

# CREATE COURSES FOR PROFIT



**IDEA GENERATOR**

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## Pick a Topic You Love

You've heard it said that the best way to create a successful course – or a successful book, or digital product of any sort – is to build it on a topic you are passionate about. One that comes easily to you; one in which you have a solid background.

That's true. But it's only the beginning of an important step. And that's where many people stop.

Once you've lined up a topic you love, it's as important to qualify that topic as it is to identify the right customers. If you don't, you risk either getting no takers, or else getting droves of people to your free webinar, but no one who actually wants to invest in a paid course.

## Ask yourself, "Will people buy it?"

There is a difference between what people will invest in for free, and what they will spend money to get.

To find out, you need to do a little research.

## Where to Research

### Shopping Cart Metrics

Track your ideal customer's spending habits. If you already sell digital products related to the topic you want to create a course for, then analyze your **shopping cart metrics** for these related digital products.

Take a second look at your shopping cart metrics and find out what your actual customers DO spend on. Is there a category or product you've been overlooking, mentally discounting or taking for granted?

Look at the results. Can you think of a better course you could create, attuned more to what they already spend on?

## Customer Service Interactions

Next, check your **customer service interactions**. It can be via email, Help Desk, customer service assistant, or social media comments and communications. What do your customers complain about the most? What do they praise the most?

Most importantly, what do they ask for? What do they want more of?

Customer service interactions are particularly insightful because people don't bother writing about something that is not important to them. They'll write because they are motivated to learn or use something – it matters. It's affecting them. They'll go the extra mile to get a solution that works. This is the area where people spend money when something matters enough to persevere in learning.

Complaints, in particular, can be gold when researching topics for a course. That's where your ideal customer TELLS you what their pain point is. Where they are stuck. What they don't understand. What is annoying them about existing courses?

## Social Media Analytics

Check your **social media insights**. See what topics are discussed in your top posts that get the most likes and engagements. What questions do people ask you or your competitors? What do they talk about in groups? Most important, what products do they either diss or recommend to each other? And what are the sticking points in those products?

## Competing Products, Books, or Courses

Research **competing products, books, or courses** too. What is the average price per unit? How many reviews or testimonials are on the product website, or on Amazon and Goodreads? What do these reviews say? Particularly look for comments like "worth every penny" or "don't waste your money".

Make notes on which related course topics are people paying for, as well as the courses that seem to garner the highest prices.

Which courses get the most reviews? And what do the reviewers say? Ask for? Complain about? Want more of?

Also, check out Amazon.com, Audible, Barnes & Noble, and other online bookstores. The reason being, if there are books on the topic, there's usually a market not only for the books but for courses too. It takes just moments to type your topic in the Books search bar and find out what's selling, what's not, and what's the hottest related topic.

**Amazon** can also be a great barometer about market saturation. If there are only two books on a topic and sales are minimal (ditto reviews), it's probably a topic that's not worth investing your time in.

On the other hand, if the market is beyond saturated – if there is book after book on the topic – then you either want to avoid such heavy competition or make sure you come up with an angle that is unique – an area of the topic others are missing but that there is high demand for.

Be sure to check Amazon's book market against course marketplaces. Remember that books are what people buy when they don't have the time or money to invest in a course. Try to determine from the reviews if this is the case – or if they're buying the books because they want more of the topic.

## Paid Market Research

Don't spend thousands of dollars for a report on general trends. Instead, be sure to select statistics geared to:

- A specific area/country
- A specific topic
- The specific year

## Do a Test Webinar

Producers do this before they invest in creating a new TV series. They make a pilot and see what sort of reaction the pilot gets.

Running a webinar on your topic teaching people about an essential aspect should be your version of a series pilot.

Treat it as you would any other webinar. Find others to interview you, promote the webinar. Put out a targeted ad or two. Talk it up to your email list, group members and social media followers in advance. In short, do everything you'd do to attract people to the actual course itself.

Now, how did that go? Did you get sign-ups for your webinar? For your actual course? How many people showed up, live? And how many viewed the replay?

How many downloaded the transcript, if you provided one?

What did that tell you about their learning preferences?

When you have defined your audience and your topic, the last important question not to skip is have you got something new and fresh to bring to the table?

We've spent quite a bit of time on getting your targeting right is really that important. Don't neglect the research. Find where your expertise and your audience's interests overlap. That's your sweet spot.

## Plow Ahead with Help or Input

It's one thing to do the research. Now you've got to test it. In addition to gauging audience interest, get feedback on the following course elements:

- Your title
- Your course content
- Your landing page
- Your marketing plan

Beta testing doesn't have to be a nightmare! Have a couple of friends or colleagues preview one or two lessons and get their input.

If your topic relates to a closed Facebook group or membership that you run, ask members for their input. Run a poll on your top title contenders. Run a poll on potential lesson titles. Ask either/or questions such as, "Would you rather see a lesson on landing page design or a walk-through of a specific landing page SaaS?"

Design a tightly-focused survey asking no more than ten key questions. Try running this with a small but valuable incentive such as a free template or a checklist to encourage people to complete the survey.

You can use either a free or paid survey, but if you are planning to use [Survey Monkey](#) to collect your responses, know that a paid account will also allow you to brand your survey, collect email signups, have access to priority 24/7 support, and more.

Survey Monkey has been in the business of helping marketers and entrepreneurs create useful surveys since 1999 and is the top choice of many.

Take a look at systems, software, and apps you already use, like Zapier. They often include survey capabilities too.

You don't need to get overly complicated in getting feedback on course components and structure. Just ask targeted questions and aim them at a few of the right people. But whatever you do, don't skip the feedback on your course as it is being created.

You will also get better results if you don't waste time and recruit the right people to help with it.

The latter includes:

- Hiring specialist freelancers and outsourcing elements of your course creation
- Creating a dream team
- Documenting and standardizing your process



## Areas You Should Consider Outsourcing

Any part of the process that isn't in your zone of genius that isn't within your own speciality zone.

You will lose money if you allow yourself to get bogged down handling areas that are outside of your own skill sets or talents.

Why invest days or weeks learning how to set up webinar software when you can have someone experienced in your chosen webinar platform and system set it up in an afternoon?

Why struggle to create a solid course structure when you have trouble writing coherent messages inside birthday cards to your nearest and dearest?

Hire a copywriter who is familiar with course creation and construction and have them polish your course for you.

Another solution is to buy quality, limited-license pre-made, private label rights course packages on topics that have already been professionally researched and written, and simply tweak these with specific examples or case studies to make them your own.

You can make your course even more unique by using this sort of PLR material as a structure, as a skeleton for your course, but you'll find it's a rock-solid skeleton that naturally gives you a focused end product when you add your own flare.

Don't procrastinate on getting help either. Don't wait till the last minute or until you've already got yourself in a mess with some aspect of the process.

Make a list with each step that goes into course creation and prioritize in order which ones you need to outsource.

It's important to keep sight of the big picture and having more than one set of eyes and skill sets will help you do that, so recruit them early.

## Brand Your Course

You don't have to have a nervous breakdown creating the course of the century or a sumptuous website – but considering how many proven and tested tools are available nowadays, and how many talented and skilled freelancers there are online, your course should feel clear and focused. And it should look great – so great that it feels far more appealing to potential students than your competition's courses.

Get one thing straight. Gorgeous design does NOT mean spending six thousand dollars on a website if you don't have the budget for that. You can do a stunning job by taking care of a few essential basics.

Use a current drag-and-drop WordPress Theme.

Even if you hire someone to set up your theme for you, if you have already chosen and purchased a quality theme or theme license, you'll save yourself a fortune in web design costs. You're not asking for design, just set-up. And your site will look like a dream.

Make sure your course branding matches your website.

Yes, it's that simple. Use your business logo in your course landing page and platform. Use your brand colors and images there too.

Course platforms such as Skillshare and Teachable provide you with templates, so be sure to customize them as much as you possibly can with your own unique branding elements.

## Brand your social media profiles

Make it a clean sweep, and use your logo, colors, and images on your social platforms too.

Most of all, DON'T overdesign! Choose your branding elements first and have them handy to apply to your online presences.

Keep things clean, clear, and simple.

## Plan Your Lessons

Even if your course is about a topic you know back-to-front, the whole point is to teach it to less knowledgeable people. Take the time to make sure every process is clearly explained.

Here's how to make sure your lessons sparkle.

- Create meticulous lesson plans that explain every step of the process. Give more detail than you think is necessary!
- Take out every detail that is not relevant to what they are learning in the course. For example, don't start explaining a complex concept or process that your students don't need to use right now to achieve the lesson goal or course goal. Table it for inclusion in a new Intermediate or Advanced course.
- Create detailed lesson plans well ahead of time.
- Start with a point-form checklist of what you need each lesson to cover.
- Your lesson should promise a resolution to that lesson, as well as move your student toward the course goal. Tell students precisely what they are going to learn at the beginning of a module. Stop when they have achieved that specific, single lesson goal.
- Don't wing it when it comes to video or audio lessons. Never record a video lesson without an outline, cue cards, or a script.
- Give your courses and lessons clear, descriptive names. People should be able to read the course or lesson name and know exactly what is being promised.
- Make sure course lessons follow a logical order and build on each other.

The structure is simple. At the end of each lesson, you will be able to perform the functions promised at the beginning of that lesson. Every point the instructor explains is relevant only to the lesson goal. There is no extraneous information to confuse the viewer.

The presenter is interested specifically in making sure the viewer understands the lesson. She is clearly not interested in just showing off her knowledge, nor does she preface a lesson with her life story. The result is

9:08 minutes of pure gold, at the end of which the viewer has mastered the basics of setting up an Excel workbook page.

Even if you have no interest in learning Excel, do yourself a favor and invest nine minutes in seeing how a master teacher presents a memorable and satisfying lesson.

Of course, this assumes that everyone who visits this lesson is a visual learner – someone who regularly turns to YouTube or other video platforms whenever that person needs to learn something.

Don't assume that's true for everyone. Think about learning processes. Some people love to listen to podcasts to learn things. Others love written instruction. Yet others prefer video, hands down.

The same goes for specific methods of instructions. These will mirror the learning style.

For example:

- **Visual learners** respond well to diagrams, animations, charts, pictograms or images, as well as demos
- **Auditory learners** respond well to auditory checklists or summaries at the end of a lesson – or added as resources
- **Kinesthetic learners** appreciate homework. Practical demos showing things being set up work well too.

How many of these tactics do you need to include? How many ***should*** you include?

While it's a great idea to reinforce a lesson with components that augment it, such as checklists, summaries, transcripts, workbooks, and/or exercises. You don't need to throw in everything plus the kitchen sink. Keep in mind, your ideal student won't be rigidly pigeon-holed into one specific learning style but is more likely a mix. Meaning it IS a good idea to add an extra resource – that transcript, or checklist, or slides, and so forth.

The trick is to be selective. Learn your ideal student's learning style beforehand, so you can tailor your support resources to her preferences.

## Research Competitor Courses for Inspiration

Many entrepreneurs launch online courses, and some are extremely successful. While you can certainly learn from their tactics, you should NEVER steal their formats, content, or ideas!

When you see a peer or competitor do something unique or compelling, identify exactly what it is that you love about what they did. Separate the principle from the execution.

For example, say you love a course module you watched because you found the little animations illustrating each point really made the course engaging for you. Don't rush out to hire the same artist and copy that format. Think about WHY you found it engaging.

Your reasons might end up something like this:

- a. "The animated shorts were funny and made a dull subject interesting."
- b. "Each animation reinforced and demonstrated a difficult point."
- c. "I'm a visual learner, and it helped me understand the concept."
- d. "I like humor. My mind wanders with grocery lists of instructions, and this made me hang in to see what the next animation would show."

Next, ask yourself if the reasons you liked the lesson would be the same reasons your own student would want something similar.

What you are really reacting to is not the format, it's the 'execution'.

You're reacting to:

- The reinforcement within the lesson
- The way the instructor made a dull process interesting

Those are the principles behind this particular instructor's approach.

How can you reinforce within your lesson?

Does it need breaking up into segments within the lesson segment?

Would a simple slide work just as well?

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Would image quotes work better?

Would a bullet list work best?

If you do decide to use cartoons or animations, don't copy that instructor's format exactly – that's robbing his or her brand. Find your own way to animate it.

Think about how you can make it completely your own. How can you change it to speak directly to your audience and suit your topic?

## Create a Genuine, Original Course

Instead of duplicating other online courses, explore using other formats.

Can you repurpose anything from your kids' homework or lesson plans?

How do podcasters teach listeners new ideas?

When you watch instructional TV shows, what helps you retain knowledge?

It's tempting to just recreate something you KNOW will work ... but you're better off doing your own thing!

Follow a strong, simple, repetitive structure but teach fresh new material.

That's what will really make your course memorable.

## Examples of a Course Outline

### **Lesson 1: The Secret to Course Success? Choose a Topic That THRILLS Your Fans**

Learning Objectives: Finding a Topic that Pays

- Identifying what your students will rush to pay for
- Beyond demographics – the secret audience data you can't ignore
- Recognizing the real stumbling-block – where are they truly stuck?
- What you should – and should not -- promise

- Finding your sweet spot where their needs and your skills and experience overlap
- How to tackle topics that have been done before, so your course stands out

## **Lesson 2: Why Picking the Perfect Name Will Make or Break Your Course**

Learning Objectives: How to Dig Deeper for the Perfect Name that Sells

- How to avoid boring course names while being clear and descriptive
- Five tiny tactics to make sure your course name sings and zings
- How to take naming your course to a higher level – even if you think you’ve nailed it
- Teaching them what to expect so you can fulfil their expectations
- The secret naming ingredient you MUST include

## **Lesson 3: The Best Way to Design Fun + Valuable Lessons**

Learning Objectives: Creating a Memorable Course with Entity Identity

- Working with your personality – not against it
- Identifying your strengths – so you can play them up
- What to do if your learning style and preferences don’t match theirs
- The one thing you can’t fake – and why you shouldn’t try
- The secret method that pros use to making course design easy
- Giving your lessons entity identity – three key ingredients and one secret spice you need

## **Lesson 4: 4 Key Reasons to Get Help Building Your Course**

Learning Objectives: Creating a course that will build your business

- How to leverage the skills of others to make your course launch succeed
- What you need to do yourself – and what you should always outsource

- How to stop yourself from veering off in wrong or confusing directions
- The most important step to add (it's one that others often miss!)
- 3 easy ways to keep your business growing while you're busy teaching your course

## Build Your Course for Profit

- ✓ Create a course that stands out from all its competitors
- ✓ Establish yourself as the ultimate authority on your course topic
- ✓ Keep students interacting with you long after your course is over
- ✓ Keep them looking to you for resources, tools, and learning over and over again