

What to bring to the table? An examination of requirements in job announcements targeting media and communication graduates

Abstract

Digital transformation and disruption fundamentally alter working environments in corporations of all sizes and industries: Agile, temporary project teams, innovative office spaces and techniques of “new work”, digital tools and applications, among others, illustrate responses to the new market situation. The changing conditions under which people work today have been examined extensively (e.g., de Leede & Heuver, 2017; Baarne, Houtkamp & Knotter, 2010). As a result, companies’ expectations of the qualifications and practical skills of their (future) employees are changing as well (e.g., European Union, 2017). This is particularly true for the media and communications sector, which has been the driving force behind many of these trends (e.g., Deuze & Prenger, 2019). However, in literature on human resource management in media and communication, these new employer demands have not yet been sufficiently investigated.

Our study aims to capture employers’ demands with regard to expertise, skills and qualifications of their future employees. We propose the following research question: What do media and communications companies expect from media and communication graduates? We address this question against the backdrop of new work and HR management studies (e.g., Hays, 2017; Mishra, 2014; Rump & Eilers, 2006) as well as prior studies of job announcements (Guo & Volz, 2019) and by means of a non-reactive, empirical approach: Job announcements posted by companies and targeted at media and communication graduates are evaluated, since they have proven to be an useful basis for the early investigation of changing employer demands (e.g., Guo & Volz, 2019; Kang & Ritzhaupt, 2015). We have acquired a rich dataset of 4.466 German job postings from February 2019 specifically targeted at graduates of media and communication programs; a sample of 879 job announcements was analyzed applying quantitative standardized content analysis.

Our study sheds light on specific requirements that companies name in job announcements targeting media and communications graduates. In terms of personal skills, our findings highlight requirements such as communication skills (65%), an independent working style (38%) technical know-how (37%) as well as team spirit (36%). Regarding individual characteristics, a high degree of initiative (23%), creativity (21%), flexibility (13%) and reliability (12%) play a major role in job announcements. Among typical hard skills associated with the media and communication sector (e.g., media production, design, management), a special emphasize of our study is on the practical data and programming, thus reflecting a general trend towards datafication (van der Aalst, 2014).

From our point of view, the media industry serves as a ‘canary in the coal mine’: As a sector that was hit by digitization early on and in which the world of work has changed abruptly, it could be a blue print for certain trends in the entire labor market. We therefore see our findings as relevant for other industries in order to anticipate potential developments of working conditions.

Keywords: skills, work environments, HR, media graduates, job announcements, quantitative content analysis

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