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HUMANITARIAN CULTURE OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATOR AS A COMPETITIVENESS FACTOR IN INFORMATION SOCIETY

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Abstract

Humanitarian culture development of professional communicators' personalities is regarded in the article as a fruitful strategy to raise alumni competitiveness in the Information society. Domestic and foreign scientists' and practitioners' vision of communicators professionalism factors are reviewed. The key components of the of a personality humanitarian culture are identified by the authors: ethical, aesthetic, civil, and methodological components; Humanitarian culture of personality is the basis and purpose of modern education. The results of empirical studies are introduced within the article to substantiate the vision of humanitarian culture as a factor influencing competitiveness potential of PR, advertising, journalism, etc. alumni in the Information society (HeadHunter Group, St. Petersburg unit, provided us a report concerning demand in the employment market in the field of professional communication; we also surveyed opinions of Saint-Petersburg Advertisers Club participants within focus groups). Basing on the presented results we explicated major tendencies of employers' demands for applicants from the examined professional area. As consequence of the research performed we state that the intentional development of professional communicator soft skills within the educational process should be determined as an efficient long-term strategy for professional communication alumni to prosper on a labour market in Digital age.

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1. Introduction

In the information age it is difficult to overestimate the importance of professional communications for modern business activities. In accordance with the global Professional Standard, the principles of which were published on the IABC website in February 2015 (*The Global Standard of the Profession*), the purpose of the communicator's professional activity can be formulated as follows: professional communicators represent the voice of their organization in interaction with customers, employees, partners, shareholders, competitors and the local community. Professional communicator makes the organization famous by forming a single brand voice, combining its verbal, visual and digital messages, as well as all kinds of organization activities through a common mission and vision.

Meanwhile, the problem of incomplete compliance of the quality of training of professional communicators with the requirements of employers not only does not lose its relevance, but also increases due to a number of political, economic and socio-cultural trends that characterize the modern Information society. According to the Modern Federal State Education Standards all academic program are necessarily to be supported by reviews from potential employers' and to meet corresponding standards of profession. In our previous publications (Sharakhina & Trubnikova, 2018) we already introduced the requisite of Russian higher education institutions to analyze labour market trends (Opornyye vuzy slivayutsya s biznesom i vlastyu, 2017).

These trends are redoubled by digitalisation of professional communicators' practice and to train competitive alumni causes a problem to any higher education institution. The lack of professionalism indicated by the authors causes irreparable damage to the reputation of the communicator profession, which in the eyes of business and society is unable to perform its important functions.

2. Problem Statement

Domestic and foreign scientists and practitioners reflect and write about the factors of professionalism of communicators, noting, in particular, the need for special education, the priority of service to society and social responsibility over personal interests (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, pp. 76-77); honesty, the ability to listen to all opinions, the use of a strategic approach to their activities (Murray, 2015); approach to their activities as a vocation (Klyuyev, 2016).

At the same time, the researchers draw attention to a number of challenges that affect the individual in the information society, such as social transformations taking place under the influence of information and communication technologies, the spread of network structures, the need to work in a multitasking environment (Lysak & Maksimov, 2015).

Azarova in 2017 presents the vision of professional communicator by american specialist W.J. Buchholz which he had come up with from 1988 at ABC Annual International Conference and which is still up to date. W.J. Buchholz formulated one of the main contradictions on the way to achieving true professionalism, which is relevant today: modern professionals who have received higher education and public recognition and are focused on career growth, are extremely pragmatic. Basically, he said, they are guided by the ideology of their own interests, preferring to socially oriented, altruistic motives of their predecessors the accumulation of honorary titles, signs of public recognition, leading to career growth.

From the point of view of Buchholz, in such a situation, associations and corporations should provide professional responsibility through effective codes of professional ethics.

Accumulating the above points of view, it seems that the factor of professionalism of the communicator may be the orientation of education on the development of humanitarian culture of a personality. Scientists often define humanitarian culture of a person as a specific manifestation of "human in a person". For example, the doctor of pedagogical sciences Brazhe (2006) understands the humanitarian culture from the social dimension as "a range of ideas, regularities, conceptions, laws, facts, developments, processes which constituent sciences, arts, religion, and addressed to a person's life, mastered and applied by this person in individual's life, contributing to a person furtherance and human society alliance" (p. 10).

In the monograph, written by a team of authors of the St. Petersburg Academy of postgraduate pedagogical education, the humanitarian culture is, first of all, the knowledge, mastering and development of the spiritual (that is, non-material) world of a personality, those specific properties inherent only to a personality that distinguish him from other living beings, it is the awakening and elevation of the human in a person (Eliasberg, 2008).

The study of the humanitarian culture of a professional communicator seems appropriate from the standpoint of value and subject-activity approaches. This is due to the fact that, firstly, the judgment about the phenomenon of humanitarian culture is always evaluative, and secondly, it is possible to judge the phenomenon of humanitarian culture only by studying activities that are always subjective.

Psychologists note that every human individual "is not born, but becomes a subject in the process of communication, activity and other types of activity" (Brushlinsky, 2003, p. 61). The study of the humanitarian culture of the   professional communicator from the standpoint of the subject-activity approach involves the consideration of the process of his professional activity in the aspect of individual subjective coloring of personal meanings.

The monograph, written by the team of authors of the St. Petersburg state electrotechnical university "LETI", identifies the main components that determine the humanitarian culture of professional communicators (Klyuyev, 2016). From our point of view, in relation to the problem field of activity in the sphere of professional communications, the following components of the humanitarian culture of a professional communicator can be identified:

2.1. Ethical component

This component manifests itself in the ability to combine the aim of updating professional ethical codes in accordance with the growing complexity of the information and communication environment, based on traditional humanistic values, providing for the possibility of social development, inseparable from the free development of each individual. We also note that the presence of this component makes it impossible for the communicator to adhere to the ideology of his own interests.

2.2. Aesthetic component

This component manifests itself in the need to rely on aesthetic criteria when creating a diverse content of professional communication. It also means the ability to effectively solve communication

problems related to targeting audiences with different levels of education, and understanding the need to preserve the native language, its wealth, purity and expressiveness.

Aesthetic communication is associated with the concept of harmony within the communicative field, involving three types of relationships: to yourself, to others and others to yourself (in the socio-psychological literature, this latter relationship is called attributive projection). Psychologist Abulkhanova-Slavskaya notes that only the type that has in the structure of its consciousness all three relations, is able to use "not a one-way interaction, but perceives the relationships as mutual relationships that require their understanding and solutions" (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1999, p. 30).

2.3. Civil component

This component is connected with the ability of a professional communicator to combine the interests related to the pragmatic goals of a particular employer and broad social interests, involving the development of the individual and society. The civil component of humanitarian culture is also connected with the understanding of the need to rely on foreign experience of professional and communicative activities and the need to adapt them to the national specifics of Russia.

2.4. Methodological component

This component involves the consistency and predictability of thinking of the professional communicator, his ability to metacommunication. The development of this component requires fundamental preparation, which enables the communicator to operate with data of the metacommunication level, taking into account the subjective context and specifying the mode of the transmitted message. The well-known theorist in the field of professional communications Pocheptsov (2001) notes in this regard the following: "Having such metacommunicative knowledge, being at the same time in a situation of communication and metacommunication, the communicator can control the process of information transfer so accurately that the level of achieving the desired result increases sharply" (p. 41). We can also indicate the need for the intensity of training noted by many scientists as a factor in the development of the methodological component of humanitarian culture: "the peculiarity of intensive training is the transition from teaching particulars to teaching the laws from which these particulars follow" (Romantsov, Danilenkov, Melnikova, & Goryacheva, 2011, p. 11).

3. Research Questions

We consider these humanitarian culture components of a professional communicator development as a strategy to raise alumni competitiveness in the Information society.

4. Purpose of the Study

To approve the stated hypothesis that we conducted empirical research and used labour market data provided by St. Petersburg branch of the HeadHunter Group.

5. Research Methods

To overcome the problem of incomplete compliance of the quality of training of professional communicators with the requirements of employers St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University "LETI", School of Humanities, PR Study Department surveyed opinions of Saint-Petersburg Advertisers Club participants within focus groups (3 focus groups with 32 participants were conducted since 2017). St. Petersburg branch of the HeadHunter Group within the frame of our cooperation activities provided us a report concerning demand in the employment market in the field of professional communication.

6. Findings

According to St. Petersburg PR and Advertising departments chairs opinions we found the adaptation period of recent graduates in a definite company takes not less than half of a year. Employers state that most of alumni don't have skills of business negotiations, contractual arrangements with counteractants; they don't have experience of obtaining documents' internal approval by lawyers and accountant officers. Young students usually are not in habit to work on the full-time basis and to be responsible in fulfilling job duties; they don't have corporate social skills and subordination understanding. Furthermore, they are very often do not have systemic thinking and vision of his or her individual contribution to successful company performance. These are the reasons why employers prefer to hire experienced professional communicators (Sharakhina & Trubnikova, 2018).

The structure of labour market in the first half of 2018 in the sphere of marketing, advertising, and PR can be illustrated by the Table 1 (HH index in the sphere "Marketing, Advertising, PR", 2018).

Table 01. The structure of St. Petersburg labour market in the sphere of marketing, advertising, and PR

Job opportunities (vacant position)	% of the total vacant positions, January/June, 2018
Client manager	35,4
PR, Marketing communication	20,0
Internet marketing	18,6
Promotion, Specal events	14,6
Marketing management	10,1
Project management	9,8
Merchandising	9,7
Design	8,9
Advertising scheduling	8,8
Analyst	7,1
Young specialist	6,5
Market analyst	5,8
Brand-management	5,7
Print advertising	5,4
Product Manager	5,3
Trade marketing	4,9
Copywriter	4,9
Outdoor advertising	4.8
Advertising production	4,2

BTL	2,8
Pagemaker	2,5
Consultant	2,4
Promoter	2,1
Assistant	2,1
Radio advertising	1,3
Art director	1,2
Interviewer, Polling specialist	1,0
Adperson	0,9
TV advertising	0,8
Mystery shopper	0,4
Political PR	0,2

We see rather high percentage for professional communicators in the field of Internet, and growing demand for digital skills (Sharakhina & Trubnikova, 2018). If to analyse career opportunities for yesterday alumni in the field of our interest we can observe interest of employers' in candidates possessing these skills as far as experienced professionals quite often lack them. According to popular blog "Your life line is in your hands" in modern conditions   potential candidate should have understanding of CTR, OR, CR, KPI analyses, WEB-analytics, online marketing, etc. (Your life line is in your hands (blog): 04.03.2017).

At the same time the present stage of Information society lets us review artificial intelligence as a competitor on a labout market in the field of digital professinal communications.For example, the use of IBM's supercomputer, Watson by Saatchi LA got a very high coverage by professional oriented media (ADWEEK, 18.05.2017).

This trend involves "superprofessional" (soft) skills of professional communicator development. The most important of them, according to employers' statements, are: systems thinking, dealing with ambiguity, intersectorial communication, multilanguage and multiculturalism, client-oriented approach, and project management. Thus, we may consider the humanitarian culture of professional communicators' development as a fruitful strategy to raise alumni competitiveness in the Information society.

7.   Conclusion

Looking for effective strategy to raise alumni competitiveness in the Information society with its constant customization of digital skills of professional communicators we believe that development of humanitarian culture elements could serve us as a solution.

Ethical component in the professiogram of professional communicator corresponds to the emplyers request for, client-oriented approach and strategic communication skills.

Aesthetic component correlates with the necessity of "savoir vivre" in communication and business activities.

The presence of humanitarian culture civil component helps any professional communicator be effective on a global arena of multi-cultural society.

Methodological component of the personality demonstrates project oriented competence and leads to professional communicator's ability to integrate and embed employer's communication activities into intersectoral context.

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