How to support newcomers working in Cafe Europe

HAND GUIDE FOR YOUTH WORKERS: Soft Skills for Youth workers and Volun-teers

Cafe Europe

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Learning aims and objectives

The following guide was drawn from the questionnaires and interviews conducted by the consortium partners to local potential participants in the project. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce major soft skills that participants will develop during the project, as well as the methods that will be used.

Using the knowledge from this chapter, the participants will have logically structured methods of tackling practical problems, developing their own skills and improving their efficiency as a team.

Introduction

Soft skills or interpersonal skills can be considered as a combination of social skills and communication skills. Hard skills are those that are acquired in a formal way at school, educational institutions and higher education, and have to do with the requirements, knowledge and skills, both technical and formal, to be able to develop a specific activity. Hard skills are those that help us to specialize in a specific area in a professional way, acquired in an educational institution. Soft skills are those learnt in a continuous way in our personal development and that help us develop in both private as professional life. We can learn hard and soft skills. All types of skills are important and necessary depending on the job to be performed. In the following, we want to shortly describe how a skill is acquired and learned.

In this section we will go through the most important soft skills, as well as how you can develop and hone them throughout your experience in the project.

Communication

One of the main skills that the potential participants wished to improve on was communication. Communication in this instance, due to the participant pool, includes both social skills and language skills, as many potential participants are not native speakers of the language of the countries they live in. Communication is an exceptionally important soft skill professionally, especially in the context of working at Cafe Europe, and improvement of said skill will most likely increase the employability of the participants. Better language skills will also improve the ability of the participants to integrate into society and reduce the social stigma and intolerance they may face due to their different nationality.

The project by default will improve the participants' communication skills, as it will bring them in contact with multiple people on a daily basis, requiring them to interact and learn new social skills.

Practical exercises:

Simulation: Try to split into teams of cafe workers and customers, taking turns to communicate. Pause whenever you feel like you need assistance or a break, and ask your teammates for support during the exercise. This will gradually teach you how to participate and run the cafe. Morever, simulated interactions with customers can be used to help the participants practice and feel more confident to deal with the real interactions in the future.

In terms of language, the participants should be placed in roles depending on their existing skills and preferences, so a person who does not feel confident with their language skills can start from a position without a lot of interaction with customers, and gradually move to the front of the cafe as they build their knowledge and confidence. For example, someone who isn't confident with people should try slowly taking on more and more responsibilities involving people throughout the project, at their own pace in order to improve that skill.

Responsibility

Another important skill that wasn't reported frequently in the questionnaires and interviews was responsibility. It will be included in this set of guidelines however, since it is a crucial soft skill that will be evaluated throughout the project.

Responsibility can be improved and tracked internally by the participants. Responsibility should be enforced in a positive manner, rather than a negative one. Specifically, focus should be given on incentive and reward, rather than control and punishment (Social Theory Y vs Theory X). Encouragement is a better way to motivate members of a group to undertake their tasks with responsibility, than them doing it due to fear of repercussions. Participant attendance, whether everyone is doing what they have been assigned, personal evaluation through mutual discussion and sharing experiences or concerns with co-workers can greatly help with raising responsibility.

You can find out more about Theory X and Theory Y here: https://www.slideshare.net/Aglaiaconnect/theory-x-and-theory-y-of-motivation

Team Building

One of the soft skills that was reported during the interviews and questionnaires was team building. It is an essential skill in terms of running or working at Cafe Europe, as it is a system that requires coordination, task division, responsibility, and respect for one's peers.

In order to empower team building, participants are encouraged to do the following in groups:

1.Identifying individual strengths and weaknesses, share them with your team and discuss how everyone can work together in harmony.

2.Identifying goals. Discuss what your personal goals are and what the goal of the team should be. Make sure you are all on the same page in terms of what you want this cafe to be.

3.Dividing tasks based on these strengths and weaknesses, while taking into consideration improvement goals (for example, someone who is not good at communicating but wishes to improve can be gradually placed at different positions to ensure that the team works properly, while they improve on their weakness before moving to their desired position)

4.Problem and conflict management. Define a strategy of problem solving and conflict management. You can either agree to discuss everything as a team or elect someone to act as the leader in times when quick decisions or conflicts need to be resolved.

5.Focus on flexibility, meaning the ability of the team to adapt to the needs of its members. Timetables, roles and individual tasks should be clearly defined and allocated, but at the same time, members should be understanding towards their peers. Discuss your time and other responsibilities and try to accommodate everyone's needs, without burdening some members of the team more than others.

Reflection and Presentation

Presentation skills and reflection skills will be useful towards the end of the project, where the participants will have to present their experiences by reflecting upon them. They are not only useful skills for professional but also for personal development.

In order to facilitate reflection and presentation, we will utilize the "Four Fs" model (Greenaway Model of reflection) to create a logical and useful reflection framework that will be helpful for the participants, as it will provide them with a comprehensive way to reflect and evaluate their experiences, as well as help the consortium as it can be used in the evaluation of the project.

The four Fs model refers to the following process:

1. Facts: An objective account of what happened. Try to objectively describe the situation and the different factors that contributed to it.
2. Feelings: The emotional reactions to the situation. Try to remember how you felt and how these feelings affected your actions.
3. Findings: The concrete learning that you can take away from the situation. What did you learn from this experience?
4. Future: Structuring your learning in a way that you can use it in the future. What have you learned and how can you use this in the future? What things will you improve? What things will you repeat, and which ones will you avoid?

Do' s	Dont' s
Focus on slowly and methodically developing your soft skills, according to your own existing skills and capabilities	Isolate yourself in your comfort zone, avoiding things that you feel that you are not very good at.
Coordinate with your team and communicate your needs, wants and concerns.	Act on your own or feel peer-pressured into something that you are not comfortable with.
Try to find common ground during a conflict and try to understand the perspective of others	Take conflicts personally. People are different, and differences of opinions are natural.
Include everyone and include them equally	Exclude people from the group, or forming internal groups that exclude others.
It's okay to make mistakes. You learn from them.	Give negative feedback and make insulting remarks
Use the methodologies described in this hand guide, even if some seem trivial. The purpose of these suggestions is to create a logical framework to develop skills.	Go in without planning or discussing what you want to do with your team.

Phases of learning a skill

Learning a new skill can at times be a completely natural process, while other times it may be an overwhelming experience. In either case, it's best if you approach the learning process through a 4-phase system, which will maximize the benefit of the process, while at the same time making it more manageable and stress-free.

The process involves analysing your strengths and weaknesses and identifying a specific gap in your skill set, which you were either already aware of or have just realized. This makes the gap conscious. Once this is done, through practice, you will begin improving. This means that you are actively and consciously acquiring a skill, which is called conscious competence. Finally, once this skill is sufficiently acquired, you will begin using it without even thinking about it, which is the stage that we ideally want to reach, which is called the unconscious competence.

1. Unconscious incompetence: we don't know that we don't possess a skill.

2. Conscious incompetence: we know that we do not possess a skill, we are aware of our "lack".

3. Conscious competence: I have decided that I want to acquire this skill. I get training to be able to perfect it. This is the moment when I have to think about what I am doing at all times.

4. Unconscious competence: I have satisfactorily acquired this skill, in fact it has been so acquired and is so ingrained in our mind that we develop it and put it into practice without even thinking about it. In short, interpersonal skills help us to differentiate ourselves from other people.

Further reading

You should now have a good understanding of Soft Skills and how to develop and use them. Here's what you can do next:

1.In Chapter 7 of this Hand Guide, you will learn more about how to use your reflection skills to evaluate the impact that Cafe Europe has had on your skills, as well as assess your overall experience.
2.In the e-learning course, in Module 7, you will have the opportunity to learn more about soft skills and their applications.
3.In the next chapter of this Hand Guide, you will be introduced to cultural sensitivity, which in itself is a very important soft skill. Make sure you keep all the things you read here in mind when you move on to the next chapter, in order to ensure that your experience is the best one possible in this multicultural endeavour.

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