CAN A «MARKETER-PROGRAMMER» MEAN A PROGRAMMER WITH USEFUL KNOWLEDGE IN MARKETING?

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The article deals with the process of reviewing the specialty "digital marketing" and a term "marketer-programmer" from a different angle. In my research, I have investigated some other aspects in daily activities of programmers and tried to prove that they also need knowledge in marketing as marketers need experience in programming.

Bertrand Russel told, "In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted". [1]

Let us do it.

What does a marketer-programmer mean? Is it about a digital marketer or about a marketer with some useful knowledge in programming? Can it mean a programmer with helpful knowledge in marketing, which is used in every day working activities?

If for the last question you are sure the answer is "strictly no", then, please, return to the Bertrand Russel's quote.

Students of my specialty besides some marketing disciplines, study database, programming of network applications, basis of object-oriented programming, etc. However, if you visit the website of our university, you will find no information about graduates from our specialty as qualified specialists in a programming sphere and how marketing helps them on a daily basis. I mean that graduates from our specialty are considered to be marketers with useful knowledge in programming, but not vice versa. So, why does nobody consider us to be programmers with necessary knowledge in marketing?

You can tell me that it is silly, because programmers don't need marketing at all. Apparently, marketing and programming never meet each other in your head. Also you can meet such stereotypes as "programmers are about hard skills, not soft". But this is not the case.

Do not you believe? I understand your doubt and I was "on the dark side", too, until my elder sister Polina, who has been working in EPAM for over a year, opened my eyes. According to her overseeing, IT-specialists, which are seemed to be far away from marketing, face the process of solving marketing tasks practically every day.

In a nutshell the problem is in the fact that programmers, testers and other IT-specialists sometimes deal with such things as "promotion" or "advertisement" of their product or the part of work they have done.

Imagine you are a programmer with great hard skills only. You deny the importance of soft skills. So, you do not know country profiles of people from other countries and how to negotiate successfully. In addition, you are not aware of time management, rules of business communications, you are not able to

hold a self-presentation and a meeting effectively. Instead, you have deep knowledge in databases, networks and programming languages. Will you survive in the world of outsourcing with all this?

If you answered: "Yes, I will", would you change your opinion if I tell you the fact that in EPAM you need to have deep knowledge in both types of skills (hard and soft) to pass an assessment successfully from one level to another? Moreover, the aforementioned soft skills, such as knowledge of country profiles of people from other countries and awareness of business communications concepts, for example, are taken from the titles of EPAM courses.

Let me tell you that outsourcing is the practice of obtaining goods and services from a foreign supplier, the role of which EPAM acts. As an example, think of a hair salon that sends towels out for laundry rather than cleaning them in-house. That means that we have a customer and a performer, relationship between of which should be organized.

Let's assume that company MAZ needs an application. It acts as a customer. EPAM can implement an application. It acts as a performer. To organize the application development process EPAM sets up a project, which means a set of programmers and testers, combined in order to achieve one goal. Besides the fact that relationship should be properly organized internally: among programmers, among testers, among programmers and testers, the relationship should be organized between the overall team and the customer.

To do this EPAM uses Agile software development methodology in most of its projects. Agile software development methodology is an umbrella term for a set of practices based on the principles expressed in the Manifesto. One thing that separates Agile from other approaches to software development is the focus on the people doing the work and how they work together. Solutions evolve through collaboration between self-organizing cross-functional teams utilizing the appropriate practices for their context.

In the Agile Manifesto it is said: "Individuals and interactions over processes and tools. Working software over comprehensive documentation. Customer collaboration over contract negotiation. Responding to change over following a plan. That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more." [1]

Moreover, among 12 principles of the Manifesto you will found the following:
"The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation." [2]

The methodology includes such activities as daily meetings, retrospectives and demos.

What do daily meetings mean? Each day at the same time, the team meets to bring everyone up to date that is vital for coordination: each team members briefly describes any "completed" contributions and any obstacles that stand in their way. This meeting is normally timeboxed to a maximum duration of 15 minutes, though this can need adjusting for larger teams. If you sit in on a daily meeting as an observer, you will understand that it is an excellent way to learn a great deal very quickly about a team's familiarity with Agile practices.

A retrospective is a meeting that is held at the end of a working iteration. During the retrospective, the team reflects on what happened in the iteration and identifies actions for improvement going forward.

A demo meeting is an activity of a working iteration review where the completed product items are demonstrated with the goal of promoting an information-rich discussion between the performer team and a customer, for example.

All these activities are a recurring solution to a particular set of problems that occur when a group of people attempt to work together as a team. They are a mechanism to synchronise regularly so that teams can gain what is reflected in Table 1.

Table 1 – Helping items, provided by Agile

№	Items
1	Share understanding of goals. Even if they thought they understood each other at the start (which they probably didn't), their understanding drifts, as the context does within which they're operating. A "team" where each team member is working toward different goals tends to be ineffective.
2	Coordinate efforts. If the work doesn't need to be coordinated, you don't need a team. Conversely, if you have a team, I assume the work requires coordination. Poor coordination amongst team members tends to lead to poor outcomes.
3	Share problems and improvements. One of the primary benefits of a team versus working alone, is that team members can help each other when someone encounters a problem or discovers a better way of doing something. A "team" where team members are not comfortable sharing problems and/or do not help each other tends to be ineffective.

4	Identify as a team. It is very difficult to identify psychologically with a group if you don't regularly engage with the group. You will not develop a strong sense of relatedness even if you believe them to be capable and pursuing the same goals. [1]

So, being a programmer or a tester in an outsource IT-company you need to take part in activities, which need soft skills. To sell your own product, no matter whether it is a new application, a new idea or just a small talk about the tasks completed today and the tasks planned for tomorrow, you need to have at least some basic knowledge of marketing.

As we all know, marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society.

To gain soft skills programmers and testers, for example, can attend internal courses. But if you think of the most valuable resource of our life – time, you will probably postpone the attendance these courses because you understand that you have not enough time to learn, indeed, basic skills.

I have found the solution. It lies in the fact that we can save time and nerve cells thanks to the proper choice of a method of learning it. And the method is to inject information about this or that helpful soft skill in such a way technical specialists will not feel it. I want the helpful tips to be like the 25th frame. For example, let this information be printed on tea bags or be left inside biscuits with wishes, carefully provided by the company.

I hope I succeeded to prove that positive answers to the question from the beginning: "Can it mean a programmer with helpful knowledge in marketing, which is used in every day working activities?" have a place to be.

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