

DR. CARRIE ROSE

The Completed Course

**THE SECRET TO CREATING LASTING
IMPACT, RAVING FANS, AND INCREASED
PROFITS WITH ONLINE COURSES**



The Completed Course

The Secret to Creating Lasting Impact, Raving Fans, & Increased
Profits with Online Courses

by Dr. Carrie Rose

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Introduction

I believe that online courses, if created and marketed properly, have the power to lift up countless lives.

What would happen if every person that ever took an online course had the desired outcome that they were looking for?

Better health?

Greater wealth?

More impactful relationships?

More life back in their time?

That's the world I'm striving to create.

More people are creating online courses than ever, but how many people have had a difficult time turning that one-off course into a business, creating the course their audience has been asking for or figuring out what they want in the first place, keeping their existing customers past the first sale, or worse, how many are still struggling to make even a single sale? So many people live from launch to launch because they fail to see the big picture.

The dirty secret in the online course space is the degree of customer churn. If we were really rocking this thing the way that we profess to others, we wouldn't have a 97% attrition rate in a \$255 Billion Industry. It's pathetic! Unfortunately, because almost everyone's business inside of the online marketing world is somehow attached to courses and the ability to sell them, barely anyone is saying anything about it and it is secretly hurting us all.

The misstep of accepting bad information doesn't live and die in the world of online marketing. Understand this clearly, it affects every coach, consultant, author, speaker, trainer, and small or corporate business that attempts to implement online courses with the same bad information that was accepted one iteration prior. We are incestuously passing on regurgitated information to each other and it has created such bad practices that we now have a disastrous return on investment for the amount of time that people have spent trying to figure this out to no avail.

Let me say this as succinctly as possible:

Online Courses aren't dead. However, bad online courses are dead, as well as the bad online marketing practices that go with them.

While selling online courses can be incredibly lucrative, it requires more than hitting publish inside of your Learning Management System to create lasting customers, reduce the amount that you are spending on customer acquisition, and really play the long game of being a highly successful thought leader in your niche.

See that's another dirty secret in the online course space, even those that are successful don't always see the big picture. They are just operating with slightly more information than the ones following them.

Thankfully, there are those out there that have mastered this. I, personally, have had clients achieve up to 90% course completion rates. Wouldn't it be amazing if we could take all of our combined knowledge and level the playing field so that we could all operate with the best strategies designed for maximum impact and earnings? What would that mean in regards to creating lasting impact, raving fans, and increased profits?

There is a book that does all that and more. The Completed Course has been designed specifically to shorten the learning curve so that you can have the success with online courses that you desire. This book will resolve all of your questions and concerns related to the world of online courses, while offering ninja tricks for our more advanced readers that are truly ready to master the game. This book is for those that have at least some background knowledge in online marketing and probably feel like they've had some success with this space, but are looking to increase impact and profits. If you are just now entering this space, there is information in here that will be massively helpful, but might not go as deep into the concept as you need for your desired level of success.

In an effort to level the playing field, I reached out to my connections, who are some of the most successful, sought after brilliant minds in the online course space, to see what they are doing differently that is allowing them greater levels of success and creating greater impact with their audiences...

not to mention inspiring raving fans! The volume of combined wisdom and easily implementable tactics presented by those interviewed is priceless. Their combined net worth and experience in the information product creation space makes this book invaluable.

Contributors include:

Ryan Deiss
Pat Flynn
Jay Baer
Jason Swenk
Ian Garlic
Ray Higdon
Greg Hickman
Mitchell Gandy
Chris Smith
Justin Lofton
Keara Palmay
Katya Sarmiento
Mel Abraham
Tim Erway
Phoebe Mroczek
David Bayer
Dave Albano
Wes Schaeffer
AJ Yager
Norbert Orlewicz
Andrew O'Brien
Anthony Trucks
Anna Selby
Jason Alan Miller
Itay Bengal
Jesse Jameson
Kate Buck Jr
Mark Bailey
Jeremy Howie
Michael Savage

Owen Hemsath
Pamela Herrmann
Robert Ricciardelli
&
Jeff Schechter

As I said before, I've had clients achieve up to 90% completion rates by using combinations of the strategies that I am presenting inside of this book.

Make it so that when you spend money to acquire a new customer you are actually getting a new customer and not just replacing an old one. I promise that if you apply the knowledge inside of this book you will drastically increase your customer satisfaction. By implementing just one of the strategies in the book you could jump to a 50% course completion rate off the bat! (I'll tell you which one later!)

I shared one of the strategies that is described inside of this book with a friend of mine that has been in the info product creation space for over ten years and he said, "Thank you. You just made me millions."

Don't be the person that misses out on opportunities by waiting too long to devour this content. In a year or two your colleagues are going to tell you that the sky is falling when it comes to online courses (some of my friends are saying it now). I want you to be prepared by not being in that bucket of people creating products with old outdated strategies and misinformation. Be the kind of person that has their ducks in a row. Be the kind of person that has continuous sales despite the fledgling methods of their competitors. Be the kind of person that takes action immediately!

The online course creation and marketing tips you are about to read have been proven to create lasting, sustainable results by some of the top businesses in the industry. All you have to do to begin to emulate their level of success is to start reading today and apply each strategy immediately.

In the last part of the book I will divulge future recommendations that have literally made jaws drop when I've suggested them face to face. The light bulb will switch to on and you will know exactly how to go further than the masters. Hand on my heart that is my promise to you.

Take control of your business now, make it as successful as you want it to be,
and truly enjoy what you're creating!

PART 1: THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ONLINE COURSE INDUSTRY

As you can see, this book is divided into three parts to make it easier on the reader. In Part 1 we will examine further what we know about the course industry as it stands today. In Part 2 we will examine best practices in online course marketing for the purpose of higher completion rates. In Part 3, I will offer my suggestions on how to improve the educational experience, as well as how easily artificial intelligence can be added to any online course to increase student engagement, as well as encourage future sales.

I would suggest that the more advanced online course creator / marketer may be able to skim to where they need and then read slower to take it all in, but I wouldn't use this book as a reference the first go around. You would be surprised how many people are avoiding best practices... and as a result missing out on massive revenue!

The online course industry is projected to be a \$255 Billion industry in 2017. There is a lot of money that is being made and yet to be made in the online course space. I think that alone means that it is something that a lot of people should care about. A lot of people who are just like you!

And with those dollars, from my perspective, is an opportunity to radically change many lives. Either way you slice it, that's a good enough reason to get out of bed in the morning.

Always remember, on your worst day, you're someone's best hope. I paraphrased that from Larry Bell from my teaching days, but I truly believe that it is something that we all need to remember from time to time.

If you woke up on this side of the dirt this morning, there's a reason. You're not done yet. You have people to serve. Don't let me or them down.

#OFCOURSE I Would Care So Much

Everybody has a story. We give them meanings and they shape our lives... hopefully for the better.

I knew that I was different as a kid. I really didn't talk. It wasn't until my adulthood that I was able to reflect back and realize that for years out of my life I had selective mutism. I could say it was from a childhood trauma or the fact that I was a left-handed kid and they trained me to use my right hand. Either way you shake it, I wasn't adjusting like the rest of my peers. And nobody seemed to notice.

I was passed on, grade to grade, always lagging way behind and always feeling massively out of place. I entered Allen Elementary School in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the start of my 5th grade year a quiet shell of a human being that barely ever spoke and couldn't read. I left at the end of that school year with the highest standardized test score that school had ever seen.

What happened?

Dee Taylor.

One teacher made such a transformation in my life that I obsess over it till this day.

In addition to then having selective mutism, I'm also dyslexic. Another fact I didn't realize until I started teaching reading to 5 year olds. *"What sound does 'a' make? Well, that's an excellent question!"*

It explained why I always got my numbers super confused and why I read a lot upside down.

I spent 10 years of my life working in public education. It was one of the greatest gifts that I ever gave myself. I considered myself the Ellis Island of the classroom at a Title I school. The majority of the children received free or reduced lunch because their parents didn't have the money to provide that for them. Many would leave on Friday afternoon and I wasn't sure if they would be fed again until Monday morning's free breakfast.

There were a lot of children there in need of my help, in need of someone to care and to take the time to see them exactly where they were at, and never limit their potential. I asked for students that had difficulties. I worked with students with all sorts of struggles from deaf and hard of hearing, to autism,

to selective mutism, to Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and many that had auditory processing issues (which is how dyslexia is primarily diagnosed today).

My passion was for the science and art of teaching.

The art of caring for an individual and doing everything in your power for them.

And the science. Oh the research! I began an absolute fascination with learning strategies. Some strategies that people cling so tightly to in the field of education aren't actually effective and yield little results. And then there was what actually worked.... and what, when applied in the right combination would yield the greatest results I had ever seen.

I honed my craft in the classroom, but my desire for impact was always greater.

There were so many struggles inside of public education that I set off to earn my doctorate. I wanted to work for the Department of Education either on the state or federal level because I thought much change was needed.

After almost three years at the University of Central Florida (Go Knights!), I found myself in a World of Beer of all places. Yes, I'm human.

And while hanging out with a friend of mine, I met three men that would forever change my world. Two of which, Jesse Jameson and Tim Erway, were interviewed for this book.

When I asked them what they did for a living they said things like Affiliate Marketing and Search Engine Optimization. It seems absolutely ridiculous now, but I had no earthly idea what they were talking about at the time... and that struck a chord.

I'm not a fan of not having the answers.

I was fortunate enough to have their guidance as my quest to understand this world of online marketing took flight. As they pointed me to course after

course to understand the world they knew, I continued to write my doctoral dissertation on professional development.

And I came to one conclusion during that time.

Most of the online courses that were in existence, were really bad. That's my professional opinion at least. I can't sugar coat this one. They were just awful!

Even the most well intended, well put together courses were missing any visible evidence of researched based learning strategies. This is not anyone's fault, truly. We tend to perpetuate old habits and do what's been done. We pull from our own experiences, in this case our examples from our own learning, and we repeat those patterns. It takes some earnest discernment to recognize what's working for people and what needs to change. Most people that create online courses as a part of a marketing funnel, be it a marketer, author, speaker, coach, or consultant, have not had adequate training in the rudimentary foundations of teaching, let alone any advanced understanding of practices that truly flip the switch inside of a person's brain.

What's always been particularly interesting to me is the number of people in the online course creation space that have harsh feelings towards the public school system, yet, when creating courses only take at best the worst from those experiences. So much of what is absolutely amazing about education and what we know to be impactful is flat out left out of the online experience. More on this to come in Part 3 of this book.

Frankly, they don't know what they don't know. And I believe that if they knew better they would do better. Hence, my faith in this book to make a difference in this industry, to disrupt it, if you will.

This book is not about pointing fingers. It is, however, about supplying every reader with as much information as possible to make something of a high degree of quality that will sell and encourage backend sales.

As for me, I continued to study. I continued to devour online courses.

After some time, and an A-MAZ-ING Tony Robbins event, I quit my job,

like any good entrepreneur would, and set out to find myself in the world of online marketing.

Months later, I was hanging up the phone with my first business partner when she said, “Ok, well I’m going away for a few days. When I get back on Monday, I need to create this course, but I have NO idea how to do it. Ok girl, talk then.” Click.

One click and a weekend later, my Course Creator Method was developed.

I used over 500 research studies worth of data that demonstrate how people learn and connect to content to create this formulaic approach for people to create impactful courses. Moreover, the approach streamlines the course creation process and makes it much easier to extract content from the course builder.

I trained my then partner on the process. I trained her friends and colleagues on the process. I set out to find my own clients and train them on the process.

As time went on, I ended that partnership and started a new one, Of Course. Our only focus is online courses. It all started with that systematized approach to online learning and a deep understanding of best practices in online marketing.

What started as an fascination with online learning became even more of a mission when I heard one horrible statistic: On average online courses have a 3-5% completion rate.

My obsession into the completion rate as a metric to determine the success of online programs turned into the beginning of a loose qualitative research study.

I knew that I alone could not answer this question.

Online courses are a beautiful marriage between education and marketing. I am a certified “Customer Acquisition Specialist” and “Content Marketing Specialist” because I feel that I need to be prepared to advise and connect my clients in order to serve them properly.

But let's face it...

There are sooooo many more smart marketers!

So I set out to interview some of the most brilliant minds in the space for an answer to one question "why?"

The response was a variety of reasons.

This book is a culmination of the body of that work.

There is nothing in this book that you couldn't find on your own with some thought, research, and a good ol' fashioned dose of "want to." But this work will give you access to the brilliance of the experts interviewed for this project on this one issue like none other. And frankly, with what they charge, that makes this material priceless. Please value it as such.

Again, these are some of the brightest minds in the industry. I may feel the need to expand on what they are saying and from time to time, I may not. If they drop the mic, that mic may stay dropped simply to let you soak that in.

Of Course The Completion Statistic Matters

Here's how a lot of info-product creators view online course completion:

It's like when people buy a treadmill. They buy it so they can feel like they would lose weight. Done. It becomes where they store their laundry until they can find the time to put it away.

That has a lot to do with the psychology of purchasing. According to Jesse Jameson, CEO and Co-Founder of SocialMediaPro.com, "The overwhelming majority of people that buy courses are buying it for the psychological and emotional satisfaction that they get during the buying process, which is why so many courses never get consumed. It's not because the course wasn't consumable or useful information. It's the person got the emotional charge out of the buying process, because over the course of many years now with direct response copywriting, there's a lot of things that you can do through social proof and other means for a person to feel like, "Wow! I've got to have

this course because other people bought it, because I like what it has the potential to do, I feel good about buying it.”

While this is true and I make no argument to the contrary, instead of viewing course purchasers as the masses of defunct treadmill owners, I prefer to think of them as diners at my restaurant. I’m inviting you to share my perspective on this one.

If I owned a restaurant and on average only 3% of the dinners I served were ever finished, I would have to examine my business.

I would wonder if I am giving them too much food.

Then I would check to see how many to-go boxes were flying out the door and how much was actual waste.

Regardless if it was their fault for having eyes that were bigger than their stomach, I would make it my point to figure out what was going on.

In a day when so many people are hungry for growth in a world of opportunity, we need to view this incompleteness of courses as a tragic waste and really examine if we are creating and selling courses in such a way that best serves our audience.

Why This Matters To you

Now that we’ve talked about how low completion rates are in the industry, let’s get clear on why it should matter to you.

If only 3-5% of the industry is completing online courses as a standard, yet there have been over \$250 billion dollars worth of sales per year, how much money are we leaving on the table when it comes to back end sales?

How often do you have to put more people in your marketing funnel? How much more money do you spend on customer acquisition than you should need to? How does that impact your business as a whole? Are you making the profit in your business that is possible?

I get it. You want more freedom, flexibility, and more money in your life.

You've figured out a great way to get it and you want to cash in on the gold rush while it's here. That's really not a bad thing, and the truth is you can have it, but it's going to cost you. The market is telling us clearly that we need to do better, be better, and care more about our consumers. On the other side of all of those empty promises are people that believed in you, and for the most part still have unmet expectations. The question is, are they likely to become champions of your brand, buy your other products, or find ways to go deeper with you? The easy answer is simply, no.

There are a lot of people out there that will sell you on the concept of online courses as passive income. I'm not here to sell you anything. My goal for you is that by the end of this book you have enough solid information to create a digital course in such a way that it generates your business sustainable income and supports your clientele to the best of its abilities.

There's sort of the new get rich quick scheme, which is recurring multiple streams of income, and digital products have sort of fallen into that conversation. They've been positioned as part of the multiple streams of recurring income conversation. What we find is that there a lot of really well meaning, passionate, mission driven people that have been sold this idea that digital products is going to be a way for them to create a big impact and generate a significant income while also "more effectively trading their time for money." The reality is that a very few percentage of people have success with digital products. The success of a product comes with reiteration and reiteration takes time. And time requires ongoing investment. I've seen story after story after story of people who had a traditional business who either slowed down or stopped their traditional business, everything from coaching, to investment planning, to consulting. They go on this digital product hunt and they end up spending their life's savings in the process and not coming through to the other end.

What we like to see is that if you want to do a digital product you have

1. Income coming in
2. Predictable marketing system

I don't believe you have a business until you have a predictable marketing system. I believe you are still figuring out your business.

A predictable marketing system could be something like I go to a chamber of commerce meeting that will generate 12 leads and of those 12 leads 2 will turn into clients. You can decide to go to more chamber of commerce meetings and generate more leads. And then of course at some point in time we want to automate that predictable marketing system.

You're not there to have an extended conversation in the digital world which means you need to nail the communication. The only way that you nail the communication is by going in and doing the one on one work.

Digital products is a channel for what your business model is. Like you do a thing, and one way that you deliver it is through digital products.

What I get really passionate about and why we're helping people in this space is because you have people that want to do the work, but they've been sold the wrong model. And that kills me. They've been sold the 'if you go do the digital product thing right, you can get rich off of digital products. Instead of "if we can sit down and figure out what you're passionate about and turn it into a business, we can add digital products as a component of it and help you grow a successful business.

- David Bayer, Founder & CEO David Bayer Businesses

The dream of passive income and the desire to create an online course as a means to achieve it may very well be one factor in the low completion rates. If your intention is to create revenue for yourself without the thought of how it fits into the larger picture of your business model or how to serve the people on the other end with integrity, it is obvious to all involved. If your product feels like a "get rich quick scheme" to the person on the other end of the computer, they will lose interest in you and walk away fast. Wouldn't you?

It's not that it isn't still possible to build a successful online business and sell digital products as a component of that. However, when you see someone that is successful at generating passive income through the distribution of online courses, all that you are seeing is the end result. You don't see everything that went into that success. Jason Swenk, Entrepreneur & Agency Advisor, had this to say, "First of all, there's a lot of people that their stuff sucks and they're good at marketing. It's kind of like the old adage of "the easiest way to make a million dollars is to write a book on how to make a million dollars." I think a lot of online programs are that, where people see this kind of lifestyle that a lot of us live, and they go, 'We want to do that. We want to make money while we're sleeping.' But they don't realize all the stuff that you have to do in order to build that and want to actually help the market."

We all want our watches to notify us every time we've made a thousand dollars from a course sale. There are systems, processes, and ways of being that will get you there. Creating a business that stems from complacency and jumping blindly into a dream will not get you there.

The question then becomes, what can you do about it?

The Not Me Economy

As soon as my children were old enough to play together my ex-husband and I insisted that we no longer had two children, we in fact had four children. We were gifted on this earth with Christopher, Lillian, Not-Me, and I-Don't-Know. While the first two had come to me through the natural process, the later were a spin off that I am still questioning to this day.

When we think of people that say "Not me" we tend to think of children. Children that for some reason or another are afraid to get caught. Children that have yet to learn the value of taking responsibility for their actions. Children that are still trying to determine how they want to show up in this world, be it somewhere on the scale from average to extraordinary.

When I think of online course creators, I never view them as average people. I view them as truly extraordinary. I view them as the movers and shakers that came here at this moment in time to gift this world with their knowledge

and bring about a better way of doing and being for others around them. And yet... the second I bring up online course completion rates, would you like to know the first thing I hear from people?

“Not me.”

I hear “not me” in so many forms. I hear it in the form of “Why are those bad course creators ruining it for the rest of us.” I hear it in the form of “People aren’t buying my course because they haven’t finished the ones they have bought. Finish your courses people! You need to buy my course.” Even worse, I hear it from a company that does over \$35 million in online course sales annually when they tell me that they don’t even know their course completion numbers.

Let me be clear, with a 3-5% course completion rate on average, chances are that you are not the anomaly. This is basic math. The only way to fix this is to start taking responsibility for it. That starts with knowing your personal data and doing your best to improve that.

A Voice of Reason and Integrity

It shows you that most people when they’re creating courses, they’re creating it for the sale... and kind of after the sale, you’re a customer, ok you’re done. To really succeed long term you have to treat the sale, because really it’s not even about just completing that course, it’s about completing future courses, about getting your coaching, and other programs as a result of the great advice and the great content that you share in your course. Think about it, if people aren’t completing your courses, how likely is it for them to get your more expensive program or get another course down the road? Yes, there are going to be people who even though they don’t complete the course they’re going to get somebody else’s next course or program because they love to learn and that’s what they’re all about.

It also shows you how difficult it is to get people to complete courses because you would assume that by creating everything and having it all there that people would chomp at the bit to get through every bit and part of it, but it shows you that a lot of people are buying because

of something, but not going through it because of some other thing. I don't know if it's buying because they just expect that the purchase itself will be the magic button, then they find that there's all this work that they have to do, and then they just don't do it. Or... the course creator doesn't do a good job of actually keeping people progressing through, because if it's something that takes more than a day or two, you're going to have to have some mechanism by which you can remind people about where they're at or why they're doing this because the sales process really heightens up that energy. And it gets people to really want to buy because during the sales process you're talking about what happens after you do this or the results of the thing that you're getting and all of this great stuff, but when you're in the course you forget all of that stuff that was mentioned in the sales video because the person that was selling the course isn't selling it anymore. They're just driving you through the content.

So there's responsibility on both ends I feel. And I feel course creators need to do a better job of holding people accountable.

Industry wide, initially it just makes me feel kind of “ickie” because we are selling something that people aren't even using. It's almost like, “Hey, are we in the snake oil business?” No. Well, there are people that are doing that. Most people have courses that are really helpful, but because of the accountability, the guidance, and the way perhaps the course is set up then it is not being used, and therefore, it's not as great as it can be.

- Pat Flynn, Founder at Smart Passive Income

How Does Our Market Perceive Us

Pat raised an excellent point. Most of us are not in the snake oil business. Although we can approach it from the “Not me” standpoint that I brought up earlier, we can choose instead to recognize that is how our markets are perceiving us because they are not getting out of their purchase what they expected from it and that will have long term effects on the industry if we run this race as is without a few course corrections.

Jay Baer, Founder of Convince & Convert, adds, “Online courses right now

remind me of where SEO was 10 or 12 years ago. Where it's growing really fast, everyone knows they need it, tons of consumer demand, but so many consumers are getting burned and realizing, "I thought this was going to be better than it was," that you're going to start to have people being skeptical of the entire category. There's going to be a shake out eventually. Where people demand more from courses and rightfully so. But, the counter-balance to that is the trend of how people learn, and on a phone, and on their computer, and virtually, and at their own pace, and all those things that's not slowing down, in fact, it's accelerating. That genie is not going back in the bottle. So on one hand you've got this like tsunami of demand and on the other hand you have a bunch of people making courses that have no business making courses, and are frankly doing things that are only marginally ethical. At some point those two things are going to collide. And I think what will happen in sort of a Gartner Hype Cycle style approach. You're going to get to peak courses and then you're going to see a down tick because consumers are going to get skeptical and it's going to shake out all the charlatans, and then you'll see an uptick again."

Maybe it's time to shake out the charlatans. I certainly won't argue against that. However, with a 3-5% completion rate on average, who are you and I to point fingers at? This weeding out will affect everyone. It is time to stand and deliver.

Of Course You Should Still Build a Course

Is this the time to throw the baby out with the bathwater? I would argue that it is not. Many smart entrepreneurs are building courses and loving the lives they are designing in the process. Owen Hemsath, otherwise known as Owen Video, Online Video Consultant had this to say, "Had I to do it again, I would have been building a course from the day I opened up my business. Here's why: because at some point you're going to get tired of doing what you do, even if you love it. You're going to mature. You're going to grow. You're going to want to create a lifestyle for yourself that enables you to move on from what you're doing."

Owen is correct. Most people are drawn into the space of creating courses because this method, done the right way, has had proven results.

According to Ryan Deiss, Founder and CEO of Digital Marketer, a marketing education company, “The future of information products I think is bright because it’s not information products, it’s called publishing. It’s only been around since forever. I don’t see it going anywhere anytime soon. I do think that as information becomes more readily available, accessible, and of higher quality through media like YouTube, you’ve got to bring your A-game. It’s going to be less about merely informing and have a lot more to do with providing entertainment, but also more narrow analysis.”

So, let’s not scrap the whole industry just yet. Instead, let’s examine and refine it. Let’s approach the system with best practices and go back to creating win/wins for us and our clients.

The Ecosphere

As Steve Denning points out in his article in Forbes, “Why Building a Better Mousetrap Doesn’t Work Any More,” if we focus solely on the product, we will go the way of the Nook. Instead, it is far more important to focus on the ecosphere.

So what is this ecosphere? What is the bigger picture as it relates to online courses? We all know how much revenue online courses drive and the level of scale and impact they bring to any business brave enough to pull Excalibur from the rock and wield the mighty sword. (Too dramatic? I digress.)

I knew something wasn’t quite right when I first went down the online course rabbit hole. I really wasn’t positive that there was even data to prove what my gut was promising me was so.

Thank heavens Seth Godin shined a giant spotlight on the inherent problem on the Tim Ferriss podcast when he shared that online courses have a 3% completion rate.

A study by Katy Jordin puts completion rates for Massive Open Online Courses at 2-10%.

When I shared this with my friend, business and mindset coach, Phoebe Mroczek, she was disheartened. “I think it’s really interesting that it’s a 3%

completion rate. My initial reaction is always going to be “wow, that’s really disappointing” because I think people take courses to gain knowledge of other people’s experience from like years and years of experience.”

There are some really good people putting together courses with the set intention of making dramatic impacts and serving countless people. However, how do we even begin to make sense of that inequity of energy? How can we say that we serve our audiences with that level of imbalance?

How can courses serve audiences, make impact, and make greater bank for their creators?

If we are really going to test the health of an online business we need to look at customer satisfaction. Most people would look at one specific metric to determine overall customer satisfaction: Refund Rate. Online course creators can expect on average a 15% refund rate. Some will say that if you don’t have a 20% refund rate that you’re not marketing aggressively enough.

While this has become what is to be expected in this space, this does not match up with what we know about consumer behavior. According to Ruby Newell-Legner in “Understanding Customers,” a typical business only hears from 4% of their dissatisfied customers. Keeping in mind the percentage of refunds that I mentioned in the last paragraph, what’s the total percentage of dissatisfied customer on average in the online course industry?

Consider what this lack of satisfaction means for your sales on your backend products and services. According to Marketing Metrics, you have a 5-20% chance of selling to a new prospect and a 60-70% chance of selling to an existing customer. It is more important than ever to keep those happy customers in your ecosphere so that you can continue to serve them.

Some People Will Quit Your Course No Matter What You Do

It’s true. No matter what you do, you will invariably have some attrition. What we must do as product creators is mitigate that attrition and provide the best possible experience for our clients. Reminder: it’s not the restaurant patrons responsibility, if you have a one star establishment.

Let's start to dive into some of the basic reasons that someone would leave a course.

Why Would Someone Quit a Course

Why someone would quit a course:

Either a quality issue. This course is not as good as I thought it was.

A relevance issue. This course is not as useful to me as I thought it was.

A modality issue. This course and the way information is delivered do not fit into my life or I do not have the right learning windows to get through this course all the way.

What's hard for course owners is that all three of those are circumstantial.

To say, well the course isn't good enough, well what's good? What's an objectively good course?

What's relevant? Well, what's an objectively relevant course? You don't know, because someone might buy it and think it's for them and then it's not for them, unless you're baiting and switching them, who knows.

The truth is going to vary based on the type of course and who their audience is.

-Jay Baer

PART 2: CURRENT BEST PRACTICES THAT INFLUENCE COMPLETION

Of Course We Need to Start From The Beginning

I'm going to lay this process down in order, because I want this book to be valuable for anyone at any level, and that includes those that have never created a course before.

As my good friend Phoebe Mroczek says, "We don't really need more information, we need better information." So please find in this book the best information for you at this current point in your journey.

Teach What You Know

This is really the basics. It is what most people that tell you to create courses sell you on. According to Dave Albano, CEO and Founder of Joza Marketing, "It's a good idea to create a course when you want another stream of revenue to your business and when you want to get your message out there in a greater way."

Yes, you can create a life that you love by packaging what you know into a digital product.

And yes, if you are looking to teach something it should be something that you, yourself know how to do. There are so many people out there looking for a quick something to sell that are creating courses that they have no business creating! Just stop it! If you have to ask someone to show you how to do it so that you can make a course on it, it is not a good idea. Not yet, anyways.

Phoebe Mroczek sums up this epidemic, "The people who are selling these courses a lot of the courses that I have experienced have been just regurgitated information that doesn't really get to the heart of the issue. A lot of the courses that I'm seeing coming out now, they haven't considered, this is what I walk my clients through, what does your customer success path look like? Where are they right when you meet them? What are the feelings and

emotions right where they're standing at the current moment? They are totally missing the mark on that. So they're selling to people who aren't 100% ready to digest the information."

Have a Game Plan

There's so much room for expression. Long gone are the days where it takes all kinds of funding and traditional brick and mortar business to put your ideas out to the world. Internet marketing and all aspects of the internet afford us new opportunities to do that quickly.

- Jesse Jameson

And thank goodness it does! Just think of how drastically Amazon alone has changed the world of publishing. If you have information, creativity, ingenuity, and drive, you have the power and tools at your fingertips to send shockwaves of delight and elevation across the planet. Changing lives, improving functionality, designing processes, whatever your goal is it is now achievable through the magic of the internet. And it costs next to nothing to get started. In fact, just the cost of a cup of joe, in order to borrow some wifi from your neighborhood coffee shop, that is.

How does one create that something that will elevate and enrich the lives of others? How does one answer the siren's call and lead their life in purpose, without having to live it in their parents' basement?

According to Owen Hemsath, "Creating something that lasts is a combination of opportunity and passion. Your thing will last if you are passionate about it, you kick up dust, and you make things move. The idea that you can make 20 grand a month teaching quilting all of a sudden just became a lot more reasonable. There is a marketplace for you to teach what you love and teach what you know. Moms across the country are making money on YouTube teaching canning and lunch prep through their youtube channels and their blogs."

You at this point in history have an amazing opportunity to build a business out of the ether, quite literally, while simultaneously building the life of your dreams and creating the impact that you desire.

However, the fundamentals are the fundamentals. You must start at square one if you are in any way looking to become a creator of information products.

What to Consider When You Are Getting Started

As Owen mentioned above, it is a great idea to be passionate about what you are sharing.

Mark Bailey, Creator of BehavingBoldly.com, adds:

Whatever comes the easiest to you is where you should make your money. Easiest in the form of effortless. It doesn't mean it's super easy, but it's effortless. It's something that you think about, you dream about, you do about all the time. And it's usually something that you're extremely interested in.

It seems to be with all of the entrepreneurs that I've been around and coaching is that they don't dream big enough. And when they don't dream big enough, they're allowing all of these things to get in the way, like "I wonder what the market wants. What should I create that they want?" Looking into yourself first and find what it is that you love to do, and you love to think about, and you love to research, because that's the thing that's going to come the most naturally. Whether you're creating an online course, whether you're filming yourself on video, it's going to come across supernatural with bold enthusiasm because you believe in it. It's something that you're excited about.

It's great to share information and things that you believe can help people and their lives, but when you create a course, you are now an influencer. This isn't just a hobby. This is something that's done purposefully. As an influencer you have two jobs. The first job that you have to do is to create value. Your second job as an influencer is to share that value or to show that value, but in order for it to be valuable, it needs to be personal and relevant to that person or that audience. Do they know how to apply that in their lives with the information that you've given them?

Who Are You?

“Who are you” is the ground floor for any business. If you don’t know who you are, people won’t be able to connect with you. You will be another person selling another thing. So many people dive right into product creation and selling their widget without thought given to laying the right fundamental framework. They find themselves failing, burnt out, and hating the process instead of accepting that if they are creating value and truly solving a problem, they have to do the work on themselves first. You wouldn’t expect a software to magically appear overnight or a house to build itself. Craftsmen focus on their craft first. Online businesses are no different. If you are selling of yourself, your information, your processes, your way of being, you must go through your self discovery first. If you already know who you are, great. So many people don’t and they come off as stale and their business falls flat. This is truly why “authenticity” has made it into our vernacular as a buzzword.

Norbert Orlewicz, Online Marketing Strategist, offered four questions for any beginning course creator to answer prior to branding themselves:

1. Who are you?
2. What do you stand for?
3. Who do serve?
4. How do you serve them?

I would argue that if you can’t answer those questions, it’s not time to make a course. I mean, if you want to be a one-off info-product creator that has some passive income but continues to struggle to create sustainable revenue in the online marketplace, go ahead.

But at the very least, decide this now as it relates to one course.

Many people get caught up in, “I don’t know who I am! How can I possibly answer that for my business? What if I don’t always want to teach this one thing?”

Truthfully, Norbert had the best response to this I have ever heard. “You want to think of your business like a software company. With software they

never create the final version. When is the final version of the iphone coming out? It's never coming out. There's always going to be a new improvement to it. You start out with 'Your Business 1.0.' The great thing with having an online business, not a brick and mortar business is you're able to reiterate a new version of that business every few months. You could launch a new product. You could launch a new vertical. You could go into a new market. You could continue to expand your business. Make a choice, make a decision, and get started now."

As my good friend, Ian Garlic, CEO and Founder of Authentic Web, would say, "Version Done is Better than Version None."

You don't have to go on a self-discovery mission on a beach somewhere meditating for months to find yourself before you can answer question one. But on some level, you should be creating something that is absolutely congruent with who you are right now and be ready to build yourself around that.

Which Comes First, The Audience or The Product?

Assuming that you know who you are and who you want to serve, the question then becomes do you build the product or the audience base first?

"Figure out what is unique about you in your knowledge, experience, expertise, and what you know. Then, turn around and package that in frameworks, models, metaphors, and stories behind it. If you want to create a product, you should lead with the impact in their lives, that it does change the way they do things and their outcomes. I think when you lead with that the byproduct is commercial success.

If we start driving from the bottom line up, then we are going to make choices driven by profitability and not necessarily by the impact of the audience that we are trying to serve.

1. What do I know?
2. Who can I serve with that knowledge?
3. How can I serve it to them?
4. How are we going to price it in that marketplace?

Entrepreneurs look for market gaps that they can fill. If you're an expert trying to train, I think what you need to look at is your expertise, your knowledge and your wisdom first. And then find the market that you can solve their problems with it and go that way. So, it's not from a market in, it's from you out perspective.

- Mel Abraham, #1 Bestselling Author and Founder of
Thoughtpreneur Academy

Norbert offers the marketers approach:

There are two schools of thought. Neither is wrong. It's a different approach. There are a lot of experts in the industry who will tell you to build the audience first. A lot of these experts come from the blogging philosophy. The blogging philosophy is "blog, blog, blog, create content, create content. Build an audience. Build good will. Build an audience. And then eventually figure out what your audience wants and sell it to them." Makes a lot of sense.

But, if you ask them what that's going to take, they'll tell you that will probably take a year or two of blogging, building content, building good will, and networking in the space, etc. etc. And then finally you can make some money.

A lot of bloggers that follow that theory, look at the statistics, 95% of bloggers don't make any money. And the reason is because they're blogging, blogging, blogging, creating content, creating content, but they have no strategy to monetize that content or to monetize that audience. Now, I'm not saying that's a wrong approach. By all means, you can take that approach. I come from a different approach. I come from the direct sales approach. In the direct sales approach, we don't market anything unless there's a direct way to make money from that.

I personally would like to make money sooner than later. That's my approach to business. I'm not saying the other way is wrong. I would just rather make money sooner than later. So, I would rather put my monetization vehicles in place first and then simply put gasoline in the car, in my vehicle. The gasoline is the marketing. That's my content. That's my social media. That's my paid ads. If I have a monetization strategy, if I have a way to make money, then I can do paid

advertising. And with paid advertising I can scale my business, and that, too, makes a lot more sense than slaving away for two years creating content, hoping somebody reads it. The number one rule to build a successful business is you need cash flow. So why would you not make that your priority focus when you're building your strategy?

The best advice that I can offer you is to blend these approaches. Determine your expertise and build products that solve problems based on your expertise.

Surveys

It is possible to create an audience and survey them to determine what they would like you to build for them. Ryan Levesque wrote an amazing book around his approach to that method. You should read it. One cautionary tale that I would offer is to make sure when surveying your audience, follow his approach to the letter. He is very detailed in the book about the sample size, or number of people that you survey in order to make a decision. This process works wonders for people with large audiences already in place.

Justin Lofton, Facebook Ads & Business Acceleration Expert, suggests that this method may be difficult for some people to do correctly. "From a data set perspective, you need a large amount of data. Where's the audience that you can get a 10% survey response from. It's nearly impossible to find without paying a survey company a large amount of money to figure it out. Most people aren't a big brand that can do that."

Justin adds that an additional challenge, "with building an audience and then hoping that they tell you what they want, the challenge is that people don't know what they want. What they tell you that they want isn't actually what they want. I mean it's a whole Steve Jobs model with the iPhone. They didn't know they needed the phone. You have to build something that you understood that would bring value to their lives. If you ask people or you survey folks, in most cases they're going to tell you things that they think you want to hear. And maybe you'll have a couple of nuggets here and there that are really what they're after. Even then, if you create that, it doesn't guarantee they're going to buy it simply because you created what they said they wanted. Because what they say they want and what they truly desire is

usually different.”

I have heard horror stories from people saying that they had zero sales on a product or event simply for that reason alone. Whatever you do, do not build a product based on feedback that you received on a Facebook post, at least one without some ad spend behind it.

By all means, if you have an existing audience, ask them what they would like you to build, but then do your due diligence. Dig deeper.

Customer Success Path

When you think of your customer success path, as Phoebe Mroczek suggests, it becomes really easy to see a throughline from where your clients start with you at the very beginning of the journey and where they end up at the very end. All along that path are various intervals that are seemingly obvious to discover. We can look at the concept of a marketing funnel and easily enough define points where a whole new concept would need to be mastered, they are more obvious intervals.

Inside of those chunks of teachable content there are even smaller bites of content. We will continue to examine this point as it plays strongly into other areas throughout the book.

Norbert Orlewicz asks us to keep in mind when you’re getting started, “When you’re beginning, your focus shouldn’t be to dominate the market, your focus should be to build your tribe.” Whatever you do ALWAYS focus on your people. Those people are the focus as you build out your content continuum along that success path.

When you decide to create your course, you need to start with market research and look at one block of teachable content along that success path.

Research

Good marketers know how to do market research. For some reason so many course creators skip this step and jump right into product creation. This is definitely a reason why people aren’t finishing courses. We aren’t creating

the right product for them. This affects upfront sales, this affects course completion, and this affects back end sales.

Tim Erway, Founder of Elite Marketing Pro, describes his process for conducting market research with efficacy:

My emphasis and focus before I ever go and create any course whatsoever, before I spend any time, energy, effort, money on creating content is to get to know my audience very intimately. In fact, I'll spend more time on this element than any other element in the research phase because I can overcome a lot of the gaps and challenges and problems and things like that in the marketing by understanding my audience better. So, if I can get a handle on who my audience is, what their fears, problems, desires, challenges, all that stuff is, then the course creation part of it is super, super simple.

The way that I look at course creation is we're solving problems. Typically there's what I call "Suckville to Awesometown journey." Suckville is where they're at now and Awesometown is where they want to be. So, what I'll do is I'll basically take a look at that on a macro level and think 'what is it that this person wants?' And I'll strip away the surface level emotions and the surface level desires and I get to the core level emotions and core level desire of that person's wants, desires, needs, fears, challenges, etc. And I strip it away and their dreams, and their goals, and their ambitions, and all that stuff, and I really get to the crux of it. Because I know that a lot of the way to get people to buy courses, to actually commit to going through them, is to really speak to them on a level that will connect with them on a core base level. So, it's not just doing what most people do and speaking to them on surface level emotions and talking about the dream, the lifestyle, internet lifestyle for example, if you're selling the make money niche, most people stop at 'You can make money. You can have all the cool stuff: The cars, the houses, and things like that.' But really when I'm speaking to people in the make money crowd, there's various different verticals, various different types of people we're talking to. You've got your cubicle slave, which is very very different in their language, in how they think, and who they are than someone

who's an internet marketer or a network marketer.

Justin Lofton confirms that people, “make a lot of assumptions about what the market wants based on what they want. They do a lot of work and put in a lot of effort to find out that's not what the market wanted.” He goes on to say that, “If you're really speaking the language of the market and giving them what they're looking for, they are going to consume that course. No question. The issue is that if you build something that you think is great that the market needs and maybe you're good at selling it, but once they get into the course you're not seeing them consume it, it's likely that it's not really solving the problems that they have.”

Justin Lofton, Tim Erway, and Jesse Jameson all suggested starting with Amazon to research your product idea.

The process is simple, but will take time to do. Please do not skip these steps.

Considering who you are, what you know, and who your audience is, go to Amazon and type in the keywords that you think your audience would be searching for into the search bar.

Examine the top 5 books in your keywords.

“Examine the number of reviews left on those books to get a sense of how large the audience is. If you did that research than you can likely go and attract something that's going to attract an audience” Justin adds, “They don't have to leave a review and it's not like a survey where they're asking them specific questions. They're telling them passionately why the book changed their life.”

Also, keep in mind during this process that if you are not seeing any material on your topic, pull back immediately. A lot of people fail right here. They think that if there isn't anything on their topic that they have open season in the marketplace. Actually the opposite is true, if there isn't anything on your topic, there very well isn't an audience for it. You want to go to where there are buyers and that means going where you may think the market is flooded.

Think of it this way. If a person likes to cook, how many cookbooks do they

have? One cookbook? Probably not. I personally have 20 cookbooks, a stack of recipe cards, and google for everything else.

If a person likes to fish do they have one pole? Of course not.

People purchase what they like and are used to purchasing. Do not reinvent the wheel.

Tim Erway suggests going deep into the comments left. For this process pay close attention to any and all three star reviews specifically. A five star review doesn't give you a lot of data and a one star review can often point to an angry person or a dreadfully bad experience. A three star review is gold because it shows you exactly what the person liked, what they didn't like, and what they wanted more of. These three star reviews will show you where gaps in content and opportunities lie.

Start by reading the front cover, the back cover, and the table of contents. Justin Lofton has a brilliant approach to using these reviews to determine basic course outline and structure. "I try and start with looking at the Table of Contents of the books that are already top selling in that market because it is already structured in a way that the market is accepting from a topical standpoint of how they breakdown chapters and maybe even sub topics within chapters. I'm going to at least review that to make sure that my organization of a course is in line with what the market seems to be comfortable with based on top selling books in that market. That at least gives me some structure to make sure that I'm not missing segments. Because sometimes what you'll find because you're just kind of in your own bubble, you start saying, "Oh. I'm going to teach this, and I'm going to do this, and I'm going to put this together" and you forgot about a segment of the space because you make assumptions about what's already known out there in the market."

After you have exhausted Amazon, turn your attention to Google. Now, don't start drinking from a firehose, just take the top five experts in your space, possibly the authors of the books that you just researched, and go to their websites. Examine their websites for gaps in marketing. Do they have an opt in? Do they direct traffic to their course? How bad is their website? Be honest. Take note of everything.

If they have the opportunity to opt in to their funnel, do it. You want to examine how they communicate with their audience and what offers they are putting in front of them.

If you would like more direction on this process, I've made a complete masterclass training on this topic. Simply go to m.me/DrCarrieRose and type the keyword RESEARCH. My messenger bot will take care of the rest.

Start with Copy

Here's the standard process:

1. Boy meets course idea.
2. Boy makes course.
3. Boy hires copywriter to sell course.
4. Boy sells course.
5. The end.

There is not an obvious problem with the standard process. However, the lack of congruence between the copy and the product are causing a ton of issues when it comes to completion and return rates.

Jesse Jameson sums up the process, "The people creating course content usually are not the people writing the copy. So a person stepping in to write copy, their goal is to generate sales the best they can to get offers to convert based on what they think the market wants to hear. It's really the responsibility of the content owner themselves to go back and and look at the copy and work with the copywriter to say, "You know, this sounds good. It's going to get some attention, but it's really not accurate in what we deliver."

How many course creators have gone back and had that conversation with their copywriter? Have we arrived with that degree of integrity across the board?

Congruence is really what we are talking about here. Congruence is something you can feel when it is present, and you can 100% feel when it is missing. When it is missing, your customers feel like they got the ol' bait and switch and are none too happy with the outcome.

AJ Yager, Chief Growth Officer, Praxis Metrics, adds, “Everything matters. From the ad to the landing page, to the opt in, to the conversations that are being had in the auto responders to get people to buy. The sales page. Everything has to be consistent and congruent. And if it’s not, you’re not going to see very good conversions.”

Itay Bengal, Copywriter, had this to say, “Congruence or lack thereof is simply put something that we cannot ignore. There has to be congruence. If not, then you’re going to get a lot of refunds. Expectation management is critical to any business, that’s offline or online.”

According to Pamela Herrmann, Vice President of Marketing at Mortgage Cadence, “There are people that are great with writing copy that’s designed to part people with their money.” And what a great skill to have! If you think of sales in terms of the number of product that you sell equates to the number of people that you’re going to help, this is a fabulous gift! However, it is definitely a gift that should be used wisely.

So how do we, those without that power of fabulous copywriting skills, navigate these murky waters so that nobody lands ashore with the impression that the deliverable did not match the sales page?

My suggestion is simple. If you are going to create a course, create a faux landing page first. Craft all of your promises to your audience before you start creating your course. Keep it in alignment with your skills, knowledge and ability. Create the promises based on what you’ve found that your audience is looking for inside of your market research. If you can hand on your heart serve your audience to the degree that you promise on your landing page, they will feel that congruence. When you are done creating the course, review the landing page again. At that point you can make adjustments if needed before giving the faux copy to a trained professional to transform it into copy that will sell. Your audience will feel the congruence and the copywriter will know what to promise your audience.

Intention

Now that you’re truly ready to get started with creating your course, you need to circle back to why you’re creating it in the first place.

What did it feel like to make this course? It felt a lot bigger than a course. It felt like as if I was sitting down to paint a painting or architect a building. Knowing and believing that this is going to be something that I want it to be 100% expression of me and be 100% serving of hopefully hundreds and thousands people who see it over time. I see it as a culmination of a 10 year journey to learn as much as I can about this industry and then the process ... not that you would put “Launch 31” next to the David, but the concept of having this huge block of marble and chiseling it away to something that I would want in a museum. That sort of symbol, feeling, and tone was there for me along the way. I went into it with the firm belief that if you create something beautiful and resonant, then the money follows.

- Jason Alan Miller, Co-Founder of Peaceful Media

One of the topics in course creation that isn't talked about too often is the role that intentionality plays in course completion, customer satisfaction, and retention.

It is quite easy to recognize courses that were created with purpose and the intention of the greatest good for the end user. There are some people that will always lean into making a course strictly for the purpose of generating profits and many that will put profits first and serving others second. That is quite a bit more common. Guys, we can feel it when you do that. Now, I've already shared with you my perspective on the “Not Me” Economy and how dangerous that is for not just you, but the industry as a whole.

So, please silence that voice in your head and instead of that knee jerk response of blame passing, think for a second. Why are you interested in building a course? Why have you chosen this route over all other forms of money generating activities for your business? There are two main reasons that people are attracted to making online courses: the ability to make passive revenue that is driven by recurring sales on autopilot or the need to reach a larger audience and create a bigger impact. They go together and can be one and the same. There is no guilt to be had in making sales.

However, if it is only for generating a profit or mainly for generating a profit, your audience will be able to feel it.

Chris Smith, Founder of The Campfire Effect, created his course as pre-workshop content initially. He created it with the intention that the people coming to his workshop absolutely must understand the material inside of his course before their arrival in order to gain the maximum amount of value from the workshop. Chris changed his approach slightly and began selling the course from the stage at different speaking engagements, however, at the time of my writing of the book Chris had yet to venture into the space of selling his course through a traditional marketing funnel.

I think that the intentionality around building my course has something to do with why so many people complete it and why so many people find so much value in it. Because I didn't just create it as something to sell. I created it so that people would have a transformation and be.

I think there's something to the intention of how I sell it. I tell people, "I want you to buy this course because I built this course with the intentionality that it's going to have a transformation on your life. And if this is going to be another course that you buy and don't complete, and really don't implement and allow that transformation to happen, I'd really you rather not buy the course."

I believe that what causes individuals to buy so many courses is the same thing that causes them to go to so many networking events and spread themselves too thin. I think so many individuals aren't clear on what they stand for, what they want to be known for, and the type of business they want to build. So they buy all types of different courses, products, marketing materials, and tools.

I think when you're really, really clear on who you are and what you stand for, and the business you're building, I think it's way easier to say no to things.

What's the intention behind why we're building them? Are we building these just to have an info product to sell and create that passive income or are we building these courses with the intention that it really has a massive impact in people's lives or their business?

What's the intention behind why they're buying it? Are they buying the course because they know that it's strategically aligned with their business model and what they want to accomplish? Or are they buying the course because it's really exciting and they think it might allow them to go do something, but they're not really sure what it's going to allow them to go do.

When you put a course out there, it's like a piece of you. Or at least I hope it would be. I think way too many people are creating courses for the sake of having an info product to sell.

- Chris Smith

Michael Savage, Personal and Professional Master Coach, adds that if he were coaching someone through the process of creating a course, "The first thing I would ask is "What's the outcome of the course?"

And if the answer is money, "Um, ok, that's a great outcome, too, if you understand the business. But for me I'm going to go two or three levels deeper with a person like that to make sure that they have a motivation other than the money, because once you get the money, you still have a business to run. You still have customers to engage with. If they want more, and they've paid you for answers, you may have a responsibility to continue the relationship depending on how you market yourself. Are they ready for that, right? I want to know their outcome because I think if people just look at the task before they understand their outcome or purpose, that's the whole science of achievement without the art of fulfillment. Without the fulfillment, the state that their in when they film the course will likely show up and translate to their audience and then it won't feel good."

Michael is so right! At Disney World all Cast Members, aka employees, are required to smile when they answer the phone. Why? Simple. You can hear a smile. It changes the way your voice sounds and it instantly becomes more pleasant to listen to. If that energy translates across telephone wires, of course it will translate through all of your video materials and recordings related to your course.

Justin Lofton approaches each day with the stance of "When I wake up every morning how many people on this earth can I help improve their lives?"

What would the online space look like if we took that degree of intentionality into our courses, if only for the moment that we are creating them?

Create Value

Inside of that intentionality is the desire to create and add massive value to the lives of the people on the other end of the computer screen. Value has become such an interesting word in the marketplace. Personally, I think it gets thrown around as much as the word authentic. We know we should add value and be authentic, but there are still a ton of fake people telling you things you don't need to know.

Value is simple. Solve a problem. When discussing the customer journey, Jesse Jameson added, "Every step of the way I want the next stage to be congruent with the last one and I want the perceived value to be more than they were anticipating." Therein lies another question. How can you create perceived value? How can you make it so that each step of the way your customer feels so cared for that the perceived value is always high?

Jesse goes on to say, "A subject matter expert can slice up their knowledge into all different levels of value. Value is going to be different for each individual. Hopefully, when the person is seeking knowledge and specialized information, they're looking for something that is going to help them connect dots in their own world so that they can become more efficient or accomplish some goal that they're after. In most cases, the value is in the eye of the person receiving it."

Ray Higdon, Owner at Ray Higdon, asserts, "Go after what you feel you can talk about for the long term and don't be afraid to be too specific. Be afraid of being too generic. Value in the traditional sense, that I mean is really solving problems."

Proof of Concept

What you really want to do before you get started is look for a minimum viable product that you can sell before you create it.

I know, I help people create courses. Telling you to do it this way makes

absolutely zero sense for my business model. That's how you know that you can trust it.

I'm not telling you to make a garbage program. Simply that you should sell it before you create it. Think of it this way, how can you get people to complete something that they don't want to buy in the first place?

Don't start with launching a whole funnel to pre-sell your course. Just start with a few sales.

Most people overcomplicate things. Sell it before you build it. Typical entrepreneurs and business owners are dreamers. Most are employees trying to figure out if they can make the move, if they can even get started. While you're still even an employee you can do this. Put up a simple landing page. Drive some traffic to it. Send an email to friends and family and say, "Hey. I've identified problem x. I have a new solution y that attacks the problem from a different vantage point, with benefits z, a, b, & c. The average person with problem x experiences an impact of whatever... (list pain points). With this course, which I'm thinking is going to run about \$500 per person per license I can eliminate a \$5000 per month problem. Let me ask you something, Carrie. You're in my ideal demographic. Do you suffer from x, y, or z? Oh yes you do. Are my numbers correct?"

At the end of the day, you're trying to solve a problem. If you can't formulate an idea and deliver it concisely before you've invested 10 or 20 or 50 thousand dollars in one or two or ten or twenty- seven months into development... If you can't refine it and boiling down up front, when your back's up against the wall and you're desperate, you really definitely won't be able to. Every entrepreneur I've ever worked with has struggled with sales and marketing. Most just hate it. They hate it. They're smart people.

Presell your product. Presell it at a discount. Come out with a Minimum Viable Product.

You've got to launch because you can't steer a parked car. You gotta get going. Then you can make adjustments. Too few people get

started. They don't get started with the right thing. They get started with coding, developing, and building and not selling and marketing.

I cannot stress this point enough and so in the interest of using the simplest terms possible, you need to have proof of concept before creating your course. Creating your course will take resources in the vein of time and money... and possibly relationships. You really want to make sure that the thing that you are going to sell will sell prior to creating it. There are quite a few ways to do this. The two most direct paths as far as I see it are: presell the course or sell the course as one on one coaching

- Wes Schaeffer, The Sales Whisperer®

Presell the course. It is super simple to create a landing page. You don't need to have your entire funnel created in order to generate traffic prior to selling your course. A funnel is how we nurture the relationship with cold traffic and turn them into hot traffic so that they are ready to purchase. It is not the end all be all, nor is it the starting point to determine proof of concept. In fact, going that route can cost you, if you don't have the right offer to begin with.

Simply go to the resources guide for this book, which I hope you've bookmarked, and check out Instapage. Create a landing page that best sells the offer that you would like to create. Once you've done that, offer it to your hot market.

That sounds easier than it is, but trust that it is less complicated than creating a funnel and will teach you how to craft the language inside of conversations that will elicit a purchase from your ideal client.

I would suggest taking this step multiple times if at all possible, however you may find that you are at the point where you need to deliver prior to being able to enroll another client.

Tim Erway adds, "If you're taking them through a modulated course where you're building it on the fly and doing it with them while they're there, you're going to get a lot more people going through and completing it. That course completion rate increases exponentially when it's a live type of

scenario, where you have live Q & A, where you have live interaction and engagement. So that first time where you create that course the thing you're testing is not so much the content because that's secondary to getting people the results and it will come. You're testing the offer. You're testing the big idea. You're testing the hook. You're testing all of that stuff because again 80/20. Marketing is one of the top thing things that you need to do to be a top course creator and seller. What if, God forbid, they spend all that time on creating a course that nobody wants? Focus on marketing first. Attracting the people with the problem and then getting them life changing results. The content changes and morphs based on what audience tells them. The course becomes more valuable."

This process will provide you the feedback you need to determine if you are crafting the right offer, as well as provide you with greater research into potential holes in your content.

Sell the course as one on one coaching. This step removes one of the biggest draws of creating a course. If you do this, you will be trading time for money, at least in the beginning. However, there is a chance that you may be able sell the coaching at a higher price point than you would your course. That's definitely a bonus if you are just getting started.

The greatest benefit of doing it this way is that you will be getting consistent feedback from your ideal clients prior to hitting publish on a course.

When I first got started, I didn't create a course. I created a process. I created a system for creating courses that is based on over 500 research studies of how the brain learns and interprets information.

And... I had zero proof of concept.

I knew that people created courses. I knew that there was a market for people to help them do that and instruct them through the process. What I also knew was zero people were doing it the way I was suggesting and that I wasn't 100% sure if this was going to sell.

My then business partner suggested that I teach the process to a few people.

I did not give this information away for free. I see that mistake a lot, so I thought I would speak to it. Free is of zero value. I charged \$300 per hour for a total of 3 hours to teach my process to my clients.

Each time I followed this process, I earned \$900 and feedback. The feedback was priceless. The thank you's carried a lot of weight with me. Knowing that I was repeatedly providing value at a high level that was massively appreciated by my clients, and that they wanted to pay me for this, gave me the proof of concept that I needed to create my first online course for myself.

The shoemaker's daughter finally had shoes.

Focus on One Thing

One of the greatest struggles that a course creator can face in the onset is trying to determine how much to put into a course. Ian Garlic sums up this point, "You have to put everything in the course because you don't 100% know who's going to be in there. You don't know what this person's level of knowledge is, unless you are doing an ultra beginner course. So many people, I'm really guilty of this, try to put all of their knowledge into a course and into these giant modules not thinking about how much people will sit down at a given moment and listen to."

If you switch the focus from trying to solve every problem for every person to trying to solve one problem for a specific audience, you will have a lot clearer focus as to what needs to be covered inside of the course.

Jay Baer adds, "Be more focused than less on a very narrow audience. Make the perfect course for a smaller group of people rather than an imperfect course for a larger group of people. And if that requires you to make more courses, or more versions of that course over time, well that's what you should do. It will be more relevant for them and then your course completion rates will go up. Some topics lend themselves to multiple courses"

What Will Prevent Them From Adhering?

"The most important part of any course is to talk about the things that prevent your students from adhering. Often you'll see a course on how

to do a Facebook Live and it will tell people how to do a Facebook Live. What it won't cover is how to get over their camera shyness or how to get over procrastination, or thinking there's one more piece of equipment to buy before you do these things. And so, by paying attention to your marketplace and the people you're serving, find out what are the common things that prevent them from doing that thing.

For example, we rolled out a product last year called 3-minute expert, which is our personal branding and blogging program. How we built a 10 million over the last three years blog. In it our most watched video is "How to Overcome Perfectionism." That has nothing to do with personal branding or blogging, but it's our most watched video by the tens of thousands.

Some of the most important pieces of that product have nothing to do with personal branding and blogging. They have to do with overcoming your own limitations and overcoming your own excuses, etc.

When a thought leader is mapping out a course, don't just think, "What do they need to know?" Because if you're a decent teacher, you're going to put that in there. That just makes sense. Ask yourself, "what is going to prevent them from doing this stuff?" Those are the videos that most courses, I think, are missing.

Henry Ford said, 'If I had given people what they want, they would have gotten faster horses.' They didn't know about a car. Who could describe a car. There was no such thing.

"Understanding your audience is very powerful, but sometimes you need to read between the lines. They can't tell you what they really need, they can only tell you based on their view of the world or view of their profession. I'm not saying not to ask them. But really read between the lines and find out what is that is really preventing them from achieving their goals assuming you're in that kind of marketplace."

- Ray Higdon

Content Relevancy

As Jay Baer pointed out earlier content relevancy, or the lack thereof, can play a huge factor in course completion. Mel Abraham expanded on the notion of course relevance, “One of the things that becomes really important for us is that when you are creating a course to make sure that it’s relevant to their everyday lives. That they can see how it lands in their space. Because if you don’t it’s conceptual learning that they can’t apply and that’s when we start to lose people.

One of the things that I try to do in all of my training is I start with what I call what are the problems and what are the promises, which is really why they need it. They got to see that they need it, that they can do it, and that they are willing to do it now.”

Involve the User in the Planning

Ian Garlic adds, “One thing that I’m installing in my courses now, and I’m actually making it for my last course, is a planning module.” In this process Ian is having his students record into a calendar when they will complete each part of the course and why they are doing the course.

Continue involving them in the course throughout. At the start of each module, reiterate they’re why. At the start of each lesson, inform them specifically why.

Pat Flynn adds, “I always remind people about why they’re in here in the first place because when I’m taking courses or when I’m learning something, when I’m in the deep trenches of that work, I often forget why I’m doing it in the first place and all that happens is I either get frustrated, or I get tired, or bored, or I just want to stop. But it’s only when I’m reminded constantly what’s the purpose here that I continue to move forward despite maybe work that isn’t always so glorious in that particular course.”

Sometimes it’s difficult for course creators to know how to explain the “why” fully. A method that I have all of my clients use actually stems from Aristotle and is more of a means for persuasion than instruction, but it is so valuable to include inside of every lesson, if for nothing more than to keep their interest

in your course piqued. It is simply this “Ethos, Pathos, Logos.”

Ethos is connected to why something is the right thing to do. When you are considering Ethos, you are explaining why it is the right thing to do. Don’t over complicate this. If I were to tell you to tie your shoes, for example, I would tell you that if you don’t tie your shoes you may fall down and that would hurt.

Pathos is connected to the heart space and can be a great time to bring back the pain points that you told your audience that you were solving for and the hopes and dreams that you offered them when you sold them the course in the first place. For instance you may say, “Think of a time when you forgot to tie your shoes and fell down. How did that make you feel?”

For all of my storytellers out there, pathos is your best friend. Tell your story and pull at their heartstrings.

Logos is connected to statistics and mathematical reasoning. Google is your friend here. It is quite easy to find a statistic related to the content that you are teaching. If you can’t find a statistic for each individual lesson, try one per module and refer back to it in each lesson. Please don’t skip this part. You could easily lose a third of your audience in your lesson simply by not including a stat.

And If You Don’t Know How to Teach

According to Pamela Herrmann, the industry course completion average is failing because of our failure to involve the audience in our content. “That is literally the problem. WE have a lot of subject area experts, that are training, that don’t know how to train. And that’s why people don’t complete these things.”

Anthony Trucks, CEO - Anthony Trucks Industries, describes his process for developing content and assuring that it is landing with his audience. “When you put something out you need to be super simple in terms of explanations to where it’s literally impossible to misunderstand what it is you have, what it is you created, and what the benefit to them is going to be. At the end of the day what I want to teach and how I’m going to teach it are two different

things. Part of it was getting the content dialed in to what was learnable which was really being applicable. Your product has to deliver. I would create the content and do it one on one or in a small group setting just to teach it and make sure it's teachable and workable and then take it and launch it on a big scale from there."

Acquiring feedback from your students is hands down one of the best ways to ensure that your delivery is making an impact with your audience. As Anthony illuminates you can easily check in with your clients if you are sharing your content within a small group setting. However, if you are removing yourself from the process, make sure to have a simple survey to receive feedback from your audience.

The One Massive Course Correction that We Need to Make Today

According to Phoebe Mroczek, "We should go back to is where our ideal customer is to start with and then where they need to get to. How do we get them from where they are to where they need to be and no place else?"

This concept is so obvious when you are on the side of the computer taking the program, but it somehow seems to evade the most brilliant minds that create them.

Here's the basic premise: **adults are self selected learners.**

Yes, we pride ourselves on being "Lifelong Learners," because frankly, it sounds good. The title "Lifelong Learner" strokes our ego. It allows us to take our place within the ranks of the other growth junkies within our respective tribes.

I mean, let's face it. Nobody wants to be the village idiot. It isn't something that we could ever relate to. "Hey guys, I'm the village idiot," said no person ever.

So we buy our books and our courses and wrap ourselves in a warm, fuzzy blanket of self-importance... and do nothing.

Now, not to say everyone does nothing or that we do nothing all of the time.

However, remember that the industry average for online course completion rates is a whopping 3%. So we are looking at a 97% attrition rate. 97% of people buy an online course and don't do what they set out to do.

That's a whole lot of people doing not a thing!

Massive bummer.

So, how do we **course correct**?

First, we recognize that adults are self selected learners. We acknowledge that unless this course is a part of a larger accountability program, there is a good chance that they will never get to where they are going....

And then we let them choose.

Do you remember the "Choose Your Own Adventure" books from when you were a kid?

"If you think Tommy should go down the left path, turn to page 53. If you think he should turn down the right path, go to page 67."

It's exactly like that. Recognize that their pathway to success does not look like yours, your mama's, or that of your sister's boyfriend's cousin. It is **UNIQUE** to their experience and they know it.

So, how do we allow them to have a unique experience inside of a fixed program?

Here are some simple steps that will streamline this process:

1. Create objectives for the course, modules, and lessons. Think of each unit as a stand alone unit that teaches one step in the process.
2. Create a survey related to how competent they feel with each objective that you are covering in each lesson. For example. If the outcome of the lesson was "the student will use hashtags to grow their business," then the survey question might read, "On a scale from 1-5 how comfortable are you with using hashtags to grow your business?"
3. If they score themselves as a 4-5 on any answer, unless you have ninja

level content presented in that lesson, they skip that lesson.

4. Send them a report of the lessons they need to take to have the desired outcome. “Based on your answers on our survey you have opted out of Module 3 Lesson 5, Module 4 Lessons 1-2, and all of Module 5.”
5. When they complete the lessons necessary to have the desired outcome, ask them one simple survey question, “On a scale from 1-5 how confident do you feel in your abilities to (have X outcome)?”

And that, my friends, is how you get an engaged adult learner.

When you think of your content as a continuum and allow your audience to self select where they are on that continuum and what their needs are, you create a higher engaged audience that is more interested in your material and more likely to share how amazing your process has been for them for one main reason: you solved THEIR problem.

How Long Should My Course Be?

I seriously get this question all the time and I’m not sure that anyone really likes my indirect answer....

How long will it take you to teach the desired outcome of the course?

That’s such a loaded question, isn’t it?

There are a lot of people in the space that will tell you that each course should be “5 Modules in length, with 5 lessons in each module, and a total running time of 40 minutes for each lesson.”

Ok guys, that’s such bull, it’s not even funny!

Here’s the thing: yes, it is what is being done currently and consistently.

However, what we are doing **IS NOT WORKING!**

It’s really time that we shake up the game and look at things differently.

We need to approach time as a value exchange. We view our longer courses as we are giving our time, we are giving our value. What we need to do is see

how this is being perceived on the other end of the equation. We are taking their time and their time is valuable.

Turn the conversation in your head to “What is the fastest way to deliver the greatest value?” They will appreciate that much more than, “I want to learn how to X, but this course is 25 hours long.”

If I told you that I had this great course for you and it is 25 hours long, how would you feel about it? My answer is “That has to be super exciting for me to sit that long!” I liked Lord of the Rings, but even I don’t watch it that often.

According to Robert Riccardelli, Founder of The Converging Zone, “Our attention spans are decreasing all the time, exponentially. There was a study at one point we had a 12 second attention span and the goldfish has an 11 second attentions span. Apparently now we have an 8 second attention span. It’s important that the modules of the courses be minimized so there’s lots of little successes.”

Inside of this conversation is video length. If you have content that will take a long time to teach because of the nature of it, please consider shorter, more condensed videos. Siminars, a Learning Management System out of Austin, Texas, did a study and found that people were dropping off of videos at the seven minute mark. SEVEN minutes in and their brains were done! How do you feel about those 40 minute videos now?

Instead of trying to cram an entire lesson inside of one video, break it up into smaller digestible chunks. I recommend to my clients that each video be 3-5 minutes in length.

Truthfully, I researched length of professional development as a factor for outcome in increased achievement. After reading every research study on the topic, I found that there was no correlation between increased length of professional development and a desired outcome. The only mention of any increase in result was when the length of professional development was over 300 hours long. Please don’t make a course that is 300 hours long. Just don’t.

Ultimately, for someone to feel the value has been received from the course

you must deliver on the promise of the course. When they are done, do they understand what you said they would understand at the level they need to understand it to accomplish what you said they would accomplish? If not, your course failed regardless of how long it is.

If you can shorten the length of time that they are on the journey from “Sucksville to Awesometown,” everybody wins.

If you really want to get fancy, give the students the same survey that you gave them at the beginning of the course to determine which lessons they could skip based on their ability for a second time at the end of the course. So now your pre-test just became your post-test, as well. You can easily take their data and quantify individual student growth from that data. If you’re students are not demonstrating growth as a result of your course, you are not teaching. It’s that simple.

The Great Assessment Debate

I just gave you a means by which you can calculate the growth of the students inside of your course. This is the only means that I would recommend for a course that is a set it and forget it model.

A lot of course creators out there will encourage you to add multiple choice tests inside of your course. I would encourage you to always ask yourself why you are adding something to course before you do it.

The reason to avoid multiple choice tests is twofold. First of all, more than likely, you are not qualified to create a test of that nature. Secondly, adults know when they are being asked to jump hoops and they don’t like it.

The first answer there may shock you a bit, but it’s true. In order for a test to be reliable and valid it needs to go through a process called norm referencing. You don’t have access to the population size that you would need to test your assessment on in order to ensure validity. Just don’t do it. Please understand that I’m not putting anyone down here. I literally have a doctorate and I wouldn’t create an assessment without norm referencing it. It’s just not best practice.

On the other hand, again, why do we require adults to do things that we don't appreciate when we are taking courses. "Yes, please give me a multiple choice test," said no person ever.

If you are going to create an assessment of any kind, always consider the reason that you are collecting the data and the objective that the data is measuring. If you have not met that criteria with some degree of reason, just avoid it altogether.

Feedback

When you hear from your clients that this course is "too hard" what you are really hearing is, "this is not a match for me. This is not meeting me where I am at." You have a choice here. You can ignore the information as in the "not me economy," or you can opt to take a more progressive stance. I would take the opportunity to gather more feedback from the client. Were they prepared to take the course? Did I create the best product possible? Am I meeting the needs of every learner? And, I think more importantly here, "how many of the people that are taking this course are having similar issues?"

Receiving feedback provides us with an opportunity to improve. Take a proactive approach to feedback with your clients and continue to make slight improvements along the way. They will tell you what you need to keep them in your funnel, if you ever so gently put your ego to the side and focus on improving their experience. Keep in mind that only 4-5% of dissatisfied customers complain and open yourself up to appreciating the people that do.

Edutainment

According to Michael Savage, "It has to be edu-tainment not just education." Thank you! Indeed!

What 80s child doesn't remember the iconic scene in "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" when Ben Stein is repeating "Bueller" much to his student's shagrin. The scene isn't memorable because it was so far out of left field. It is memorable because every person on the planet has had an experience where one of their teachers made them feel like going to sleep with their super dry, monotone presentation style. Who didn't want to leave their class? More

importantly, who wouldn't want to quit their course?

You don't need to juggle or have the greatest comedic timing in order to retain your students, although that helps, but being even slightly interesting can carry a huge weight when you consider all of the options that people have to aggregate their attention. If you really want to captivate the listener and you know that you're just not that interesting, consider having someone else do the voiceover for your course. If the course is not attached to your personal brand, have them record everything. Ain't no shame in the game. Remove any ego that you have attached to your involvement in the course and concentrate on the user experience. Ask yourself, *"Am I the one that should be presenting this material? Will they enjoy this course if I record it?"*

Case Studies

More course creators should consider the proper execution of case studies inside of their online courses. According to Ian Garlic, "They use case studies, but they're not using case studies properly because they show someone's success. I feel like we can capture someone going through the same thing as us, what their problems are, and what they're going through and what they're thinking. Most of learning is in the failure, not in the actual execution." Moreover, if all that you are giving your students is what's working, then you're not giving them the full picture and the opportunity to fine tune the process.

There are examples and nonexamples in every lesson. The examples show us the "to do's" and the non examples show us what not to do. Nonexamples are often more powerful than examples because they can show the subtle nuances of where the train fell off the tracks. You may have heard of these non examples as teachable moments. Instead of skirting those moments under the rug and assuming the wrongness, be vulnerable with your audience and show them where they could have a lapse and not achieve their desired outcome. Go one step farther and don't give them the answer. Instead give them the opportunity to inquire.

Increasing Cognitive Rigor

According to Mark Bailey, "When you share a perspective with somebody,

then in essence, you're asking them to think differently. If they're unconsciously incompetent, they don't know what they don't know." The problem with most online courses is that they encourage the consistent dependence on the course creator to provide all of the answers for the student because they create an environment that provides for unconscious incompetence."

Not only do the students enter the course with some level of unconscious incompetence, but they stay there, as well. We are spoon feeding answers and somehow expecting some level of independence.

Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix (2009) blends both Webb's Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy for the most comprehensive classification of student desired actions organized by cognitive rigor.

There is more statistical evidence to support increasing cognitive rigor as a strategy to increase desired achievement outcomes than any other strategy ever recorded.

I know I went all educationese on you for a minute, so let me explain.

Increasing Cognitive Rigor quite simply means that we have to make them think harder.

Most courses offer only the opportunity to recall information. For instance "I'm going to show you the 5 things. What 5 things? These 5 things?" The student may remember those 5 things for the next 5 minutes, but after that it is inconsequential. It didn't leave enough of an impact to demand the brain connect to that content. Anna Selby adds, "If you can design your course for competency as opposed to testing for memory, you're going to have a revolving door of content that they're going to want to consume."

However, if the course creator were to require deeper levels of thought, inquiry, and action, then they are in essence increasing cognitive rigor. As the rigor is increased by applying this method, so is the likelihood for retention and the transformation of the participant.

Take your traditional branding course for instance. Most branding courses

will tell you that you should have a professional photo taken, have a logo designed, create a website, and put together some social media accounts. More often than not they don't have you examine others in your space from the perspective of a potential client, rate logo designs from best to worst, or compare and contrast two different websites.

Provide opportunities for them to change their way of being instead of simply adding 5 steps to an ill equipped arsenal.

Make it easy on them to accomplish the tasks that you provide for them. Mel Abraham adds, "If I just say "here's what I want you to go do," some of them will do it. But if I say, "here's what I want you to go do, but I've got a template, a worksheet, a cheat sheet, or something that they can go and work from, it changes it tremendously, because then they feel like they got a tool."

Understanding Modalities

Kate Buck Jr., Chief Geek Girl at kbjonline, states, "I think a quality course is one that's able to reach all of the people that are taking it. So you have a mixed bag of people from their experience level also to their learning styles."

This is so true. Many course creators tend to think of their own personal needs when they are creating their courses. "I like to learn by doing X. So therefore, I will have my students perform X." Although I can completely understand the logic behind this thought process and appreciate that they are giving the process that much thought, it falls short of hitting the mark. Instead of building the course for you, build it for your entire audience by addressing all learning modalities into the course.

If you are not familiar with learning modalities they are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. People who lean into visual and auditory modalities comprise 25-30% of the population each. Kinesthetic learners comprise 15-20% of the population. About 20% of the population rely on multiple modalities. The truth is that you honestly don't know who is taking your course and it is best to use all modalities in each of your lessons to create a greater impact among your students.

Dave Albano adds, "If you can, do your online course through video, through

audio, and through the written word. The reason I say that is because people learn in different modalities. Some people are more text based and they like to read everything. If you record everything on video, then you can hit all three formats in one fell swoop. You record the video once, through the video you can have it transcribed, so you have the text. You can strip out the audio so you can put the audio only from the video in an audio download file. In one recording of video, now you have the visuals, you have the auditory, and you have the text based.”

Application is one method to increase cognitive rigor. Greg Hickman, CEO and Founder of System.ly, asserts, “There’s education and then there’s learning. A lot of people are putting out information and educating people. But people are just consuming and not doing anything with it, because they’re no real application for it at that time.” Course creators must provide an application component with every lesson. If you are only requiring the student to “know” without an opportunity to “do” then your kinesthetic learners, about 15-20% of the population, are already sunk. Please add application components for my kinesthetic friends. They really dig it.

This may be a slight stretch, but with the high level of dyslexics and people with ADHD that are drawn to the entrepreneurial world, if you are making a course for that audience, kinesthetic activities are an absolute must, as those populations tend to lean towards the kinesthetic modality.

Keara Palmay, Social Media Marketing Strategist, is a rockstar with getting people to take action, “I find with memberships that they always want the content, they always want to learn, and they always want to take action. So, they need to have action takeaways. They need to have tangible action steps to take at the end of every lesson so they feel that they’re creating momentum and heading in the right direction. Even if there’s no action to take other than to reflect, then I will at least give them questions to journal and I’ll tell them to take the time and space, find that sacred space where you feel safe to really think about the things that maybe you’ve been avoiding, really confronting head on, now’s the time. I always have a handout and an actionable takeaway.”

Ian Garlic adds to this discussion, “We need to consider, too, not only the way people learn, but where they are learning. All of these courses are

designed for sitting down at your computer and watching a course. I do most of my learning in the car. I would love for somebody to actually think about that. “Hey, here’s an audiobook course for you. It’s going to take you through the whole method. You can listen and when you get out of your car you do these two things.”

On the Journey to Mastery

When a person is done they don’t just understand how to complete a task so to speak. They haven’t just learned this skill, but they also at least are at the beginning

What defines the beginning of mastery is that you’ve gone from philosophy to initiate, in other words you’re at a place where you can begin to practice something and you have demonstrated not only that you know the information in your brain, but you can demonstrate it as a skill. You can go beyond just thinking about it. That to me is the beginning of mastery because that’s the place where you can play with a concept.

Can that student now go out into the real world and apply that knowledge?

I don’t feel like as a course creator, by myself, I can say that the person is reliable for understanding my material.

I can only teach you what I’ve done, what I believe, and my perspective. I say that to take responsibility for my teaching. I’m not teaching you the right, the only, the truth, the light, the way.

I think it’s a great business model and I think it serves some purpose of creating reliability and understanding a person’s basic understanding of material, but when you come into something and you first don’t speak about it intelligently until you learn, and then you parrot everything that you’ve heard. And then you practice and as you practice you discover and learn things and you’re able to speak it in your own words. And all of a sudden, one day you find yourself embodying the information. That’s to me the journey of mastery.

- Kate Buck Jr.

Accountability and Engagement

There's so much information out there, it's how it's packaged that really matters. Because the truth is, almost everything that you can buy, you can find for free. But free can also be the most expensive thing you do because it involves your time, and rounding up, and finding the bits and pieces everywhere.

I think course content is going to cost less on the front end and is going to include more coaching on the backend and that's where more of the revenue is going to be generated. (because there are tons of places you can buy cheap courses.)

The real value is going to come from people who create course content that people who resonate with them uniquely want to consume. For me, I'm not trying to get everyone in my marketplace that wants to learn social media marketing or facebook advertising. I'm looking for the people that resonate with my particular style. I'm not trying to make everyone happy. What I find is that the more authentic I am with my own style, I'm going to have some people that absolutely don't like it and there's going to be some people that absolutely love it. And that's what I want. I want the raving fans. I don't need to have everyone. I think we're going to see a lot more of that. I think we tend to learn better when we learn from someone that we have some rapport with. Of course rapport comes from viewing like we have things in common.

- Jesse Jameson

So how do we package content in a way that resonates and creates the greatest amount of rapport imaginable?

Anna Selby, Founder of Pretty Witty, Creative Strategist and Business Development Consultant, states, "Course design needs to motivate and by motivate they (courses) need to be engaging. Adult learning has completely changed. Now in the online form it's 24/7. They're going to learn at all levels. The only way to get them to stay is by creating engaging content. And

there's so many different ways to do that.”

In addition to proper instructional design and creating courses that deliver on the desired result that was promised to the student, it is essential to add an element that urges students to remain inside the course once they're there.

Many people who create courses are looking for the passive income model approach. This may work for some and there are a few ways to setup automated engagement. However, I would encourage as much hand holding as possible to do in a scalable model that best fits your business.

Accountability Partners

Phoebe Mroczek asserts “One of the best things that you can insert into your course is an accountability partner. Who is holding this person accountable?”

And the numbers back up her assessment. In a preliminary study conducted by Thinkific with a somewhat small sample size, researchers found that courses that have accountability partners have three times higher completion rates than their completely passive counterparts. A slight tweak in accountability could mean a world of difference when it comes to the need to constantly fill your funnel.

Although many try to set up accountability partners, there is a slight nuance to the process that will truly set up your students for success. Consider your students' time zones and businesses while pairing up partners. You don't want someone in Fiji paired with someone in Oklahoma nor do you want a C-Suite Executive paired with a first year solopreneur.

Make sure the pairings are as appropriate as possible given your list of students.

Instructor Led Content

Big names in the online course space, such as Digital Marketer are leaning into more traditional instructor led content. CEO Ryan Deiss lends his perspective, “I'm truly learning more in this focused environment. I see where that's headed, as well. So at Digital Marketer, we're right now testing

a \$5,000, 12 week intensive where we are walking people through all of our certifications in an instructor led, actual online classroom type of environment. People like that because it's that focused intensity. I think you are going to need to combine these different things as it relates to information."

Although this method is certainly not easily scalable nor passive, it does create a greater value exchange. While many consultants and coaches are trying to figure out what service offering to create a value exchange that warrants a greater price point, they could easily create that value by taking their existing content and adding an instructor led option. Imagine the case stories that would come from that deep, intensive work churning out successful students!

Office Hours

One of the most scalable options that I've seen that offers instructor support is providing office hours, just like they did back at the university level.

Anna Selby suggests using this approach and creating "an open communication channel for students" using feedback forms. She also suggests creating a help map to guide the students through this process. "People are going to stay and they are going to be less likely to refund if there's a help map that's clearly identified." She adds that "1. They need to see that there's help. 2. They need to see a proper path to get help. 3. They need to be motivated to get help."

The most annoying part of any office hours or group coaching scenario is the wait. I'm sure you've been there before. Everyone has a ton of questions that don't pertain to you and despite what we try to say, there really are dumb questions.

My greatest suggestion to you to create the most streamlined access to you for your students is to scale your office hours. Create buckets of your students. I do this based on which phase they are in my course. There are office hours for those in phase one, phase two, and phase three. That way we keep questions specific to the section of the course they are in and the content that they are covering.

You may find that you need another bucket for those without the necessary prerequisite background knowledge to be prepared for your course. That is up to you. Do what best serves your students and your business.

Certifications

Certifications are huge! At Traffic and Conversion Summit in 2016 it was announced that Digital Marketer's programs went from a 3% completion rate to a 63% completion rate with the addition of certifications. Ryan Deiss lends his insight into this phenomenal jump, "I know for us one of the reasons we've pivoted away from just information into certifications is we knew that information in and of itself, again, what's the end result. You've always got to ask yourself, 'What's the end result of information? I know something that I didn't know before.' OK great. So what? Right. So What? In copy we want to say "Once you do this, you'll be able to do this, and then you'll get this result." But the problem is that it's your product plus their effort equals positive result. It's a much tougher sell. With certifications, when you're done, you will now become something different. Product consumption you now become something different. It's a status play."

While some course creators are uncomfortable with the certification model, others are embracing it! Thinkific has completion certifications inside of their Learning Management System. In addition, they have them integrated in such a way that your students can advertise your course by including your certifications on LinkedIn as a proof of their ongoing professional development. Talk about a status play! But of course your students should be rewarded by possible clients and employers for having developed themselves further through the continuous learning cycle when so many others are rocking their basic skills!

Completion Incentives & Gamification

Gamification is kind of a buzzword so be very careful what you view as gamification that is appropriate for adult learners. I was researching Learning Management Systems for a client and found one that was super proud of their drag and drop crossword puzzle feature which is highly inappropriate for adult learners. Remember, the people in your course want less fluff and hoops to jump through. So give them the goods. As we move forward with

AI you will see a lot more gamification options that are appropriate for adult learners. However, for the purpose of this book I will stick with what is easily accessible to the masses.

According to Tim Erway, CEO of Elite Marketing Pro, “human accountability and human interaction gets double digit course completion” inside of their programs. They’ve used completion incentives by unlocking only “one module at a time and they (the students) have to touch base with their coach before they can have the next module unlocked.”

Consider what I mentioned earlier about the value that you create by including instructor involvement. The inverse of this is true as well. As Greg Hickman points out, you have to consider the price of the course when you structure it to include completion incentives with instructor involvement, “They are much higher price points because you have access to people. Most people that invest in something under \$500 most likely aren’t going to do anything with it. And as the business owner you really can’t do too much other than automated reminders that’s going to allow them to complete it anyways because then you’re not going to be profitable. The price points that they’re playing with, they’re almost pricing themselves out of being to help people.” Greg suggested a similar approach to what is working with Elite Marketing Pro, using the course completion levels to unlock access to the instructor.

Jeff Schechter, CEO and Co-Founder, High Return Real Estate LLC, suggests using a point system where rewards are given out based on the accumulation of points. “If you look at any of these apps or online games, they are built to be addictive. If you want to get people to complete stuff, then you want to take the biggest page from that playbook and say, ‘what can we add into our training products to create some sort of addictive gamification to that?’”

People will want to know how they are doing in relation to other students. Now there’s some competition related to the course. “Once I start seeing that I’m in the top 10%, that’s a big stroke to my ego.”

Jeff adds, “You can start going one layer deeper and get into rewards for top percentages.”

One great place to track all of this and create that level of competition for rewards is inside of Facebook Groups.

Using Facebook Groups for Engagement

Using Facebook Groups for engagement is the latest rage, but please make sure that if you take on this feat, you do so strategically and with intentionality. Keara Palmay asserts that, “They (students) want some sort of accountability and community. A lot of people will throw together a Facebook group and put people in it. However, a community will not create itself. A community needs a leader. Often times, they won’t just listen to the leader, too, because they’ve got a thousand other things going on in their lives, so why do they care to participate to make your group look cool. Some of them will, but most just won’t.”

I’ll add to this that students will almost always take on the vibe of the instructor. It’s human nature to try to fit in. So if you want a welcoming room, be welcoming. If you want conversations to be of a high level, start high level conversations. If you don’t want spam, don’t sell your widget. I am honored to have one of the best Facebook Groups designed for course creators. You can access it here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ofcoursecommunity>. It was crafted to be that way.

Keara continues, “I create some sort of bribe to get people engaged. For example, at the end of the month I’ll give a prize, and I will let them pick one of three prizes. I’ll have a free strategy session with me, or you can have the five top books that changed my entire life, or something. Basically, I’ll give them three options.” And people love options! Choice Theory can be a powerful motivator if done well. “Make a big deal of whoever wins that prize at the end of the month. Put a picture of them. People love when you commend them for the specific things that they’ve done right.”

And they hate it when you point out what they’ve done wrong, especially in a group. Even if you try to add some layer of anonymity to it, they will know who you are talking about. More importantly you will make EVERYONE uncomfortable. If someone does something that really irks you and makes you hot under the collar, message them directly. Take that offstage and

handle it with care for the person. You'll create a much warmer atmosphere and happier, more engaged students.

Owen Hemsath adds, "You have to build community into the course because entrepreneurs will get themselves up a certain number of times. But when those times expire, entrepreneurs need the team to come pick them back up again." He suggests encouraging people to use the group by directing questions that come to the instructor back into the group. When they ask a question, "say hey "great questions, ask it in the group!"

Try to come up with ways to continue to encourage people that are relevant to your course. Pat Flynn suggests, "Continuously reminding people where they're at and how far they've come is also great. Appreciating small wins. That sells the course while people have already purchased it. Again the idea that they're in the right spot."

You are always selling people on your course. Don't stop or it won't serve them.

Remember, above all people are looking for that sense of belonging. Ryan Deiss illustrates this point, "We've also combined information with community, because people are lonely. With Digital Marketer Lab people join for the chunk of information that we're promising, but they stay because of the community. Information + Community."

Completely Passive & Scalable

I have been sharing this strategy ever since my interview with Jason Swenk, because it is pure gold. It's completely passive and scalable, and it will yield results because it feels like the conversation your students are having is with you! If you do nothing else, do this one thing.

"And I think the other part of it is, for the one's that actually have a good program, making it like an onboarding process. Whenever I develop a course or a program, I want them to go through it, because if they actually go through it, they'll actually get value. If they actually get value, they'll actually take action and buy more later on, or they will be better off. And I think people are just trying to look at

success for themselves rather than significance. If you can help people out and have them achieve success for themselves than you'll achieve significance, and that's a lot better than success. So when I do a program on the onboarding process, let's say like with the Agency Playbook, I completely redid it, and this is on version three so it's not like.. Some people just create a program and then it goes stale and I think you should upgrade it. So on this one, what I did was I said, "Ok. there's 8 systems so you can go through it in 8 days, 16 days or 8 weeks. And then I create the marketing automation, in order to remind them, "Hey, this is why you need to go through this system. How are you doing on the other systems?"

- Jason Swenk

How to Market and Sell Your Course

Please keep in mind that this is not specifically a marketing book. I am not a marketing guru. I have intentionally included some of the most brilliant minds in the marketing space in the book because, as I stated before, online courses as they are being used currently outside of the traditional academic setting, are a marriage of education and marketing. You will not have a successful course without understanding marketing. There is no way around that.

With that being said, this book includes marketing strategies that are included for the specific benefit of creating courses that your audience will love to purchase, look forward to taking, and as a result they will want to stay on the journey with you.

If you wish for a deeper dive into marketing, please reach out to any of the contributors of this book. Many of their best secrets are included in resources section which can be found by going to my messenger bot at m.me/DrCarrieRose and typing RESOURCES.

Positioning

How you are positioned in the marketplace can be essentially critical to your success as an online course creator. Does your audience know who you are? How do you stay on their radar once they do?

As we discussed earlier, it is not necessary to have an audience at the onset of this journey. In fact, I would not wait to build a course until after you have established your online presence. However, once you have a product in place it is literally #GoTime, if you want that puppy to sell.

I interviewed Andrew O'Brien, Founder of The Publicity Guy regarding publicity as it relates to course completion.

How you are positioned is highly integral to their desire to learn from you.

How much does the audience believe in them and how much do they see them?

I keep them constantly intrigued and get them to see me in the media all the time. Once they're in my course, in my list, they get emails every time that I'm featured in a media outlet. I try to constantly build this authority figure with my audience. Some of them may know me, may have heard of me from friends, but maybe they don't know me personally maybe they've never met me. So what I do is I constantly get that media exposure in front of them where I'm constantly giving value.

In media interviews, I don't just talk about how awesome Andrew O'Brien is. I talk about "here's some action steps that you can do to get better publicity for your company. Here's some action steps that you can take immediately to do this. They know every time I'm in Forbes, Entrepreneur, Inc, Huffington Post, any of those, that I'm always going to be providing value. And what I'm doing is I'm building this authoritative figure with my audience. And I feel like once they trust you enough and they kind of idolize you, I feel like that would possibly increase the completion rates because they see you as this authority figure, not just as a teacher, not just as a trainer, but as someone that's world renowned for what they do."

- Andrew O'Brien

It may seem like publicity is so out there and next level if you are just getting started. You may start to have imposter syndrome, the little voice in your

head saying, “who do I think I am?” I promise you that you are not alone in feeling that way. However, if you feel you are in the position to share this information with the world, then you have a responsibility to go all in and make sure that they know what time it is.

Publicity makes a world of difference. When I was featured in a list in the Huffington Post as one of “50 Must-Follow Women Entrepreneurs in 2017,” it literally changed the way that everyone related to me. I had to raise my rates immediately. Kidding, Not Kidding. I was offered more speaking opportunities. Not to mention my 14 year old son was telling everyone at his middle school how cool his mom is.

If you are thinking that getting publicity for yourself is difficult, check out the resource that Andrew included for this by going to m.me/DrCarrieRose and typing RESOURCES.

Outsourcing Copy

There is an art and a science to writing good copy and having this skill is essential to selling your courses. According to Anthony Trucks, “you know that you have a solution, but you have to be able to convey very distinctly that what you have in a solution legitimately will be a good solution.”

I don’t know about you, but study as I may, I am not a copywriter. My best bet is always to outsource this to someone who has mastered their craft. I know I am not alone on this. Itay Bengal agrees, “It’s really helpful to know how to do everything, but is it always feasible and possible? Not necessarily. You need to be able to find the right people to do the right jobs.”

If you are searching for a copywriter to take on this task for you, Itay suggests avoiding “done for you copywrite websites. You won’t get many opens and you’ll set off a lot of spam filters.”

Itay adds, “There are fabulous copywriters out there! A good copywriter will ask the course creator if they’re on the right track. They’ll also get an understanding of the course before writing the copy.”

Itay has seen a few course creators miss the mark when outsourcing their

copy, “Often times they don’t have their avatar really, finely developed. And so, if in everything that you’re writing, you’re not delivering it from the perspective of “how is this going to land on my perfect customer?” then you can easily lose them, people get distracted, and they move on to something else before they finish it. Look if you’re super clear on your avatar, and what their pain is and what solution they’re looking for, then your sales copy on the landing page should be pretty clear and concise to that pain.”

Do you see why your pregame is so essential? As I covered earlier, know your customer avatar and write your faux copy in advance of your course creation. You will be in a much better place to hire the best copywriter for you, you’ll increase your upfront and backend sales, and your customers will want to finish your course because everything is congruent from A to Z.

Scarcity

There is a lot of debate in the industry around scarcity being used in marketing. Why do people use it? Simple, because it works. However, applying too much leverage or being incongruent in your practices will make for some ill gotten gains.

Chris Smith shines a light on scarcity, “It causes a lot of people to buy info products for the wrong reasons.” If they weren’t really ready to be your customer, do you want them? I know that sounds counterintuitive, because we all love sales. However, I have to wonder if what Pamela Herrmann has to say isn’t part of the problem with the industry, “you kind of think what is the psychology behind the person that is doing the course. Who is your marketing appealing to and who are you attracting, if you have scarcity marketing, which a lot of people do? They use scarcity marketing so they attract people who have fear. Odds are they’re not going to complete because they’re not runners to begin with.”

If we are attracting people out of a place of fear, are we reaching the best customers to begin with or are we leaching off of people that are hurting? Are we attracting the right students? Or worse, are we snake oil salesmen?

I don’t have the answer for this. I wouldn’t steer you away from making sales. However, make sure you examine your practices as it relates to your

business model and do the best thing for your customers.

And this should go without saying, but since bad practices still seem to exist, please follow Itay's advice, "If you are doing scarcity, mean it. If you are saying this cart closes at midnight, and then four days later it's still up, people are going to stop believing what you tell them."

You want to establish a relationship built on trust with your audience.

You'll want all of your copy ready before you head into your launch.

Launch

When you get to the point where you are ready to launch your course, you'll really want to keep in mind what is the best path for your content, your audience, and your business model. Jason Alan Miller offers this perspective, "What I'm learning is there are hundreds of ways to launch a course. The one size fits all in the marketing world is creating a ton of confusion. They're hearing things from people that are 10, 15, 20 years deep into something and going 'Well, I need to do what that person's doing,' because that person is doing their job and saying 'this is what's working for me now.' But they have very little understanding of what it took to get to that now or the body of work that it took to get to that now."

My launch team included two marines and a purple heart army ranger. I'm not sure that there is anything about our process that is duplicatable. Take what's working and make sure you synthesize that information with what works for your business.

Tim Erway of Elite Marketing Pro urges people to go for iteration 1 and put out something that is useful and valuable. "If the stars are aligned and everything works out perfectly and you hit a homerun the first time you launch your course. That's if everything's perfect. That happens maybe one out of ten times. Typically what's going to happen is you're going to launch your course, and you're gonna launch the wrong course. Maybe it's the wrong hook or angle. Maybe it's the wrong big idea. There's so many things that you have to get right to have a home run and it's very rare that anyone will get it done their very first time. So my objective for selling any course is

I'm looking for minimal viable product, minimum viable offer, minimum viable funnel, and just go." I think we have a continuing theme here, folks.

Tim also suggests that most people give themselves too much time for a launch, which will lead to putting off the course and possibly never launching. He suggests that if you think it will take a month to launch your course, ask instead yourself instead, "how could we do it in two weeks?" His suggested timeline is 7 days to launch your course. I create courses with my clients in 4 day intensives. Whatever you are doing, shorten the amount of time that you are thinking it will take you. Set deadlines. Make it public. Get in the ring.

Marketing Funnel

If you are not familiar with the concept of a marketing funnel and you are wanting to market an online course, you will want to get on that. It's one strategy that has made many a successful entrepreneur. This book will not lay out the funnel process for you. Only provide guidance as it relates to the completion of your courses and success of your online business.

Mitchell Gandy, Chief Operating Officer at VShare, It took it to church, or was at least preaching to this choir, when he said, "Your course is a significant part of your funnel. If you have a course that under delivers, or is overwhelming to consume, your customer just won't be ready to buy your next offer." As you continue to grow and fine tune your marketing skills, I want you to understand this one thing as it relates to your online business: your course is an integral part of your funnel. There are strategies that we can use to make people want to buy it, finish it, and buy your next offer. However, it is no longer something that can be swept under the rug and ignored. Those days are behind us!

Splintering

Dave Albano offers his time tested insights as it relates to splintering the marketing funnel. This strategy, should you implore it, could be massively successful for you. Please make a judgement call as to what is in the best interest of your business. I trust that you understand by now that there is no "one size fits all" approach to this. However, Dave is brilliant, so please

consider it.

The structure and the format of the course delivery can be almost just as important as the content, not just for consumption, but also for the flow of the course.

If you can chunk up your content into digestible bits that people can relate to.

Start with your core offer, because that's the ultimate thing you want to sell to your prospects or your eventual customers. In this case, let's say the core offer is a 6 module course. Then you can pluck out one of those modules, your best module, the one that you get the most feedback from, the best value statements from your customers, the most wow statements that really impacted them the most. Pick your best module, pluck it out, and then productize it. Make it its own stand alone product. When you do that you can then make that module a tripwire. This is called splintering.

There's something in that module that made people say "wow," or "ah hah," or "I got it," or just blew them away. Whatever that micro piece of content is in that module, those make great candidates for lead magnets.

When you structure it that way, then the flow, when someone sees an ad leading to a landing page on which that awesome lead magnet is sitting, then they say "oh yeah, I want that so bad, I gotta have it." When they opt in for it on the thank you pages, it says, "Hey, you love this lead magnet, but it's actually a part of this bigger thing over here called Module X. (You can even give it its own stand alone name as a product.)

I hope you can see how easily this splintering process fits neatly inside the content continuum model that I mentioned earlier in this book. Having a full grasp on your content continuum can create even greater rewards if you pay special attention to this next section.

Funnel Segmentation

I think there's two problems. I think there's a front end problem and a back end problem. So we'll talk about the front end problem first. And what I mean by the front end problem is that there's a lot going on from a marketing perspective to engage, and nurture, and prepare people to convert into this course that people are trying to sell. If you create a funnel correctly on the front end, you're more likely to be getting the right people into the course, which will automatically lead to higher completion rates.

Some people are so damn good at marketing that they are hitting all of the pain points and promising all of these things. The people that are biting and buying on the promise of this course aren't actually in the position where they should even be investing in that course yet. But they think they are.

If you ask people if they think they're an expert, there's a lot of people that think that they're experts, but they really aren't experts.

I love how Greg Hickman just comes out and says it. We have a responsibility as an industry to sell people into programs that will best help them. If they aren't at that place yet, if they don't have the background knowledge need to be successful inside of a course, then they shouldn't be sold on that product. However, if you know your content continuum and the full range of your customer's journey, then you can place offers in front of your audience that meet them exactly where they are at.

Greg goes on to explain:

How people develop funnels right now, they're not segmenting enough based on our people truly in a position where they should be consuming this content right now. Because let's face it, most of us just drink content from a fire hose. We're always consuming stuff that we don't even need to know right now. And that ends up making us make bad decisions. And when you have a really good marketer that can tap into your psychological pain points of where you want to be in the future, then you're going to want to level up and you're going to want to invest in yourself, but you're still probably investing in things way too early.

If you look at the overall client journey, there are three different types of customers:

There's the oblivious customer, which is they know that there's a problem, but they haven't quite nailed down what their specific challenges are.

Then you have the afflicted, which they've now identified why they are experiencing this pain and they understand that there's a solution out there and they've started researching solutions.

And then there's the informed. They know exactly what type of solution they need. They're just reviewing their options and they're ready to make a decision. Then obviously people buy.

If people come into the funnel through your content that is targeting informed people, yet they're oblivious, and somehow you've convinced them to buy, they've jumped over all of these things that they probably aren't even aware of, that might not be even covered in your program because you've taught them for free in your content up to making them informed. So now they are in way over their head, they get overwhelmed, and they don't do anything.

How can we identify which bucket our audience falls into, be it the oblivious, inflicted, and informed? Probably one of the best ways to determine that is to survey them. Offer engaging surveys prior to purchase that pre-qualify them for the instruction that they truly need in order to be ready for your high ticket offer.

Please, by all means, don't talk yourself out of sales here. On the contrary! Smart marketers are having amazing success and higher conversion rates by simply including prequalifying questions through Facebook messenger bots. Determining the correct placement of a potential customer can actually increase your sales.

Just remember to create multiple offers for each step along the journey.

If you aren't sure how to apply bots into your marketing plan, start by opting

in to every ad that you see that requires a “type goldfish in the comments to receive my free guide to scooping pumpkin guts.” Yes, complete different words here, but I hope you get the gist.

Not everyone will be using bots to the best of their abilities, so don’t jump in and just copy what they are doing, but analyze what you see and use it to the best of your abilities.

More on bots to come!

Making Additional Offers in the Funnel

Here’s where we can really get into trouble as it relates to online course completion rates. Jay Baer had this to say, “You have to make sure your not putting your upscale on the last page of the course, because if you accept the premise that most of them won’t finish it, and you’ll only get upsells if they finish it, then you have an audience acquisition problem there, clearly.”

It has become practice to sell as much as possible when someone initially purchases. And for good reason. You can look for platforms that offer mini marketplaces inside of your library so that customers may purchase all of your material. Also look for options to bundle your packages so that you can sell more options at once. If you have a platform where the customer’s credit card is on file already it will make it much easier for them to make additional purchases. In addition Jay recommends, “You got to make sure that if you are going to have some nudges for upsells or cross sells, or other things, that those nudges occur before what you would consider to be the natural end of the course.”

The One Number You Must Know if You Are Running Ads

Very successful models understand that the most important metric is not the revenue that comes from the sale of your product. I know that sounds a little bit counterintuitive. There’s a metric that seasoned marketers use called the Lifetime Value of the Customer. They’ll look at all the numbers and say “for every single person that buys our course, we know that some of them will take an upsell” We know that there’s a metric out there. Sometimes it’s a moving target. We want to

get as early as possible, like 6 months or 12 months into the business, a number that is our LTV. Why? Because, if we have an upfront product that's \$200, we can then say, we're going to be willing to spend up to \$200 to acquire that customer because we know that we are going to make extra money on them on the backend. So our front end product is there to establish a customer. You're willingness to spend \$200 puts you ahead of 99% of all of the other internet marketers who are not willing to spend \$200 to acquire a customer.

As soon as you can get to that point, you can outspend your competitors. As soon as you can outspend your competitors, you can leave them in the dust.

- Jeff Schechter

The Lifetime Value of your customer is the number that you must know if you are wanting to get your offers in front of the largest number of people. Most people look at ad spend as an upfront cost as opposed to seeing it as a part of the larger picture. Jeremy Howie, Facebook Marketing Expert & CEO Enlightened Marketing, LLC, suggests that you, "Know your numbers. Say you're selling a \$300 product and you have a couple of upsells, maybe ones \$200 and ones \$500 so you're up to \$1000, you want to start to look at the lifetime value of your customer or a client, not just that initial product purchase, because the backend, those upsells, even though they're going to be a much lower percentage (of conversions), some of them are going to convert and take care of your assets, but don't just guess that, know your numbers."

If we are going to consider using this number, the Lifetime Value of the Customer, when determining the amount of money that we are spending on paid advertisement, then it would stand to reason that we would want more than a one off course sale. Consider connecting the dots further out. If you are going to take the money earned from the sale of your course and pump that into your ad spend to increase your customer acquisition, then you would want to make sure that you have additional products and services to offer and that people will buy them.

Can you see how important course completion rates are to the life of your business?

Can you see how important placement of additional upsells inside of the

funnel can be?

Your course completion rate at the very least is a conversion rate to which you **MUST** pay proper attention. Use the strategies in this book to increase that rate and be very specific with the placement of your catalog of products and services.

Ninja Skills

If you really want an advanced ninja skill for keeping your students in your course and increasing the completion rates, consider advertising to them based on where they are inside of the course and what they have left to complete. You can set a simple ad up based on “if they have been to this page, but not that page” as long as you have the retargeting pixel on your course.

Many smart marketers use retargeting to engage and reenlist traffic to our webinars. Why wouldn't we use it throughout our courses?

Thinkific, a Learning Management System, offers the ability to place the retargeting pixel inside of the course. Although you wouldn't be able to chunk the lessons via this method, you could still chunk the course into stratified content. So let's say you have one course wherein you could see that there are three distinct sections. The completion of each section would represent a milestone. Instead of loading the course as “one course” inside of the platform, split the course into three courses. Each sub-course would have its own url. Now you can run an “if this but not that scenario” using power editor. This method would also work great in that you can offer mini completion certificates and milestones. These small wins will encourage your students to keep going.

Oh, and remember in the Introduction where I mentioned that one of my colleagues heard one of the strategies in this book and thanked me for making him millions. That was it. Pay attention and add this technique to your repertoire.

Facebook Audiences

If you are going to use Facebook ads for selling your course, Jeremy also recommends, “making sure that the right people are getting the right product in the first place. What’s really cool about Facebook is that if you have an existing subscriber list, or even better an existing buyer list, you can take that list, even if you only have names, and you can input it into facebook’s ad manager and you can match up actual facebook users so that now you can directly target them with ads.

So many people feel that they need to be everything to everybody when advertising their products and services. Be specific. Dial in your audience to exactly who you want to serve. Jesse Jameson sees it this way, “I would much rather have 1,000 customers where the customer value is high because they’re raving fans than 20,000 customers where 20% of them are refunding, and they only purchase one product, and the customer value might only be \$150 per customer. As where with the 1,000 customers it might be \$3,000 per customer just because you’re really paying attention to the value you’re creating and what part of the market you’re serving instead of to trying to be everything to everyone. I think that’s where the market is going to change is that people are going to be very specialized in their message and their voice. Gary Vaynerchuk is a good example. There’s people that love him and people that don’t, but he’s true to his message and the way he delivers it. That’s why he has raving fans the way he does.”

Keep in mind, as Jesse puts it, with paid advertising “you’re selling curiosity for a click. Look for ways to pique their interest without being disingenuous.

More Facebook Ninja Tricks

While interviewing Jeremy Howie for this book he came up with a ninja strategy that absolutely had to be included. We often create lookalike audiences inside of Facebook to mirror the audience that has landed on our website so that we can advertise to a larger group of people that are similar to those that have checked us out.

Consider an alternative approach. Create a lookalike audience from the list of students that have completed your course. At that point you will have not just people with interest and the potential of purchasing, but you will have a mirrored audience of those that will go one step further, do the work

necessary for their lives and businesses and become champions of your cause.

That's the audience that you really want to attract.

How Do You Sell A Course Without A Marketing Funnel

Not everyone is interested in having and managing a marketing funnel and that's OK. It is the preferred method for many, because it is something that can be systematized and predicted. If you are going to use one, consider the above recommendations.

Not Everyone Is Looking for the Upsell

Consider for a moment a different approach. Jay Baer offers this gem:

I don't know that a second purchase is the most relevant goal. I would rather have course enrollees tell other people you should take this course than a course enrollee buy a second course. Because if they're telling other people and creating new customers that creates a compounding geometric effect. I'd rather have 1000 customers buy one course than 100 customers buy 10 courses because you have more relationships at that point.

The goal is to give them so much value, to make the course so much richer and better, and more comprehensive, and more relevant than they expected that word of mouth becomes involuntary. That they are almost compelled to tell people because they can't f'ing believe how good that course was. Not the goal of what many course proprietors have now which is "I sold them something, now where are they in the funnel and what else can we sell them next? How can we sell them this super course, or the mastermind, or the club?" You know what, why don't you just give them a f'ing good course to begin with and then you don't have to sell them 2 things or 3 things or 4 things. I understand why people do it that way, but that's just not how I run my business and I never will, that's not the relationship I want to have with people.

Who could say it better than that?

You might really want to create multiple opportunities for people to work with you. I can wholeheartedly understand that. However, keep in mind how your course can serve both masters if it is executed at a high level and of service to many.

Affiliate Marketing

Many people choose to sell their courses via affiliate marketing through sites such as ClickBank and are very successful with it. If you choose to go this route, you can do it with integrity and in a way that benefits others that are searching for the value you provide. If you sell your course en masse to the wrong audience and without integrity, your completion rates will drop fast!

We had a wonderful training shared in our Facebook Group by Dush & Terra Ramachandran, founders of The Net Momentum. They trained specifically on how to create massive affiliate sales. It's a two hour presentation and I highly suggest you watch it if you wish to go this route. Please find the link to this presentation inside our resources guide by going to <https://m.me/DrCarrieRose> and typing RESOURCES.

Other Sites that Sell Courses

Be cautious of using other sites that sell courses and info products. At the end of the day, whether you choose to create a marketing funnel at the moment, you will want to reserve that right should you change your mind. Some popular sites for buying courses are the worst for selling courses. I interviewed popular social media speaker, Carlos Gill, for this project. He had a horrible experience with one such site because his course was drastically discounted and he did not have access to the people inside of the course other than through that platform.

Maintaining your relationship with your list is a must. If you cannot control the dialogue it will prevent you from making future offers. More importantly, it will prevent you from serving them at a more impactful level or even receiving feedback regarding how you are serving them now.

If you choose to go the route of using a platform that sells and discounts courses for you, view that product as a tripwire and control the conversation with the clients. Otherwise, you will not be a fan of the overall experience.

If you are discounting your course and cannot encourage them through the funnel, your interest in their completion will drop dramatically. It will take a very special person to care for their benefit at that point. Do not create a bad experience for you and them.

Selling From Stage

Many people have had proven success selling their courses from stage as a means to go deeper with their audiences. If you are a speaker already or you are looking to go down this path, this might be an option for you. You can have a 6 figure online launch or sell 6 figures in product from the right stage. Either is a fabulous option.

I would caution here that you sell with the same degree of integrity that is being encouraged throughout this book. If your course content is meant for an oblivious audience, search for an oblivious stage. If your course content is meant for an informed audience, find an informed stage. If you are offered an oblivious stage and you only have informed content, or any other combination which is out of alignment, please remember it takes 7 days to create a new product and less time to create a new idea and a landing page. Serve your audience at the level that they are at and they will love you for it.

PART 3: WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO

In the beginning of this book I came out with a pretty hardlined statement:

Online Courses aren't dead. However, bad online courses are dead, as well as the bad online marketing practices that go with them.

This book so far has been a tale of missteps and best practices, of where we are going wrong and what are we doing right... and what we need a lot more of.

In any type of evaluation this would be considered baseline data.

We are starting from a point where these practices are out there and readily available for implementation, and yet are often overlooked.

For those that read this book to this point and could not with their hand on their heart say that they attempted each of these points with efficacy, I would say, you are not alone and we as an industry have some work to do.

So much so that we are losing our repeat customer base and creating distrust in the industry.

While we have work to do to catch up with where we should be now, we have also been given a gift that will push past our current practices with online course creation, and into the realm of automation and choice like we have yet to see.

Bots: The Next Wave of Engagement Automation

When discussing this topic with my good friend and Founder of Reach and Make Millions, Katya Sarmiento, of course Facebook Messenger Bots came up! It's no doubt that messenger bots are the next wave of marketing, but the possibilities for use are just beginning! Katya suggested using the bots as engagement touch points throughout the lessons to urge your students' progression.

Accountabili-Bot-Y

On a recent course build out with a client, my partner, Lechon Kirb did just that.

He created an entire bot track to support the students from the time that they enter the course till the time that graduate.

The bot is themed to match the course identity.

The bot has an image.

The responds with humor, dialogue, and gifs that would play well to the theme of the course.

The Accountabili-Bot-Y is sent out in weekly blasts based on when the course student signs up for the course.

The student is asked simple questions related to the completion of activities and tasks. The Accountabili-Bot-Y responds appropriately to move the student back on track if they are off and to cheer them on for jobs well done.

And the next week another automation sends out a similar engagement, and so on, until the course should be complete.

It is also possible at this point in time to create seperate tracks inside of the bot to adjust for self directed learning according to how much time the student wishes to take to complete the course.

With the bots in place for all of the students, the course instructor can at any time blast all of the students inside the course with any updates, additional training session information, funny gifs, music, videos, quotes, you name it. The course instructor is now in direct, human communication with all of their students right where they live more than any other platform, in real time.

Your Learning Management System is where you house your content. Facebook is where you build your community. Facebook Messenger is where you communicate directly with your students.

With integration between Many Chat and Zapier I wouldn't be shocked to see Facebook Messenger communicating with Learning Management Systems in

the near future.

The Next Level

Facebook has not been silent in there steps towards expanding possibilities through education and self directed learning.

The idea here is that people learn what they want and need at the moment that they want and need it, without the hoop jumping of traditional educational applications.

Earlier in the book we discussed the possibility of Choose Your Own Adventure Courses, or as my more traditional colleagues would them, Learning Paths.

This concept of Learning Paths is simple to understand when you think of it like this: not everyone starts at the same point and not everyone needs the same information. Learning Paths are suggested primarily for professional development courses. Most personal development courses need to be completed from A-Z to create the leverage for lasting impact.

If you understand your content as a continuum from the start of the customer's journey with you, through the course, to the next purchase, then it is easy to break up your content into bite sized chunks when producing your course. The student need only take the chunks that apply to them through the natural progression of your course. The more that we design online courses for the purpose of complete consumption as opposed to mastery application, the more that we do harm to our students and to the course industry.

In the earlier example I suggested a Likert Survey being offered to the student prior to beginning the course so that they could self assess their needs and, as a result, only take the lessons that they need in order to master the skills that matter to them. Conceptually this would be like going to take the Advanced Placement (AP) Biology exam in high school and deciding to give yourself a 5 and opting out of that entry level course in college.

While traditional educators might cringe at the thought, I beg the question, "How do you know what they know or don't know?"

They will tell you what outcome they want through the act of purchasing your course.

Without some sort of assessment of baseline data, you won't know where they are starting from. As they are adults, you are going to need to trust them. And, as they will ultimately have access to the full range of content in your course anyway, if they circle back for remediation in a topic that they later determine that they aren't quite clear on, that's ok, too. That plays into their own metacognition and will actually aid in cementing learning as opposed to passively watching the screen.

They do that enough, don't ya think?

According to Jay Baer, "People are done with the course when they say they are done with the course, not when the course is finished." So, let's get them what they need faster.

What's Bots Got To Do With It?

I realize I just circled back to where we were pages ago. I want you to really understand why Learning Paths are so critical to where we need to go as an industry.

With Facebook Messenger Bots, we can literally set up sequences that ask questions to ask where we each student is, where they should start inside of the course, and point them in that direction as fast as possible.

For example:

Hey hey hey!

Welcome to my Course on How to Run Facebook Ads!

I don't know what you know or where to start you on your journey.

Why don't you answer a few questions for me, sound good?

Insert Responses:

a. Yes

b.No

Great! Ok first question, do you feel completely lost with Facebook Ads, or are you really looking for more advanced strategies?

Insert Responses:

a.I'm so lost, my mama can't find me

b.Give me the Goods

If they answer A - Start them at Square 1.

If they answer B - Start asking more questions to figure out they know.

Alright, I see you. Looking fly. Like you know what's up.
Let's get this started and see what you're really ready for.

Can you create a custom audience based on your email list?

Insert Responses:

a.Yes

b.No

Would you know what to do with a custom audience if you had one built?

Insert Responses:

a.Yes

b.No

OK, so as you can see, my bot is a little spunky. I through that in to show you that your bot can have a personality and adjust to the style that will best support your target demographic. Let's face it, nobody liked or remembered the boring teacher, and nobody wants to deal with a boring bot either.

Using bots with student directed Learning Paths is a great use of the student's time and is based in a ton of research surrounding differentiation by content and choice. By adding this element into our online courses we will begin to take what is good from our educational experiences and add them into a business that has perpetuated so many bad practices and stagnant results.

The Next Steps

“I don’t care how much course they consume, as long as they believe that the course exceeded their expectations. So if they have a positive feeling about the course, and the course exceeded their expectations, and they only did 10% of the course, I’m ok with that. The depth doesn’t matter so much as the attitude, because ultimately what’s going to create new customers both from them and hopefully word of mouth, is them saying, “I took it and I really liked it.” It’s not a requirement for them to say, “I took it, and I watched every single video, and I liked it.” That’s not the bar we have to clear. AS long as the reason they didn’t finish it is time, you’re probably in good shape. If the reason they didn’t finish it is quality or relevancy, you’re probably in bad shape.”

- Jay Baer

This entire book is truly about creating lifelong customers and moving them through their journey with you in a way that feels supportive and organic. At the end of the day you will need to give them what they need. And what they may need, is your next offer. Many times people purchase courses that are really wanting that specific pain point solved for... and often the course won’t get them all the way there. That’s where having a suite of offerings can be extremely valuable. The question than becomes “how do you present the offer?”

If you have a relationship with your customer through Facebook Messenger from the time that they enter your funnel, through to the end of your course, what do you think the likelihood is that they will continue on the journey with you through additional products and services?

Moreover, how possible will it be to present multiple offers, in organic ways, at the time that they need them the most? Consider this through the filter of you are continuing to assess through the messenger bot what they need to know, be, and do in order to remove that pain point and place them in alignment with their goals.

Through bots you have the gift of creating multiple paths for learning and multiple streams of revenue as a result.

If you want to learn more about how to integrate Facebook Messenger Bots with Online Courses, head over to m.me/drcarrieroose and type “Course Bots.”

Getting Started

It seems rather ironic that the concluding section of the book is titled getting started, but I really feel like that is the best fit.

This book, every course you take, every seminar you go to, every step on your development journey means nothing without application.

And please remember that point when you create your courses, as well.

As Pablo Picasso said, “Inspiration does exist, but it must find you working.” If you stop here, you will not be inspired, and you will do nothing.

So in essence, at the beginning is where we are and it’s my responsibility to make sure you don’t stay there.

So, I’m including some instructions to help you get started.

Your Action Steps:

1. Go to <https://m.me/DrCarrieRose> and type CHECKLIST for access to our #OFCOURSE checklist to assess any existing course or to use during your course creation process to make sure that you are using all of the best practices to create lasting impact, raving fans, and increased profits that are mentioned in this book.
2. Go to <https://m.me/DrCarrieRose> and type COURSE BOTS for access to more information on how to use Facebook Messenger Bots with your Online Courses.
3. Go to <https://m.me/DrCarrieRose> and type RESOURCES to access all of the resources available from all of the brilliant marketers that contributed to this book.
4. Go to <https://m.me/DrCarrieRose> and type RESEARCH to access your free training that will walk you step by step through how to properly conduct market research for your course topic.

Please remember: **Online Courses aren't dead. However, bad online courses are dead, as well as the bad online marketing practices that go with them.**

The Completed Course was designed specifically to shorten the learning curve so that you can have the success with online courses that you desire. Hopefully, this book resolved all of your questions and concerns related to the world of online courses, while offering more advanced ninja tricks. If you are a beginning online marketer, there is much to still master, but I promise you that you can get up to speed quickly.

Make it so that when you spend money to acquire a new customer you are actually getting a new customer and not just replacing an old one. I promise that if you apply the knowledge inside of this book you will drastically increase your customer satisfaction.

According to Stephen R. Covey “to learn and not to do is really not to learn. To know and not to do is really not to know.”

Now is your time to DO.

As I stated in the beginning of this book, I believe that online courses, if created and marketed properly, have the power to lift up countless lives.

I would never argue with you if you said that seemed slightly Pollyanna of me.

However, dig deep into your purpose. Sit with the impact that you know that could make if you were given the right tool to make an impact on a global scale.

And then question for a minute if online courses are a tool that allows anyone with access to wifi to create impact on a global scale.

Then, my only question to you would be, “why not you?”

Is the purpose that is lying dormant inside of you not worth the effort?

Personally, I don't think that's the case. I think it was given to you

specifically in this moment in time so that it can aid in the greater good, which, coincidentally, is not separate from your ultimate success and well being.

With access to, not the right information, but the right education, and my friends there is a difference, anyone anywhere is capable of anything.

Why do so many people build schools in impoverished countries?

Why did Mark Zuckerberg launch Internet.org?

Because in our hearts as humans we know that human connectivity is essential and access to education changes lives at a level that is immeasurable by day to day observances, but over time will move mountains.

So, sit if you must on your brilliance and your shine. Choose to lay dormant and never participate in what you are being called to do.

Or, listen to your heart, drop your ego and your fear, and truly create the level of impact that others are so in need of you to create.

The choice is yours.

I think you know which choice I hope you make.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Carrie Rose is an Educator, Entrepreneur, & Keynote Speaker, notably one of Huffington Posts Must Follow Women Entrepreneurs in 2017.

She holds an Ed.D in Educational Leadership from the University of Central Florida, wrote her doctoral dissertation on Professional Development, and is best known for her innovative teaching strategies & methodology, her current research is in

course completion rates & connecting online course development with The Science of Learning.

Currently, she works with entrepreneurs, online marketers, and businesses around the country to provide the highest quality of learning strategies with the greatest amount of impact on a variety of different platforms.