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ACCOUNTANT'S COMPETENCIES IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Digitization of economic processes places new demands on many professions, including the profession of accountant. This leads to the need to rethink the essence of the accounting profession itself and use updated approaches to the training of specialists in the specialty "Accounting and taxation". Thus, the understanding of the accountant's profession as a simple technical worker, who is only engaged in maintaining the system of accounts and recording the facts of the movement of the company's funds, is quite primitive today. The sphere of competence of a modern accountant includes both the formation of the accounting policy of the organization and the management of accounting operations, as well as the optimization of the tax burden. In addition, taking into account the development of the information technology market, a modern accountant often performs the function of processing and analyzing information, which is already partly the work of a manager.

So, a modern accountant is a multifunctional person who is a manager, analyst, financial inspector and tax controller at the same time. His responsibilities include primary processing of accounting documents, as well as tasks that require experience and an appropriate level of qualification – preparation of tax documents, reporting, communication with the tax inspectorate and others. Thus, a modern accountant is conservative only in terms of a responsible approach to work and in everything else it is a profession that is constantly transforming and requires maximum attention to changes. The basis of professional knowledge and skills of an accountant is professional education, which should focus on obtaining relevant specialized competencies for future specialists [3].

According to the free encyclopedia Wikipedia, competence in translation from the Latin «competentia» means a range of issues in which a person is well-versed, has knowledge and experience. Competence is also defined as an integrated ability of a person acquired in the learning process, which consists of knowledge, experience, values and attitudes that can be holistically implemented in practice.

According to international standards of education for professional accountants, competence is the ability to perform a functional role according to certain standards, taking into account the real work situation. When a person, due to abilities, performs the specified tasks according to the specified standards, competence is considered to be achieved [1].

The digital market economy expands the range of tasks that are within the accountant's competence. Thus, the accountant turns from an employee who is engaged in ascertaining the facts of economic activity on the accounts, to an assistant director on almost all issues of the company's activities. For successful companies, coordination of management decisions with the chief accountant of the enterprise is mandatory. It is in such conditions that the formation of professional competences of students studying in the specialty «Accounting and Taxation» acquires special importance [5].

The specialized competencies of the modern accountant should include:

- knowledge of legislative norms and standards (at the same time, the accountant must understand not only national legislation – current legal acts, codes, Regulations (Standards) of Accounting, as well as international financial reporting standards (IFRS, US GAAP));

- knowledge of the English language (when expanding partnerships with foreign companies, the accountant must be competent in documentation that can be created in a foreign language);
- knowledge of specialized software (since every enterprise keeps records using specialized accounting programs, so the ability to work with them is one of the standard requirements) [2].

If we talk about the soft skills of a modern accountant, this includes a set of non-specialized skills that are responsible for successful participation in the work process, high productivity and, unlike specialized skills, are not related to a specific field. Within this component, it is worth highlighting: social-behavioral competencies (communication; interpersonal skills; intercultural interaction skills) and cognitive skills (self-development; organization; management skills; focus on achieving results; creativity, adaptability, critical thinking, etc.). The key skills of this group are usually communication skills, the ability to work in a team, creativity, punctuality, balance, analytical and critical thinking, leadership qualities, attentiveness, etc.

Attention to the role and priority of soft and hard skills in professional activity is growing every year. In the conditions of behavioral economics, the problem of interaction with employees who have strong technical skills, but lack non-technical skills – communication and teamwork – has become relevant. Both business efficiency and their personal professional success depend on the correct construction of the hierarchy of employees' skills [4].

The study of hard and soft skills is mainly carried out in two main directions, namely: in the context of the formation of educational programs of a higher educational institution and in the part of the formation of a system of professional skills that meet the tasks of business. Hard skills are defined more clearly than soft skills and are described in educational professional programs for each specialty and in handbooks of qualification characteristics of professions. For accountants, professional skills are defined by regulatory documents. With soft skills, the situation is diametrically opposite, but more attention is paid to them, especially in the conditions of the behavioral and digital economy.

As evidenced by the results of already conducted research, accountants value hard skills much more, because they are easier to measure or evaluate. For example, a professional accountant will easily answer questions regarding the documentation of operations, accounting methods and preparation of financial reports. If a specialist develops and takes advanced training courses, he has the appropriate certificates and diplomas that confirm the hard skills he has acquired. Certificates from ACCA, CAP and CIPA indicate a higher professional level of an accountant.

However, in the professional sphere, a person's success depends on 85% of soft skills and only 15% on hard skills, so at job interviews they mostly offer to pass tests or ask questions that have practically nothing to do with professional skills [2].

The results of recent studies show that 93% of employers are interested in the soft skills of a candidate for a position, which is explained by the change in the economy and the development of digital technologies. Thus, in an accountant, employers value and consider critical thinking, problem-solving and negotiation skills, leadership and management, as well as communication skills useful for improving business efficiency. In addition, it is important to determine whether a person is stress-resistant, how seriously he will treat his duties, how he will get along with colleagues and business partners.

Thus, the competencies of a modern accountant are knowledge, skills and experience that objectively help a graduate of an educational institution in solving any tasks, as well as a set of personal qualities and abilities necessary for successfully mastering a certain activity. Therefore, the importance of both groups of skills for the performance of professional tasks by an accountant is undeniable. The success of a modern accountant's

career directly depends on achieving a balance of soft and hard skills. Educational institutions and professional organizations of accountants should play a leading role in the formation of soft and hard skills.

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