

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"

Estonia

Project duration: 01.09.2022 – 31.08.2024

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Evaluation interview "Digital skills in the retail industry"

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?

a) Do they use digital media to search for information and which ones?

Teachers show them where to find legislation documents, acts etc online (and they teach where and how to find specific information from the right online document) for the information students need (for example Riigiteataja). Both national and European legislation and directives are covered.

b) What does she/he name? Is there a tendency?

National legislations and regulations, guides etc. She also mentions that big chains have their own intranets, where internal rules and regulations are written up. Also in Lidl, the most important information about the products are up on the walls for the employees.

c) If she/he does not use anything, are there reasons why not?

- lack of technical equipment
- lack of user skills

There are study modules in every programme connected to trade that teaches these topics. Knowing legislation is most important (Consumer Protection Act, Packaging laws), regulations on maintaining and preservation of different types of products. Also, they are teaching more in general to be critical or sources and to recognize trustworthy and safe sources. Digital literacy is definitely something that needs to be developed.

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

a) What does he/she understand by data analysis?

Data analysis is a wide concept and what is specifically taught depends on the specific retail profession that students are studying for.

b) Which software tools/sources are used for data analysis?

Google Analytics, Excel

c) What methodology does he/she use?

Cannot be said concretely, as it also depends highly on the subject and profession.

d) What data do trainees need to analyse?

For example, statistics and numbers of sales results of different products and product categories. Also, customer databases and customer profiles; prognosis about which products to buy in the next seasons.

e) Do trainees have open access to the tools/sources?

They have open access to the tools necessary for their studies.

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

a) Which methodology do they use?

Tests, research papers, simulations of customer situations

b) Which methodology do they prefer and why?

Research papers are the best, as this enables the learners to commit thoroughly on the topics that specifically interests them. This method is especially preferred for people who do job-based learning, meaning that they already have experience in retail and need more knowledge to advance in their careers.

c) Which sources of information do they recommend?

It depends on what information is necessary.

d) Do trainees use digital media? If yes, which ones?

They are taught to find necessary legislation and acts, instructions. During internships they often learn to use company-specific environments.

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

a) How important is the topic of environmental friendliness/sustainability?

This is very important and there are separate modules connected to those topics. There is new and important information coming in about reusing and recycling packages and waste, and also other environmentally friendlier solutions, such as digital receipts.

- b) **How does she/he encourage her/his trainees on this topic? Is one of the topics in the focus?**

She didn't bring out that any of these topics is especially in focus, as they are all very important. In order to make this topic more interesting for the students they learn the theory in class and then go to a big chain store (Prisma, Rimi) to see and experience in person how the products are handled, discarded, recycled etc. It is important to combine practice with theory.

- c) **If yes/ what sources of information do they access?**

National/EU laws, acts and regulations. Lists of markings and labelling.

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 / vocational school / training provider to prepare students to inform customers about advertising campaigns?**

- a) **Do they use communication channels?**

If yes,

- **which digital communication channels are mentioned?**

Social media, advertising campaigns, photoshop

- **which traditional/analogue channels are mentioned?**

Displays in fairs (including rules and regulations)

- c) **Which communication channels are mentioned preferentially?**

Marketing is included as a separate module in all retail programmes. There is a small part or traditional communication, mostly it is focused on digital communication and marketing. They are also taught developments in retail, for examples the students make comparisons between different self-checkout opportunities in different stores.

Students are also asked to compare Estonian small business advertising strategies and compare them to the ones of big international companies with similar products and then they must compare what different strategies are used with similar products and taught to analyse and compare success (and put it in their e-portfolio).

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

- a) **How does she/he support the trainees in using the communication channels?**

- b) **What methodology does she/he use and why?**

The students are given tasks to compare different marketing and advertising techniques and make comparisons (also traditional vs digital). Also, they analyse websites of different stores and chains

(individually or as a team). Also, when international students come to study, then they can bring the experience and comparisons from the stores and store chains for their countries.

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

a) Which of the methods used is well accepted by the trainees? (digital vs. traditional)

Various analysis and comparisons. One very important aspect that is taught connected to advertising which is taught is knowing your customer. For example, if a person works in a store, which sells very traditional things then Tik Tok is not the correct place to advertise.

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/vocational school/training provider?

a) Do they use digital technologies/media?

- If yes, which ones?

Internal learning system Tahvel, Zoom, Moodle, Big Blue Button, Outlook, Google Drive

b) Which digital technologies/media do they prefer?

It depends, Tahvel is used most in case of important. For a faster communication with their class teachers use social media.

c) What challenges do they see in communication, with digital technologies/media.

No challenges were emphasized.

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

a) See evaluation questions from question 5

Facebook messenger, Whatsapp, Viber

10. What tools, platforms and other methods do you use to develop the co-creation and creativity/exchange of ideas of your trainees? – e.g., Mindmap, brainstorming, Miro board, Google Drive, Canva, Figma, etc.

a) Do they use tools, platforms and other methods?

- If yes, which tools, platforms and other methods are mentioned?

Padlet, Mentimeter, Digital touchscreen boards.

b) Which tools, platforms and other methods are mentioned preferentially?

Students today do not want to look at PowerPoints, creativity and practical examples/practical work is crucial.

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/classroom to observe, recognize and analyse (trade) processes?

a) Do they use information sources to observe, identify and analyse (trade) processes?

If yes,

- which digital information sources are mentioned?

- which traditional/analogue sources of information are mentioned?

b) Which information sources are mentioned preferentially?

The school invites guest lecturers from the industry to discuss and introduce specific trends and processes in retail. For example, recently there was a guest lecture on the new European directives for the better access to e-commerce platforms for the visually impaired. She finds that practical examples and experience from industry professionals is much more interesting for students than just researching secondary sources.

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.

a) Which tools are mentioned?

Magenta, Nixor, virtual warehouses. She mentioned that most of the useful programmes are not free. She mentioned, that as there is quite a long internship required, students will learn to use different tools in practice and it is more effective than to learn them only theoretically.

b) Which tools does he/she prefer and why?

These topics are covered under bigger modules. These are for example client databases, marketing, e-store order management. One tool, which is used for example is a virtual warehouse, where orders and their management is simulated.

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?

a) if, yes

- Which topics?

- What teaching methods do you use to provide the content? E-learning videos

- Do you use specific platforms, software, tools?

They have a separate VET programme, e-commerce. However, there are no elective e-commerce modules for other trade programmes, as the elective modules for each programme are selected very specifically to be connected to each profession. As e-commerce is very specific and not very

connected to other trade profession, this elective course is not included. However, some topics connected to e-commerce also come in other modules.

In Estonia, preparations are made to develop a new Qualification standard for customer service and this will include e-commerce. As a result, e-commerce modules will be added to more trade curriculums.

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

a) Which skills are mentioned?

Everyday social media (Facebook, Instagram). Shopping in online stores.

b) What deficits does she/he recognise?

Many people lack even basic professional computer skills and they have been forced to add computer skills teaching to different modules. For example, basic Word and Excel are very weak for many people. Forming CV and motivation letters for applying to jobs. When people come to study from working at a retail company, they often have knowledge on only company-based digital technologies but are weak in general digital skills. In order for them to judge and compare different tools, even monetary programmes are taught in retail programmes. At the end of their studies every student develops their e-portfolio, which includes all important tasks from all modules.

c) What role does the age of the employee play?

Age definitely plays a role. When people aged 50+, who have worked their whole life in retail come to study, their digital skills are minimal (there are computer study courses at different levels).

d) How can deficits be covered by e-learning?

It depends on the person. For older people with minimal skills e-learning is not a good option, as they need very individual and supportive learning (basically a one-on-one with a teacher who explains everything). It is also important to mention that retail is not at all popular among young people nowadays. But what is a trend is that employers are looking to upskill their retail employees aged 40-50 by giving them different courses – communication and customer service/crisis management, languages, digital skills, legislation. As every store has their own products systems, then these courses are not very sought-after. One problem which retail employers face when offering training to their employees is lack of time. Stores already often have less employees than needed and it is difficult to take time off from working, as there are no replacements who could work in the stores. Employers have said that many courses are not done solely for the lack of time.