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## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SOFT SKILLS FOR FUTURE IT PROFESSIONALS**

Compared to the past, IT specialists today face more and more complicated problems. This not only requires technical expertise but also flexible thinking. Automation, artificial intelligence, and rapid technological change all mean that how we approach problem-solving has already changed. This is where the combination of creativity and skills for solving problems will be vitally important for workers in the future.

This topic is relevant because the classical approaches to the work of the IT industry gradually give way to more flexible and non-standard ways. In an increasingly competitive environment for companies and professionals alike, the capability to respond to changes at high speed and come up with new ideas and solutions is becoming critical.

Initially, soft skills play a key role in a successful IT career, complementing technical expertise. Skills such as critical thinking and teamwork are equally necessary as system design, coding, and data analysis. However, a lot of IT specialists fail because they do not have the right skills in communication, teamwork, and adaptability – all essential for driving innovation and projects. Research highlights that IT professionals must smoothly integrate technical expertise with soft skills to succeed in today's dynamic work environment (de Campos, de Resende, & Fagundes, 2020, 1505).

Also, creative thinking helps IT professionals to develop innovative solutions to complex technological challenges. Whether designing user-friendly software, enhancing cybersecurity protocols, or advancing artificial intelligence algorithms,

creativity serves as a driving force behind progress in IT. Sadly, IT professionals are not developing creative and problem-solving skills, which is subsequently creating a growing 'skills gap' between industry demand and workforce supply (Martz, Hughes, & Braun, 2017, 41). As a result, bridging this gap demands a well-organized education and training program that encourages crisis management and innovation.

Furthermore, problem-solving is still a fundamental skill for IT professionals. This is because, in their work, they frequently face technical challenges that test their logical and analytical thinking in order to solve them. From debugging software to optimizing networks, effective problem-solving ensures the smooth and efficient operation of IT systems. Additionally, research shows that even physical education can play a surprisingly big role in the development of problem-solving skills by promoting cognitive flexibility and strategic thinking (Andres, 2021, 3). This proves once again how important interdisciplinary approaches are in IT education. A variety of teaching methods really helps to pump up the ability to find non-standard solutions.

As I have already mentioned, technologies are changing rapidly, and IT specialists have to constantly learn, including the development of soft skills. In today's reality, employers value not only technical knowledge but also the ability to think critically, express ideas clearly, and work in a team with different people. Indeed, soft skills are considered one of the most important success factors for students pursuing careers in IT (Shlenova, 2024, 45). So, if universities and educational institutions take the development of soft skills seriously, graduates will enter the labor market much better prepared. With the IT industry changing every day, this is no longer just a 'nice bonus' but a must-have for a successful career.

In conclusion, we all can agree on the importance of creative thinking and problem-solving skills for IT professionals, as they empower them to tackle complex challenges effectively and drive technological advancements. It is these skills that allow them to find innovative solutions and drive technology forward. Without them, the risk of falling behind the real needs of the industry only increases. That is why integrating soft skills into training is no longer just 'useful' but critical. This is the only way to educate specialists who will not be afraid of change and will be able to turn it into innovation.

For IT education to be truly effective, we first need to figure out the best way to develop soft skills in students. Specifically, we should explore interdisciplinary approaches that organically combine technical training with the development of

strategic thinking and cognitive abilities. Moreover, practical initiatives such as structured mentoring programs, active collaborations with industry leaders, and immersive, interactive workshops that replicate real-world challenges can play a crucial role. By implementing such approaches, educators, and businesses will finally be able to find common ground. The result? Graduates who understand not only the code but also the real needs of the market are the specialists who will shape the future of IT.

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### **THRIVING IN THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE: TRENDS, OBSTACLES, AND TRANSFORMATIVE SOLUTIONS**

Globalization and the Need for Lifelong Learning Experience: rapid technological changes and international competition require professionals to continuously update their knowledge. (Jones, R., 2023, 4). Challenge: unequal access to quality education and resources in different regions of the world. (UNESCO, 2020, 5). Prospect: development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and digital platforms to democratize education (Kasrad R., 2023, 4).

Cross-Cultural Competence as a Key Skill (SkillsYouNeed, nd., 4). Experience: international teams and global markets compel professionals to master intercultural communication. Challenge: cultural barriers and stereotypes that complicate collaboration (Jihaneziyan, 2023, 3). Prospect: implementation of international internships and exchange programs to foster inclusive thinking.

Digital Transformation: challenges and opportunities (Red Hat, 2022). Experience: automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping professions, demanding new technical skills. Challenge: risk of displacing "traditional" specialists.