'Build It and They Will Come' Doesn't Work for Leadership Communities

"It used to be said 'build it and they will come'... But if you let THEM build it, and let THEM co-create it... then they're much more comfortable coming in."

It's 2017, so you've undoubtedly been involved in an online workplace community, whether big or small. And despite the best intentions, it trails off.

Perhaps it aimed too high, and after a couple of small successes people forgot about it. Perhaps it was made as a token gesture for a new policy and never got started. Perhaps it was purposefully temporary, like for a team project.

The point is, we all know from personal experience that **'Build it and they will come'** never worked for online communities.

When building a Leadership Development community, these challenges are all the stronger. For the users, the leaders, it has to become a habit. You can't just build a digital space for it to occur and expect it to become a self-sustaining digital learning network. You have to build the investment of the leaders into its very foundation.

That's why we get them to help design the community. From the beginning.

It's all about finding a fair balance between the company's Leadership competencies and addressing the direct needs of the Leaders using the community.

We won't declare a pilot community ready to use until we've interviewed a core group of potential users (for just 15 minutes each) on what their needs are, how much time they spend on self-development, what they want from a community etc.

Because if we don't get them to help us design the community, how do we know for sure it's going to be of any use to them? Each community we make is different and relevant that way.

Even our content shows that balance. Each micro-lesson needs to be immediately relevant and practical for the leaders, and when isolated these lessons can be seen as almost reactive to the community needs. But, overall, the learning is guided by the needs of the organisation.

There's no better way of building investment than by asking them to lay their own brick.

Here's a 1-minute video on this subject. We have 10 years curating award-winning online Leadership Development communities.