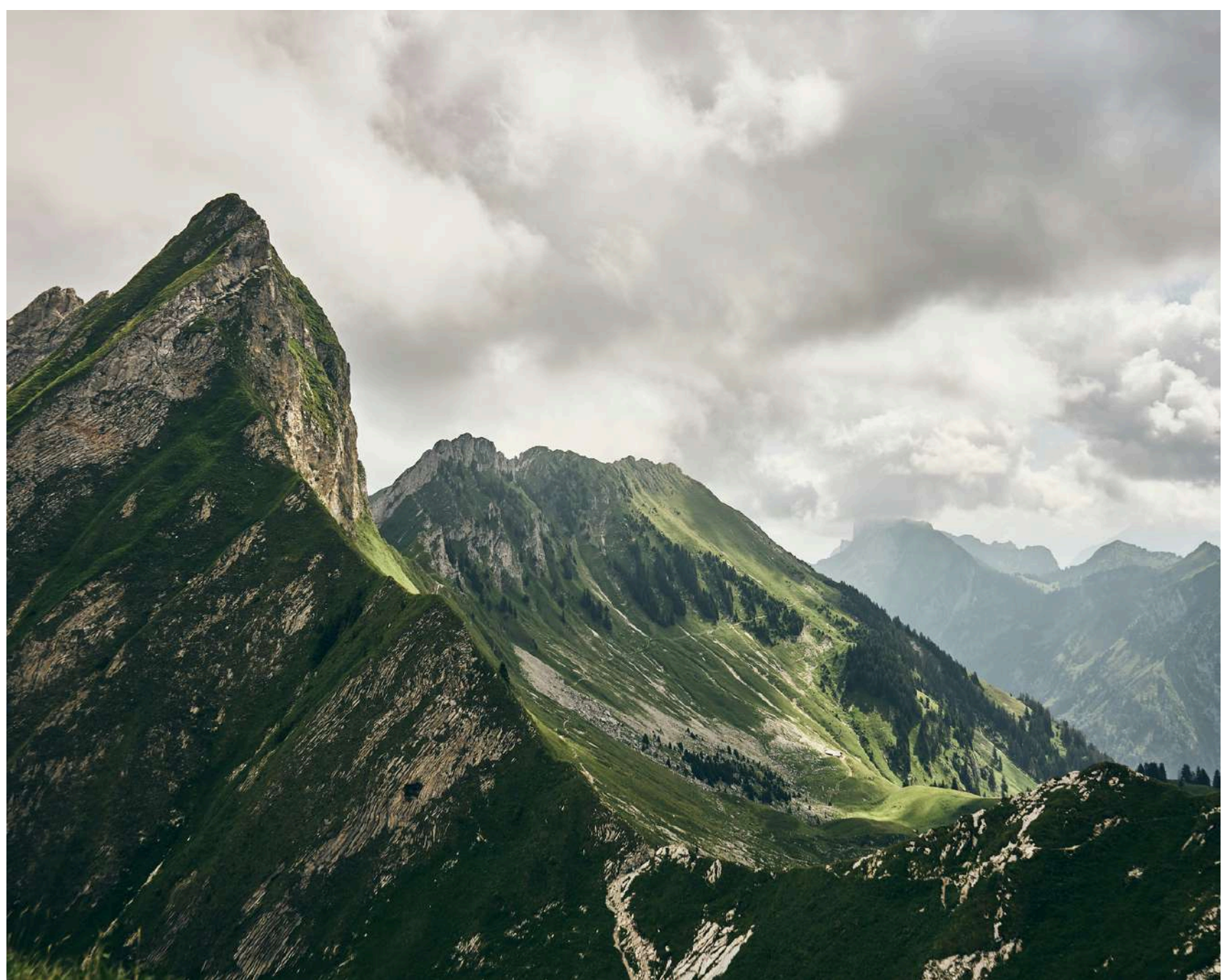


*"I've heard that people  
get more depressed  
after finishing a book  
than before. And I  
have to say, it's true."  
~ Unknown*

# A Practical Guide to Operating Your Online Course



## *Introduction*

You've come a long way. Your course is done and you've opened your virtual doors for business. But whether a veteran educator or a new instructor, the most challenging part is still ahead.

Teachers within traditional institutions (schools, colleges, etc.) typically have more focused responsibilities. They don't concern themselves with student enrollments or staying ahead of the competition. But as an online course creator, it's kind of on you to figure out your own success.



*“A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”*

*~ John A. Shedd*

This gives you immense leverage, but also creates plenty of opportunities for you to fail. This guide is a foundational roadmap for building a practical and reliable system. It will support both your course and the students who take it.



## *Widen Your Reach*

You may think what you have is a course. But, left alone, what you really have is a long series of videos. To elevate the learning experience, you have to invest in your student communication. For a start, you should utilize the tools present within your hosting platform (Udemy, Teachable, etc.). The main tools you should be familiar with are:



- **Discussion Boards and Q&A Sections:** Most of the learning platforms often have built-in Q&A or discussion features. And over time, you will notice most of the questions asked are repetitive. Often the best place to write answers to these types of questions is in the discussion board and Q&A section. If your board is well-maintained, you can push students to seek answers here.
- **Feedback Surveys:** If possible, send out surveys to ask learners about their experience with your course. This is often not up to you but controlled by the platform itself. Just be sure if anyone leaves a review (good or bad), to leave an intelligent comment behind. New students will most definitely check out what other people had to say. Be sure you are there to either respond to compliments or defend yourself from unwarranted criticism.
- **Personalized Messages:** Many platforms allow instructors to send personalized emails based on student behavior. If a student hasn't logged in for a while, send a friendly nudge encouraging them to resume learning. If a student completes a milestone, send a congratulatory message to celebrate their progress.

Pretty soon, however, you will notice there are severe drawbacks to having only these tools at your disposal:

*“Once, a farmer toiled day and night, growing the most beautiful orchard anyone had ever seen. But the land wasn’t his. When the fruit ripened, it was the landlord who arrived with wagons to carry it away, leaving the farmer with just enough scraps to survive. ‘You’re lucky I let you keep the seeds,’ the landlord said. And so the farmer worked again, never having tasted the sweetness of his own labor.”*

- **Restricted Ownership:** Platforms like Udemy and Coursera generally don't allow you to collect student emails directly. And whichever platform you are on, you are ultimately at the mercy of the platform's algorithms and policies.
- **Missed Marketing Opportunities:** Without a direct line to your students (such as an email list), you can't effectively promote new courses, webinars, or resources to your audience. You're essentially renting your audience from the platform and have limited control over how to reach them outside of the course.
- **Ineffective Engagement:** While Q&A sections and discussion boards are helpful, they rely heavily on students being proactive. Many learners may not even know these tools exist or may feel reluctant to engage in a public forum. Without additional communication channels, students will very easily lose interest.

There are a couple tricks at your disposal to enhance your process: even if the platform you use doesn't allow for direct access to email. When done right, your students won't just feel like they are being sold to. In fact, they will be appreciative of the extra effort. The methods described below rely on pushing and embedding your students within the rest of your internet ecosystem.





## 1. Create an Exclusive Community

Encourage your students to join a private group on platforms like:

- **Facebook Groups:** Good old reliable. If your course targets an older demographic be sure to especially utilize these.
- **Discord or Slack:** A more interactive and modern space for discussions and direct messaging.
- **LinkedIn Groups:** Perfect for professionals and an opportunity to expand your career network.

The most important thing is to promote these groups as a valuable part of the learning experience. Highlight the benefits, such as live discussions, exclusive updates, or access to you as an instructor. Within the group, you can periodically link to your newsletter or website if you need to grow your email list further.

## 2. Build a Lead Magnet

Offer something valuable for free. Here is the catch though, it's not free. There is an exchange that takes place: it just doesn't involve money.

Examples of a good resource include:

- A free downloadable workbook, template, or cheat sheet.
- An exclusive bonus video or "next steps" guide.
- A live Q&A session or webinar with you as the host.
- Results to a fun little quiz.

The most important thing here is you send the resource directly to their email. Not only will this net you their contact information, but when they open and engage with your resources, it sends a





message to Google and other inbox managers that you don't send spam. All that is left to do is leave hints and breadcrumbs throughout your course. Encourage them to utilize the free resource and motivate them to opt in.

### 3. Offer Additional Courses or Coaching Programs

This must be done with great care and tact to be effective. But if you believe you have offered sufficient value within the course, you can just tell them what they should buy next. Maybe offer a discount to make it more enticing: promote your next product, a more advanced program.

*“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”*  
~ Matthew 25:29

## *It Shouldn't be \*That\* Hard to Promote Your Course*

I mean it; it shouldn't be that hard to promote your course. What is hard, is asking a stranger to buy an \$80 video series; that is not the kind of promotion you should be doing. What I want you to think about is building an ecosystem.

And your course is just one part of that. An ecosystem is an environment where many types of organisms live. In your case, these “organisms” are various pieces of content, communities, and



*“Great products don’t need a hard sell. They create believers. When something genuinely improves lives or solves a problem better than anyone else, it’s your customers who become your sales team, your marketers, and your ambassadors.”*  
~ Richard Branson

interactions that feed into one another. Your course is the centerpiece, but it’s supported by a network of related resources that all work together to attract and retain your audience.

This may sound like hard work but you don't have to do everything at once. The main part is already done, you have already constructed your centerpiece (the course). Now all that is left are the simple things you do to take the next step.

## **1. Make Your Course Free (For the First Few People)**

This is important, especially if you are just starting out. Reach out to either people you know or people within communities relevant to your course. Talk to them directly and ask for their opinion on your course. Most people will ignore you, but you will find a few who want to engage and contribute. Take their feedback and use the opportunity to connect. You will almost certainly benefit a lot more from them taking your course than they will by taking it.

## **2. Make Some Free Content for Everyone**

Put out short and sweet content. This will be an opportunity to attract potential students. And there are a hundreds of different ways to go about it:

- Write blog posts related to your course topic. You can start even write guest posts to gain more reach.
- Share short tutorials or tips on social media.
- Upload free videos or a mini-courses to YouTube.

The trick is figuring out how to capitalize on the





traffic and attention you bring in. One way to do it is to tell your audience where they should go next. Bringing us to our next point.

### 3. Have a Website

This is where you let people know who you are, what you do, and what you can do for them. It's your virtual home where you can truly communicate on your own terms. And your website doesn't have to be fancy or complex: it just needs to be clear, professional, and purposeful. Here are three web pages to get you started:

- **About Page:** Let people know who you are and why they should trust you. Share your story, qualifications, or what led you to create your courses.
- **Course Information:** Don't be shy. Show them what you are selling. Provide detail and tell them what they should expect.
- **Lead Magnet Page:** If you have a free resource to offer, exchange it for their email. Use the chance to expand your email list.

### 4. Start a Newsletter

Remember all those emails we kept collecting. Here is where we use them. Use them to send special discounts, articles, announcements: anything you want. As long as you deliver value, this will be your very own personal gold mine.

- **Be Consistent:** Choose a frequency (weekly, biweekly, monthly) and stick to it. Consistency builds trust and anticipation.
- **Include a Call-to-Action:** While the primary goal is delivering value, don't be scared to include a Call-To-Action when it seems appropriate.





## 5. Embed Social Proof

As you keep growing, encourage your community to interact. Be sure to add testimonials and reviews everywhere: put it on your website and everywhere else you can think of. People trust things when they see other people trusting them. Its never too early to collect social proof.

- **Create an Inner Circle:** Having a small tightknit community will serve you when trying to get projects off the ground.
- **Build a Community:** Starting your own group on Facebook, Discord, LinkedIn or Skool is a great way to increase your standing and reputation as an educator.
- **Host Live Q&A Events:** This will keep your community alive. Even if most students don't attend, it will have a significant boost on your engagement.

Following these steps will put you well above 90% of course creators. And the best part is, it creates a snowball effect. The system you set up will work with minimal upkeep getting better and better with time. The platform recommendation algorithms will eventually start to push your stuff. At this point, it might even make more sense for you to host your courses on an independent platform.



*"The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery."*

*~ Mark Van Doren*



## *Keeping Students Engaged Long-Term*

There is a reason people buy your course over reading a book or watching a YouTube tutorial. At the end of day, people want a better learning experience. They want to learn faster, easier, and have a higher likelihood of success. They want the learning process to be fun and engaging. They want an expert to help them recognize the pitfalls and shortcuts.

Your long-term success as an educator, ultimately depends on your ability to deliver a valuable experience. Revenue in the online education space is estimated at \$185.20bn and year over year growth is 8.56% [1]. Although it is a huge market, the best educators will hold a disproportionate share as distribution costs are so low.

Here are a couple things to do if you want to stand out in the long run:





## 1. Set Clear expectations

Get into the habit of under-promising and over-delivering. Provide a detailed outline letting them know exactly what they should expect. Over the long run, you will have more satisfied students and get better ratings following this strategy.

## 2. Deliver an Interactive Experience

Take the opportunity to incorporate dynamic elements that keep the course fun and engaging:

- **Host Competition:** This is the easiest way to get people involved. Come up with new challenges to get your students involved.
- **Self-Assessments:** Add creative tasks that have your students engaged and apply what they learned.
- **Encourage Group Interaction:** Provide a space for people to complete assignments collaboratively.

## 3. Offer Follow-Up Resources

Your relationship with your students shouldn't end when the course does. Offering follow-up resources can turn them into lifelong learners and loyal followers of your work. Consider providing:

- **Reinforcement Exercises:** Remind and teach your students how to keep the knowledge fresh.
- **Advanced Courses:** Offer follow-up courses that build on the knowledge they've gained, allowing them to deepen their expertise.
- **Continuous Updates:** Update your course regularly with new examples, case studies, or industry trends, ensuring your students have access to the latest information.





## *Final Thoughts*

The journey of an online educator is one of constant growth. By nurturing your course, engaging with your students, and building a supportive ecosystem, you can create a sustainable and impactful business.

You've already taken the hardest step by starting. Everything else is about refining, improving, and connecting. Whether you're just beginning or looking to elevate an established course, these strategies will help you stand out in a competitive market.

Good luck, and happy teaching!

## *References*

1. <https://www.statista.com/outlook/emo/online-education/worldwide>