

## **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"**

### **Germany**

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?**
2. **How do you develop skills for data analysis of your trainees?**
3. **How do you teach your students to find the information in order to better advise customers on relevant product information?**
4. **How do you instruct your students to find information about recycling/reuse/reduce of products?**

The vocational school is a "digital school" and has been working with tablets for years. The tablet is part of the teaching equipment, just like the textbook. The school provides the apprentices with the OneNote software with a licence package. The entire course organisation is done in the software. The provision of learning materials in digital form (mostly PDF) is practised in all 3 years of apprenticeship.

A content library is also available. Furthermore, the apprentices receive work assignments by means of the imported files. The teacher can also see the work status of the individual apprentices.

The internet is used as a source of information when the apprentices are working on product descriptions, for example. They research product information on the internet and use the search engine Google. There are no general guidelines on how the apprentice should search for information in different digital environments and identify relevant sources. The apprentices do their research rather arbitrarily and intuitively. Depending on the assignment, some teachers make the apprentice aware of which sources are useful and which are not. The teacher herself uses sources from textbook publishers or trade journals, because she can better assess that useful information has been gathered. She also sees the danger of distraction when apprentices use digital media. The interviewee notes that the importance of teaching merchandise knowledge has decreased, because the knowledge transfer takes place in the company.

In the field of digital media, the classic search engine is used to collect information or analyse data. Digital learning tasks are only used for exam preparation by textbook publishers. Furthermore, textbooks are used and offers of the educational publishers with digital boxes are used in class. The teacher notes that digital boxes do not meet the

requirements, so that teachers have to provide their own supplementary material, which they pull out of the internet themselves.

## 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 vocational school to prepare students to inform customers about advertising campaigns?**
6. **What methods do you use to enable trainees to use these channels? (Teaching methods)**
7. **How do you train your students to choose the right channel for communication with the customers?**

The teaching focus in the field of communication "customer advice and customer information" is predominantly on traditional/analogue communication channels. The teacher gives examples such as the use of textbooks, group work with tasks to simulate customer conversations, subdivided by industry, or role plays to handle a complaint. Simulations of customer conversations are recorded and analysed with the tablet or in teams. The point of sale "stationary point of sale" with a focus on face-to-face customer service is the main focus. The teacher notes that the area of customer communication via digital channels is not a separate subject or learning area. This area is included in learning area 2 under the focus "Conducting customer-oriented sales conversations".

Digital communication channels are included in the lessons if suitable teaching materials are available. The teacher Googles for topics such as "Successfully conducting complaints talks" and sees what results come up. She mentions YouTube or the zbb with the e-learning on the topic of selling just before closing time as digital sources. She also notes that the search for suitable digital learning materials is very time-consuming and not always successful. She would find microlearnings on the topics of conducting customer conversations or addressing customers incorrectly/correctly very useful.

## 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 vocational school?**
- 9. In the classroom what internal communication channels do you use with your trainees/students?**
- 10. What tools, platforms and other methods do you use to develop the co-creation and creativity/exchange of ideas of your trainees?**

There is the possibility to exchange via the software OneNote in the course notebook. The exchange among teachers is emphasised. For the apprentices, however, personal exchange at school / in class is predominant. Modern platforms are partly integrated into lessons by younger teachers. Which modern platforms are used was not mentioned.

## 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 classroom to observe, recognize and analyse (trade) processes?**
- 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.**

Current developments in trade and trends are communicated via the following digital information sources: Information from the Internet (Google search engine) or articles from various trade journals that are uploaded by the teacher in digital form as a PDF or as a link in the course notebook. The teacher uses both digital and analogue information sources, filters them and makes them available for the lessons. Apprentices access the information digitally via the course notebook. Important analogue sources of information are trade journals such as Handelsblatt in print, Lebensmittelzeitung in print, Textilwirtschaft in print and the daily newspaper.

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

In NRW, there is a fixed learning field with a focus on e-commerce. This means that the following main topics are touched on: How do search engines work? What do I have to do to get my shop to rank 1,2,3 on Google? Multichannel strategies, using the Internet for customer loyalty, social media marketing, online marketplaces, setting up an online shop (technical and legal aspects). The content is conveyed via textbooks with prepared learning sequences or the exchange of experiences with the trainees in the e-commerce classes. The learning content is structured according to work packages and is conveyed via e.g. learning videos. The teacher sees challenges in the creation of content in the trainees' language skills, especially in grammar and pronunciation. She also sees customer-oriented behaviour as a challenge for the trainees. She considers the trainees to be technically fit.

The following ideas for microlearning are suggested by the teacher: forms of operation in retail, naming prices in a sales talk, how do I handle returns? How do I talk to the customer on the phone?