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ГИБКИЕ НАВЫКИ КОММУНИКАЦИИ КАК ФАКТОР УСПЕХА И ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТИ ДЛЯ МОЛОДЫХ СПЕЦИАЛИСТОВ

COMMUNICATION SOFT SKILLS AS A FACTOR OF SUCCESS AND EFFICIENCY FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

В статье рассматривается роль гибких навыков коммуникации для молодых специалистов с учетом изменений в современном мире. Автор определяет ключевые понятия, такие как гибкие навыки, коммуникация, гибкие навыки коммуникации, раскрывает суть терминов и показывает их взаимосвязь. В статье представлены характеристики реалий сегодняшнего дня, с учетом которых обосновывается актуальность рассматриваемой проблемы. Автор обосновывает необходимость и важность гибких навыков коммуникации как ключевых компетенций высокоэффективных специалистов. Статья будет полезна для специалистов, занимающихся вопросами образования, психологии и экономики, а также для специалистов по управлению персоналом, сотрудников компаний, работающих в коллективе и менеджеров на руководящих должностях.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а: *VUCA-мир; гибкие навыки; гибкие навыки коммуникации; коммуникация.*

The article is devoted to the role of communication soft skills among young professionals taking into account the changes in the modern world. The author defines the key concepts, such as soft skills, communication, communication soft skills, reveals the essence of the terms and shows their relationship. The article presents the characteristics of the realities of today, in view of which the relevance of the problem under consideration is justified. The author substantiates the necessity

and importance of communication soft skills as key competences of highly effective specialists. The article will be useful for specialists engaged in education, psychology and economics, as well as for HR specialists, employees of companies working in teams and managers in managerial positions.

Key words: VUCA world; soft skills; hard skills; communication soft skills; communication.

The characteristics of the modern world can be represented by the acronym VUCA, each letter representing the following words in the order they are presented: vulnerable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. We live in an era of global digitalization, and the younger generations are clearly different from previous generations because of the above-mentioned properties of modern times. Moreover, as early as 2016, the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum declared that the 4th industrial revolution has begun.

Due to global trends that are qualitatively transforming the world and society, there is a demand for certain competencies and, as a consequence, a need to identify strategies for their formation. Professors and lecturers working in higher educational institutions face a difficult task, namely, to train a specialist with not only professional competencies, but also with the so-called soft skills.

What should a modern successful specialist be like? Certainly, he or she is a specialist who has not only professional competencies known as hard skills, but also so-called soft skills. Attributing success to one single trait of character or a personal characteristic seems irrational. Success in professional sphere is usually achieved due to a complex set of factors, however, there are certain nonacademic competencies or soft skills that give a person a competitive advantage in the labor market.

H. Chassidim, D. Almog, M. Shlomo, A. Fixsen, S. Cranfield, D. Ridge, E. Chell, R. Athayde, etc. describe soft skills as personal characteristics necessary for modern professionals of different specialties, and conditions for the development of these skills in higher education. As a result of theoretical analysis of the problem of flexible communication skills, their structural organization, as well as their formation in the process of learning in higher education there arise various points of view as to the definitions.

A. P. Lobanov and N. V. Drozdova consider flexible skills through the prism of “competence triangle” which includes personal skills, hard and soft skills.

The author will rely on the works of the aforementioned scholars in terms of defining hard or professional skills and soft or interpersonal skills.

Hard Skills – special knowledge and skills in the field of expertise and professional activities.

Soft Skills – a set of supraprofessional skills (competencies) that allow to be successful regardless of the specifics of activity [1, p. 22].

Soft skills develop throughout life, and in some periods – especially intensively. One of them is the period of higher education.

Scholars from all over the world have been making up a list of soft skills that are to be applied in various situations. However, it is worth noting that the use of the skills has a common effect on self-development, qualitative studying process as well as on job promotion. A number of soft skills contribute to success and professional advancement independently of professional spheres. Nowadays a vast quantity of jobs presupposes less repetitive tasks and much more autonomy, which means that there is more so-called space for problem solving, interaction with people from different walks of life and creativity at work.

The social media platform for finding and making business contacts, LinkedIn, presented a report showing that 92 % of employers consider soft skills more important than technical or hard skills.

Speculatively we can divide soft skills into four groups:

- communicative (communication and understanding of other people);
- intellectual (critical thinking, creativity);
- volitional (time and emotion management);
- leadership (managing others, teamwork).

Coursera Inc., a major provider of open online courses founded by Stanford University computer science professors, has released a “Job skills of 2023” – an e-book that lists the key human and digital skills of today, whose criticality is gaining momentum. Among the ten so-called human skills (another name for soft skills) are storytelling, change management, communication, and so on. The handbook concludes by highlighting the growing importance of skills such as storytelling and communication competencies for any professional in the workplace and for life in society at large.

So, it is essential to note the significance of forming communication soft skills. Let us recall the meaning of the term *communication* itself, which is the process of transferring information from one person to another through various communication channels by means of a common system of signs. The term *communication* is complex, encompassing structural components, types, forms, types, directions, and so on. Moreover, the need to communicate is dictated not so much professionally as biologically, due to the biological features of *Homo sapiens* as a species that are “imprinted” in us. This competence assists in making contacts, self-presentation, effective job performance, effective problem solving. Daily we have to communicate with absolutely different people that have different education, manners and background, that is why it is essential to organize learning process with the involvement of certain tools that develop communication soft skills. Without this ability, a modern professional is not competent enough.

Communication soft skills include as follows:

- public speaking and presentation skills;
- persuasive skills;
- interpersonal skills;
- listening skills;
- communicating with empathy;
- providing and accepting feedback;
- team work and collaboration in groups;
- non-verbal communication skills;
- telephone skills;
- written speech.

One of the most required qualities or competencies in a worker is the skill to communicate effectively with people, for example teamwork interaction or providing services to clients, as well as to express thoughts rationally in oral and written speech. There is an evident tendency in the modern world towards digitalization and automatization. So well-developed communication soft skills are a must for a thoughtful specialist as skillful communication is quite a rare thing because of its negligence due to stimulation of technical skills that cater for machine maintenance. Communication skills include not only conveying ideas but also practicing active listening, responding, and maintaining the conversation, which means not monopolizing the conversation.

One of the examples of a communication soft skill in use can be a well-prepared speech at a work meeting, where, for example, a speaker has the chance to make a good first impression with his or her initial phrases. Moreover, if there are storytelling techniques included the whole speech will be no less than a work of art in the field of communication [2, p. 122].

One of the guidelines of effective communication is following the communication context, one of the examples can be when an interlocutor behaves accordingly to the situation and takes into consideration the most influential factors that can enhance the effectiveness of interaction. Effective and beneficial communication for all is like the cement that unites the participants into a close-knit team thus making the team more powerful as all the members of it move towards a certain goal co-existing in a good work atmosphere. Undeniably it is not taught on purpose at university faculties with the exception of the ones that specialize in professional communication skills and their development, but the reality is that such soft skills are required independently of professional sphere.

In the Russian-speaking world, education experts are introducing a system of the four most important skills for specialists of the future, called the “4K System,” which is called so because of the first letter and the sound of the four skills in the Russian language. The system includes critical thinking, creativity, communication,

and cooperation. Lesson projects are being developed with the goal of building 4K skills. And there are more and more such projects. Moreover, in some Russian schools the system to develop flexible skills is included in the education system and funded by large companies, such as Sber [3].

According to the scholars interested in this field the development of soft skills should be on the curriculum and should be evaluated independently as it is required from present-day generations that have entered the workforce and the ones that will to be better prepared with soft skills.

Teaching hard professional skills without the development of properly related skills to establish contact, conduct business correspondence, feel the emotions and motives of the interlocutor, smooth out sharp angles in communication, distinctly convey the meanings inherent in the act of communication is currently insufficient.

Thus, current realities and forecasts in the professional sphere show that hard professional competencies are not enough in the labor market, yet the presence of formed soft skills presents more value in a young specialist. Among those soft skills which tend to appear significant nowadays the leading role belongs to communication soft skills.

A specialist of any field with well-developed communication soft skills will be able to present himself or herself competently, negotiate effectively, formulate his or her requests and understand a partner or a client. Professionals in managerial positions, with developed communication soft skills, acquire the ability to create the right atmosphere, motivate employees, effectively give instructions and understand the emerging needs in the team. Without competent communication it is impossible to build a constructive dialogue, be it with a partner, client or employee, which means that the possibility to reach an agreement is much reduced.

It is inappropriate to deny the fact of the relevance of these skills for future professionals in different fields, so it is necessary to develop recommendations for the formation of flexible communication skills among students. In particular, foreign language seminars and practical classes are quite 'fruitful ground' in the aspect of forming communication soft skills. According to the curriculum developed for higher education institutions, foreign language – is a training discipline, the subject of which is a system of knowledge, skills and abilities, aimed at developing the ability to carry out direct communication (speaking, listening) and indirect communication (reading, writing), taking into account the specifics of the subject of communication and communication codes, the nature of interaction between interlocutors, their targets and type of interaction and social and cultural context. In foreign language classes, students develop speaking skills in addition to studying grammar, reading texts, writing, and listening. The development of direct communication skills is given quite a lot of time in foreign language classes, in view of this, the reinforcement of the knowledge attained by the development of communication soft skills in a foreign language is advisable. If we talk about a foreign language, first of all, as a

means of communication in professional activities, it is critically important to pay enough attention to language learning at university with a focus on training and consolidation of soft skills.

In conclusion, it is worth noting the necessity to not only realize the importance of soft skills and communication soft skills in particular in the modern world, but also to master them in time to remain a competitive and highly effective specialist in the labor market. The set of skills required from modern specialists in any professional sphere is a combination of professional competencies and soft skills, where the latter are playing an increasingly significant role year after year. This is especially true for communication soft skills. According to many studies conducted with the purpose of figuring out which skills are key skills for success at workplace it is evident that communication soft skills should not be neglected at all, because it appears to be the skill which students and future graduates are lacking the most. A good expert of the future must possess all the tools to effectively carry out their duties, among which communication has been and will be one of the critical universal competencies, as we live and work in a society which is undergoing the processes of high automatization and mass digitalization.

The society we live in expresses itself and self-actualizes to a large extent through communication. Thus, well-formed communication soft skills allow not only to achieve certain professional goals, coexist and collaborate smoothly with colleagues in a team, but also solve problems effectively in everyday life. Thus, we are already seeing the emergence of offline and online courses and workshops to develop communication skills. The reality clearly demonstrates to mankind the high demand for formed communication soft skills.

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