

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 important only for specific groups of trainees and tailor-made sessions for companies in retail. In most of the cases the information is provided by them and we use different data bases at national and global level – mostly we use the legislation documents, requirements and teach our trainees where to look for this information including abbreviations, healthy regulations, restrictions and other important aspects to raise awareness and teach them what exists and what is changed in the past few years.

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

We use mostly case studies, assignments for search and use of browsers and big data, data based to analyse and extract the necessary information. Evaluation and reference of the information sources is an important aspect, too. The main focus is on the type of information, sources and tools to be used.

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

This is not so critical as most of the trainees come from workplace where these rules are strictly defined and the policy of the retailer plays main role.

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

It is not mentioned in most of the classes as this is related only to the relevant industries that affect the environment and the harmful effects of specific products – mainly specific labeling, regulations, instructions and rules are taught – European law, Bulgarian legislation and general knowledge is provided.

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 rely on Moodle and tailor-made platforms provided by the retailers. It depends also on the age of the trainees – older people have difficulties using even emails and other apps like Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. We give specific assignments and exercises and apply learning by doing and instruction for the specific tasks. Mostly we rely on emails, very often Google classroom is used in Bulgaria and some platforms provided by the Ministry of education. In general: Face to face, Skype, Zoom, Google Meet mostly, rarely MS Teams, Cisco Webex, individual channels.

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

Learning by doing and flipped classroom is used a lot. Practical tasks, game-based learning, simulation and in-store practices with real customers is mostly efficient. With older people we work individually with textbooks and facilitation by the teachers.

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

We explain and instruct them what and how to be used with examples, definitions, case studies and materials for class. In some classes we use communication online for meetings: Zoom, Google Meet, chat, social media and a lot of exercises – e.g. posting ads and tracking reactions and engagement on social media, rules and role of the different channels to create the right mix. The channels are selected based on the industry and sector of retailers: food, apparel and textile, consumer goods, business to business, etc. We clarify them in class with definitions and descriptions of the main trends and practical elements.

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?

In our organisation we use Moodle for teaching, communication, grading, execution of tasks and assignments of our students. In addition, we use Google Drive and other products to create presentations, materials, YouTube for videos, Google docs and MS Office for documents and deliverables during classes.

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

As mentioned above we rely on Moodle mostly. In addition, we have groups on Viber, chat and calls by Google Meet, MS Teams, Zoom. In other companies they use MS Teams as a whole platform, Google classroom and other popular platforms. The general rule is to use a mix of all tools as we can't find one holistic solution with all functions and purposes for saving data and documents, communication, grading, teaching, etc. Emails are the most preferred channel for submission of questions and need for clarification and additional instructions. We have defined rules for the use of social media and apps like Viber for out of class use.

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 all Google products mostly, Miro, word clouds, online voting for discussions. Most of our students need deliberate explanation and teaching of how to use MS Word and Excel for more sophisticated functions and tasks. They are familiar with the basic functions.

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?

National trends and reports by the authorities, Online reports by the National statistics. Very often the retailers provide this information and ask us to teach students how to use and apply it. The processes are taught with focus on the type of businesses and industry – we can't generalize it as it is very different of logistics, delivery and production in food industry for example, also the type of products that are sold are very different and we have colleagues with specific focus and expertise for this purpose.

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.

Again, it is very much dependent on the business and the type of goods that are sold – household, food, clothing, appliances, etc. The main focus is to teach them what to search for, expect and transversal skills like emotional intelligence, communication in a respectful manner, presentation, internal communication with supervisors, managers, owners. The main aspect are the type and size of business as well as the definitions of target groups and we ask them to search for ethnographic and demographic information to better understand the customers. In these cases we raise awareness about the generations and the differences there, their behaviour, needs, attitude, etc. In some cases they need to learn about graphic design, the look and feel of goods and advertisement techniques.

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?

This is a very popular and separate course. The aspects we teach in the other classes are related to the types of e-commerce, techniques and information of how to search for products and how to source information. Mostly how to use online payment methods and protection, built-in features and existing platforms in Bulgaria.

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

Unfortunately, most of the trainees work with created information and courses, they do not need to generate much content. The tools and available platforms UX design, setting up their own business, customer service, emails and other basic functions and tools are essentials especially for the older employees. Many of them lack the English language skills, big role play the work between elder and the younger, the more flexible people. In all cases the practical skills are lacking and the modern technologies are not taught enough like the so common chatbots nowadays, AI and other, we are lagging a lot and the industries suffer.