

HARD SKILLS – CORE OF THE PROFESSION

Definition and meaning of hard skills

A well-known competence model distinguishes between technical competence, methodological competence, social competence and self-competence. With this consideration I assign the hard skills to professional and partly to methodological competence. The people acquire them in training and further education. It is the skills that make up a profession. The difficult thing about them is that they quickly become outdated. Therefore, continuous further training is necessary to keep them up to date (lifelong learning). Rapid technological progress means that training institutes have difficulty keeping their courses up to date. The further development of knowledge must therefore increasingly take place on the job. Another challenge is that hard skills are difficult to transfer to other fields. They are often industry- and function-specific. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to pay attention to the extent to which they are transferable skills. This consideration is indispensable for professional lateral shifts.

Relationship between hard skills and soft skills

The soft skills in the above-mentioned competence model are mainly to be found in the social and self-competences. In somewhat simplified terms, they form the personality of people. Their significance is more difficult to grasp than that of the hard skills. Since the latter can be certified in job references and diplomas, people feel more secure about them. Hard skills are also mentioned first in job advertisements. This gives the impression that they have a higher priority per se. However, in the case of highly qualified jobs, I refer to them as hygiene factors. This means that they are the prerequisite for applicants to be invited to a job interview. The final decision for the recruitment is usually based on soft skills. Success in a management or leadership position also depends heavily on them. But ultimately, success requires a good combination of technical, social and personal skills.