill-retail“

Development and Use of flexible and digital tools for increasing digital skills of vocational students and employees in retail trade.

Evaluation – interview

"Digital skills in the retail industry"

Bulgaria

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Evaluation interview 1

"Digital skills in the retail industry"

Teacher in VET school

INFORMATION AND DATA LITERACY

Products and services of the training company (AO - training regulations, §4 paragraph 2 number 1

Introduction: In order to advise customers according to their needs, prospective salespeople and retail clerks need in-depth knowledge of goods. This is one of the key qualifications in retail.

Knowledge of goods includes knowledge of:

- the production
- the product characteristics
- the advantages and benefits
- the application and use
- the care, storage and, if necessary, disposal of goods
- alternative offers and of course the price of the goods

1. What role do digital information sources play in your institution in imparting commodity knowledge?

It is extremely important as the companies work across countries and continents and they share information online, also many of the products are produced not in Bulgaria and the information is stored on servers, platforms and other tools internal to the company. I train all employees that start their work in the retail stores and one of the first topics is commodity knowledge and introduction of the platforms and digital sources. We use LMS, Open access materials and courses.

2. How do you develop skills for data analysis of your trainees?

They are given specific assignment and study texts by the employer including case studies and examples then it is followed by practical exercises and hand-on experience in the store. Data analysis is done in two directions: what information is needed and which are the trustful resources. All internal platforms require special training and such sessions are organized monthly. The company use complex software like SAP and other so this takes time and a lot of efforts of specialized training as data is kept there. At the univeristy we have a platform for e-learning based on Moodle, Assignments, examples, case studies, online Modules with videos, readings and tests, Specific examples and problems given by the company on Moodle.

3. How do you teach your students to find the information in order to better advise customers on relevant product information?

For in-house trainings this information is provided beforehand. For the other trainings we use mostly Google and data bases from legal sources and credible databases at national and EU level. Most of the time this is very specific, health and safety regulations; Tailor made trainings are prepared to use databases of the EC and Bulgaria – Statistics, trade and Ministry of Economy; Descriptions and specifications in print outs and digital format; Apps and platforms with automated functions; we use Learning platforms based on Share Point, Moodle; Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams.

4. How do you instruct your students to find information about recycling/reuse/reduce of products?

This information is given by the company and it is very specific depending on the type of products, business and other factors. Tailor-made materials with the company managers focused on the general strategy and principles - Kaufland, Fantastico, Lidl - led by the owning company, too. Best practices and the overall strategy; Company resources and channels.

COMMUNICATION

Presentation of goods and advertising measures (AO - training regulations, §4 paragraph 2 number 2)

Introduction: Advertising is part of a company's communication policy. Customers need to know what services the trading company can offer them. Advertising is the communication with the customer to inform, maintain one's own image, create purchase incentives and build trust.

5. Which communication channels do you use in the company to prepare students to inform customers about advertising campaigns?

We use Face to face, Zoom, Google Meet mostly but preferably internal channels. Most of the clients who are retailers have their own platforms and we have to train their employees how to use and the basic principles in general knowledge of how communication channels work and why we use the specific ones, what the target groups are and how to treat them well with respect. Many of the students lack some of the key soft skills so we focus on them and not so much the technology behind the channels.

6. What methods do you use to enable trainees to use these channels? (Teaching methods)

Most of the time it is hands-on experience, theory and practices with final assessment. We rely on case studies of the company, demonstrations and a lot of practical exercises, practical tasks, game-based learning, simulation and in-store practices with real customers. They are supervised closely by managers and their mentors from our team for better control and evaluation of their skills and advancement.

7. How do you train your students to choose the right channel for communication with the customers?

Social media and traditional channels mostly email and intranet with the platforms of the retailers. They practice with us and communicate online via Zoom, chats, Viber and other channels for feedback and guidance when doing their work.

COLLABORATION

Information and communication (AO - training regulations, §4 paragraph 4 number 3)

Introduction: In order to exchange ideas with colleagues or customers, digital media are increasingly being used today in addition to personal conversations.

8. What digital technologies/media do you use to exchange information or for communication in the company?

SAP and other software are used as provided by the retailers. Most of the trainings include only these topics and activities.

9. In the company what internal communication channels do you use with your trainees/students?

When students are in class they use Moodle and Google drive with MS Office. They have assignments for homework which is shared via different tools for common space and teamwork. We use chat, Viber groups and Google meet for online meetings. MS Teams is becoming more popular now with emails, storage of data and communication on- and offline.

10. What tools, platforms and other methods do you use to develop the co-creation and creativity/exchange of ideas of your trainees?

We use Moodle, Miro, Google docs, Slides, Sheets, Drive, etc. Most of the time it is Google docs and slides for co-creation. Very often students have group work supervised by their managers at the company and then it is a blended approach – both intranet of the retailer and our platforms. Thus, we use traditional approaches and those set by the management.

INFORMATION

Consulting of customers (AO – training regulations, §5 paragraph 3 sentence 1 number 2)

Introduction: In retail, customers today expect individual, needs-based advice and solutions to their problems as well as a clearly tailored benefit-related presentation. In order to advise customers according to their needs, sellers and retail merchant (KiE) must be able to recognize and analyse the latest trends in retail.

11. Which sources of information do you use in the company to observe, recognize and analyse (trade) processes?

This information is provided by the companies and it is very specific based on the type of processes, products and the technologies involved. In most cases the supply chain and logistical processes are on focus as employees have to work with it. In addition, customer service is important topic. We use national trends and reports by the authorities and company reports and databases, too.

12. What are the tools and other ways to develop your trainee's digital customer service skills? - e.g., chatbot, company/store app, subscriptions, etc.

We use company apps, platforms and channels. Examples, guidelines and specific study texts are prepared in advance and learners use them both in class and for their work. Most of the companies require them to know how to use different services and models: subscription, loyalty cards, social media and other. We use very few - mostly MS Office and PowerPoint in classes as tools.

DIGITAL CONTENT CREATION

Online trading (AO – training regulations, § 5 paragraph 4 sentence 1 no. 6)

Introduction: More and more retail companies set up their own online shop in order to be present for their customers on various channels.

13. Do you integrate content from the elective qualification "e-commerce" into your company/your lessons for digital content creation?

Most of the topics and lessons are aligned with the national curriculum and the company specific needs. The business is physical and in big chains it doesn't work as the requirements are strictly for customer service, arrangement and sourcing of goods, collection of information is not so common for them.

14. In your opinion, which skills for digital content creation are particularly relevant for employees in their day-to-day work in retail?

Most of the employees are focusing on sophisticated technology skills like chatbots, AI, cyber security, information safety and protection of personal information. Trainees need to be aware of the threats online like phishing, malware and other. They also need to know better how to use social media in a professional way together with channels for communication, to be more creative and not only follow the orders but become more proactive and make quick decisions in critical times and problems especially with technical tools, equipment and other when working with customers in a competitive environment and market. They also need to be aware of all these factors and have the essential business knowledge about market, target groups, profit, loss, revenue, costs, technical processes.