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To cite this Article / Käytä viittauksessa alkuperäistä lähdettä:

Lehto, S. & Merviö, E. 2017. How to build a community that adds value to educating young entrepreneurs. Teoksessa Saraketo, H & Nevalainen, T (toim.) Theories and experiences on team learning – Academic adventures in Proakatemia. Tampere: TAMK University of Applied Sciences, 62-71.

URL: <http://julkaisut.tamk.fi/PDF-tiedostot-web/B/90-Theories-and-experiences-on-team-learning-Academic-adventures-in-Proakatemia.pdf>



HOW TO BUILD A
COMMUNITY THAT ADDS
VALUE TO EDUCATING
YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS





Sami Lehto, Coach & Alumni
Elina Merviö, Coach
Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Proakatemia
sami.lehto@tamk.fi - elina.mervio@tamk.fi

PROBLEM

Working life is in a constant change. Megatrends like automation, robotisation, artificial intelligence and digital platforms will shape the world as we know it. This causes pressure to education. What should we teach to young people preparing for working life, if we do not even know what kind of professions there will be 20 years from now? The Internet is full of different kinds of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) maintained by top universities of the world. There are plenty of other sources from which people can learn the skills that they want, when they want, and where they want.

What if working life begins to give similar value to skills learned outside of a school setting as to the skills learned at school? What could be the added value that universities can offer for future professionals, if the substance can be learned in other ways?

COMMUNITY IS A KEY BUILDING BLOCK IN PROAKATEMIA

Proakatemia is a program of entrepreneurship and team leadership at Tampere University of Applied Sciences, where people learn by doing. Ownership of the learning transfers to the students through the framework of entrepreneurship. Because students can create their own learning paths, learning is impossible to scale or copy: learning builds on individuals.

At Proakatemia, curriculum is a framework that creates a context for studying. Curriculum states what kind of skills or themes students can learn, rather than trying to define exactly what students should learn. Curriculum is a way to create opportunities for students. In addition to curriculum, Proakatemia uses shared values and vision as guidelines to daily activities. So that these shared values and vision could work, it requires a close community. Community needs to identify the shared values and vision and want to act according. When confronted by problems, community always works through shared values. It leaves room for applications and doesn't force teams to work according to one predefined process.

The values are:

Trust – Proakatemia is the most vibrant and inspiring entrepreneurial community in Finland. It draws in influencers and thought leaders in business life.

Courage – In Proakatemia we desire growth. We challenge each other to surpass ourselves and to seize the opportunities of the whole world.

Action – In Proakatemia, we employ an agile mindset in scanning for new entrepreneurial ideas. We make digital possibilities a reality. As entrepreneurs, we are resilient and strive for success.

Learning – Proakatemia is a paragon of learning, taking action together and inspiring professional growth.

Success – Proakatemia is the top university of new knowledge and competence for the entrepreneurs who will build the next decade.

However, community does not create itself; it requires work to build and maintain. In Proakatemia, community is built on different kind of elements, whose foundation is in shared sources of motivation. These are (according to Daniel Pink)

1. Purpose
2. Autonomy
3. Mastery

Purpose refers to the desire that people have to create their own path. There is a shared interest for entrepreneurship, constant self-improvement and learning. Purpose is something that drives people forward.

Autonomy refers to apparent freedom. There are no strict rules or predefined path, only a framework in which each will operate. Entrepreneurship allows people to be autonomous and to chase their dreams.

Mastery refers to the possibility to become extremely good at any given field. Proakatemia students have a possibility to invest in what really is intriguing. Stories that come from

history of previous teams in Proakademia encourage the hearts of others to accomplish more. There are many stories where a team entrepreneur has built a path from nothing to a flourishing business in only a few years and continued as an entrepreneur after finishing his or her studies. Stories like these enable impossible or distant dreams to become achievable. Expertise does not appear immediately after completion of a diploma, but it is built with hard work, studying and reflection. Everyone should build their own expert identity.

Proakademia operates differently from other universities internationally. Usually, universities give much weight on numeric evaluation and external motivation sources. However, amongst others, Pink states that activities that demand cognitive abilities usually don't reach higher performance levels with rewards. These rewards can be seen also as a numeric evaluation. In Proakademia motivation comes from within, according to Daniel Pink's three dimensions.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, TRANSFERRED OWNERSHIP & CULTURE OF SHARING

In Proakademia ownership of studying is transferred to the students. Coaches do not demand developing predefined substances, but rather challenge students to think what the key competences are that would best serve student's own future. Key elements include expanding the perspective and helping students to think. Most importantly, coaches very rarely give answers. Their most valued ability is to ask the right kind of questions. Coaches are more pedagogical experts than strong entrepreneurial authorities.

Shared responsibility means that members of the community share the obligations and responsibilities of the community. Every teampreneur and team in Proakatemia is responsible to count all the hours they spend with Proakatemia studies themselves, and ECTS's are granted based on these calculations. Team leaders, assistant coaches and other responsible student roleplayers form a management group that has dialogues about important community-related matters and makes decisions concerning them.

Learning contracts are a key element for building an environment of trust. The key questions of a learning contract are:

- * Where have I been? (History)
- * Where am I now? (Current reality, feelings, base for expectations)
- * Where am I going? (Vision for the future)
- * How do I get there? (Steps and actions that need to be taken)
- * How do I know I am there? (Measuring the goal)

Community aims to share information openly. In Proakatemia, students share their reflective essays in a digital platform that is open for everyone. In a monthly community event, teams share their business key-figures, talk about successes, failures and major projects. Business Leaders of the teams, Assistant Coach and other responsible student members of the community form a managing board that makes decisions regarding important matters that relate to the community at the time, along with the presence of staff members.

During the first year teampreneurs share their history with other team members, creating an open atmosphere where one can share important parts of life in a confidential way. By describing their current situation they give a context where they operate, and by talking about future they give building blocks that can be used when building goals for the team and individuals. Learning contracts work as a tool to spark up reflection and set up goals, but it also gives space for teampreneurs to challenge each other and give feedback.

In many ways, a process that James Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner describe in their book “A Leadership Challenge” fits very well in to the process that is used in Proakatemia to build teams and community.

1. Model the way
2. Inspire a shared vision
3. Challenge the process
4. Enable others to act
5. Encourage the heart

FEEDBACK OR FEEDFORWARD

Being able to give and receive feedback is one of the most essential elements of developing individuals and communities. In Finnish cultural context, feedback is usually given when something needs to be adjusted. Culturally, feedback lacks a positive aspect. In other cultures, this situation could be reversed. Giving and receiving feedback is difficult because it often relates to very personal area. However, balanced, direct and correctly-timed feedback gives personal and organizational development an opportunity to develop fast. The

problem is that it requires good skills in receiving and giving feedback. In Proakatemia, teampreneurs develop these skills from the start. There are many tools that are used. The most important of these tools are:

Motorola, which is used after all projects. Key questions are:

- * What went well?
- * What could be developed?
- * What did we learn?
- * What action should be taken in the future?

Motorola can also be used as a pre-action feedback model to predict the possible outcomes or as a mid-project tool to determine position.

Ring theory, which is used to evaluate individuals' situations in the team. It consists of 4 rings. The core, or the first ring, forms the core of the team; its most notable members. The 2nd ring consist of key members that contribute a lot to the team, but who the team could survive without. The 3rd ring includes "hang-arounds", or members who belong to a team but give no significant contribution. 4th ring members are in danger to drop out. Every team member evaluates where they see each other in this map. Based on results, the team usually spends up to 4 hours discussing, telling feedback and deciding about future actions that should be taken as individuals and as a team.

Feedback could be called "**feedforward**", as one of the most important characteristic in valuable feedback it is the dimension that looks forward.

CONCLUSION

Community is something that can inspire and create a safe environment to fail or succeed. In an inspiring community others won't judge, members get constructive feedback and developing the organization is mutually beneficial because of shared responsibility. Community is something that members feel strongly through shared experiences, values and mission. Sometimes members even describe it as a tribe or a religion. The strong bond that ties members of the community together also gives value to the community after graduation, because alumni still want to be part of it in one way or another.

There are many cultural aspects that, in some ways, predefine how community can be built. In Proakademia some of those cultural context factors are strong equality and democracy; these are also some of the most important building blocks of the community.

Strong community that builds on being, working, experiencing, and sharing together is something that is difficult to copy or scale up in other places or in a virtual environment.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE PROAKATEMIA COMMUNITY

VISION & VALUES

TRUST
COURAGE
LEARNING
DEEDS
SUCCESS

MOTIVATION

AUTONOMY
PURPOSE
MASTERY
FEELING OF NO LIMITS

YEARLY EVENTS

TEAM DEAL
PROAKATEMIA-DAY
BIRTHDAY OF PROAKATEMIA
SPRING CELEBRATION
SALES DAY
GRADUATION GALA
INITIATION PARTY
24H INNOVATION CHALLENGE
PROJEKTORI & PROSEMMA
FINAL CAMP

COACHING

PERSONAL CONNECTION
DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSIONS
PERSONAL STUDY PLAN
CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

ALUMNI

MENTORS
ALUMNI EVENTS
ALUMNI OFFICE
ACCESS TO PROAKATEMIA EVENTS

TEAM LEARNING

LEARNING CONTRACTS
TRANSPARENCY
TEAMS
BUSINESS LEADERS
ASSISTANT COACH
HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HEAD OF MARKETING

DIALOGUE

PAJA OR DIALOGUE SESSION
LEARNING CELLS
PROAKATEMIA BOARD

FEEDBACK
HONEST / DIRECT COMMUNICATION
LISTEN
WAIT
RESPECT