

5 STEPS **FOR BUILDING** **A SALES FUNNEL** **FOR YOUR** **ONLINE** **COURSE**

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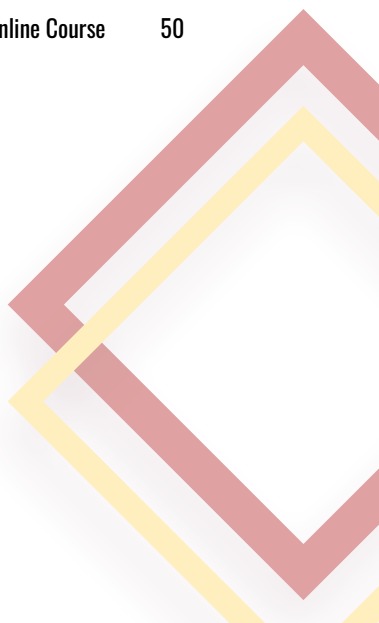
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BUILDING A SALES FUNNEL FOR YOUR ONLINE COURSE

The online course market is booming, and many coaches, freelancers, and entrepreneurs are taking advantage of this opportunity like never before. If you have some expertise, you can fairly easily create a course, sell it online, and make a solid amount of money.

But many wonder how to go from creating an online course to actually getting customers to purchase it. Building a successful sales funnel for your online course starts with understanding your target market and ends with people enrolling in your course by the dozens.

WHAT COMES FIRST, THE FUNNEL OR THE COURSE?

When you're first considering developing an online course, you may start to wonder how you're going to promote the course,

what your offer will be, or how you're going to build your audience. Even before you have a concrete idea of what your course will be, you may start pondering your strategy for getting students.

There are parts of your strategy for launching your online course that may already be in place. For example, maybe you already have a blog already with a burgeoning audience that you can market to. Or, perhaps you're starting from absolute zero and have no idea what to do first.

Don't worry, no matter where you're at in your business journey, you can create a rocking strategy for promoting your new online course.

Let's take a look at how to do that.





STEP 1: UNDERSTAND YOUR TARGET MARKET

In all of the excitement of creating your online course, it's easy to get caught up in *what* you're going to sell instead of *who* you're going to sell it to. **Don't make the mistake of creating a course without first identifying a target market that wants to buy the course you create.**

When you know your target market, it's much easier to find your audience, market to them, and get them to convert.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to better understand your target market, you need to find out who they are. The first part of this process is figuring out their demographics.

Get started by answering these questions:

- Where do they live?
- What industry do they work in?

- How much do they earn at their job?
- Where do they spend their time online?
- What are their hobbies?
- What's important to them?
- What scares them?
- What do they want from their life?
- What challenges are they facing?
- What products and services are they interested in?

Really think about the answers to these questions. The more detailed you can be the better chance you'll have of being successful with all aspects of your marketing strategy.

CREATE PERSONAS

A buyer persona is basically a fictional, generalized representation of a customer who is most likely to purchase from you. It's critical to the success of your entire marketing strategy that you understand exactly who your customer avatar is.

When you know who your buyer avatars are you can:

- Determine the social platforms where they are spending their time so you can determine where your business needs to be most active.
- Maximize your exposure and make your marketing dollars more effective by knowing who to target and where to advertise.
- Write copy that better connects with your target customers because you'll have a greater understanding of their pain points, goals, challenges, and successes.
- Develop superior products and services from a place of anticipation of your market's needs.

Creating customer avatars allows you to connect your marketing efforts to your actual customers, and that's a powerful tool.

In order to gather the most accurate and realistic information possible, consider the following techniques:

- Use surveys to gather feedback from your existing customers.

- Reach out to your target market to survey a larger audience base.
- Interview customers as well as leads. Asking why can help you to uncover the behaviors that drive their purchase decisions.

Having multiple avatars is expected, especially if you're offering more than one product or service. Tackle your avatars one at a time and start with the avatar that will bring the most profit to your business. You can also use this information to really develop your niche and position yourself to be the best option within that niche.

You can also consider creating negative personas, which can be as helpful as customer personas. Knowing who you *don't want* can make it easier to determine who you do want as a customer. Be sure to focus on reasons they weren't a good fit for your business rather than their personal characteristics.

5 STEPS TO DEVELOPING YOUR CUSTOMER AVATAR

1. **List out your persona's demographics.** Use the questions above to determine the traits of your avatar.
2. **Discover their psychographic traits.** This requires a deeper understanding of your buyer personas. These are typically based on attitudes, interests, values, and lifestyles.
3. **Humanize your avatar by giving it a name.**
Naming your avatars also helps your team to differentiate which avatar you're referring to.
4. **Personalize your avatar** by writing a dossier about them that includes their name, information, story, and a stock photo that represents them.
5. **Write a narrative about the persona and their journey** to finding your product or service. Name what they were feeling, what they were looking for, and what they were hoping to achieve.

Developing customer avatars helps to hone your messaging and make it more effective. Knowing your target audience is key to an effective marketing strategy.





STEP 2: BUILD AN EMAIL LIST

Growing your email list is important for two reasons:

- Selling your course to cold traffic - people who have never heard of your brand, your course, or you - is much more difficult than selling your course to people on your email list. People on your email list are warm leads - they know you, they trust you, and they have an interest in what you're offering.
- Your email list can never be taken away. You own it and can't be banned or blocked from it. This makes it very valuable.

Your email list is the heart and soul of marketing your course. As you grow your list and build trust with your subscribers with your content, you can periodically offer them your course. It's all part of a long-term plan and it works really, really well. If the thought of building an email list seems a little overwhelming - no worries. Let's break it down step by step so you can build a great big list full of warm leads all ready to buy your course.

CREATE A WORTHWHILE LEAD MAGNET

Building an email list sounds like a pretty simple task but most people tend to be pretty guarded about handing out their email addresses these days. In other words, they aren't just going to give up their email address because you ask really nicely.

The key is to offer them something really valuable in return. That's where your lead magnet comes in.

Let's back up a bit. What is a lead magnet anyway?

A lead magnet is an offer, a gift really, that you are going to give away to your target market just for giving you their contact information. This is why knowing your target market is step one. You have to know what they want.

Remember that the bigger picture in all of this is to build a trusting relationship with your audience so they come to you when they are ready to purchase. **That means, your lead magnet needs to be something of great quality in order to keep the relationship thriving.**

So, how do you create a lead magnet that is so irresistible to your target market that they're willing to give up their contact information?

First, you should keep in mind that whatever resource you choose should be easy for your audience to consume and easy-ish for you to create. You may spend a couple of hours creating this item for your lead magnet but keep in mind you'll be using it over and over.

Here are some examples of great lead magnets:

- Cheat sheet
- Ebook
- Abbreviated course
- Video series
- Infographic
- Tutorial

The best lead magnet is one that will resonate with your audience. Figure out a topic that is acutely important to your personas and then create a resource to match it.

GETTING LEADS TO YOUR MAGNET

Once you've created a lead magnet, you need to get it in front of the right people and get them to convert, or take advantage of your magnet in exchange for their contact information.

So, let's go back to our personas once again and remember where our target market spends its time online. **That's where you want to offer your lead magnet.**

Try these out to get started:

- Websites and forums they're active in
- Facebook groups they participate in
- Influencers they follow on social media
- Podcasts they enjoy
- Email newsletters they subscribe to
- Blogs they read
- YouTube channels they subscribe to

By targeting the places where you know your target market is spending their time, you'll be able to easily drive them to your magnet.

You can also use SEO on your website and blog to drive organic traffic to your lead magnet or PPC advertising.

The lead magnet itself is simply a landing page connected to CMS (content management system) so you can collect the email addresses and promptly send out the magnet. Don't forget to also send them a nice thank you email for signing up.





STEP 3: START CREATING CONTENT

Now you're collecting email addresses and sending your lead magnet to your new subscribers. Your course probably isn't live yet, so you're going to need to nurture your list for a bit while you're getting it ready.

You can do this with content. **Blogs, emails, newsletters - these are all great ways to keep your leads interested, keep building trust, and develop your relationship.**

BLOG POSTS

Blog posts are a great way to keep nurturing your list. On one hand, you can link them in emails and provide valuable information to your new subscribers so you stay relevant until you make your offer. On the other hand, you can optimize the articles for SEO, which can bring even more traffic to your blog, where you can also place a landing page for your lead magnet.

Blog posts are a great way to provide your audience with information that will help to solve their problems.

If you have already helped them through some of their difficulties, when you make the offer for your course, they will feel much more comfortable signing up.

Blog posts also make great social media content and can open up conversations about your products and common problems among your audience.

EMAILS AND NEWSLETTERS

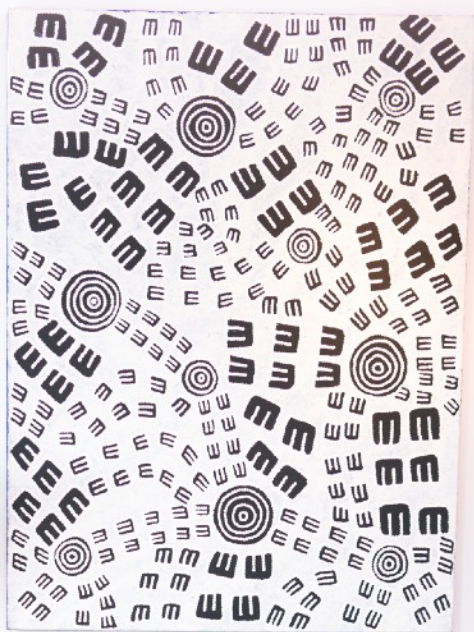
Emails and newsletters are also a great option. You can keep nurturing and marketing to your email list on a regular basis to keep your audience captivated by what you have to offer them.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't try to maintain an account on every social media platform out there. Remember, you know where your customers are spending their time. **Choose 1-2 platforms where your**

target audience is most likely to be and start accounts for your business.

You can post links to your blog articles and share information you find relevant. You can also interact with your audience in forums and in the comments section, and use the information you gain to refine your personas and learn new ways to reach your audience.





STEP 4: BUILD YOUR COURSE

You've probably already been building your course at this point, as you've been working on the first three steps. Building an online course can be challenging and you can't go wrong with lots and lots of planning.

Because this is not a book about building an online course, but rather creating a funnel for your online course, we won't delve into a lot of depth here. Still, let's look at the basics.

CHOOSE YOUR COURSE TOPIC

It goes without saying that your course topic should be something that you're not only knowledgeable about, but also something that you're passionate about. If you have no passion for your topic, it will come through in your teaching and students will find your course less than engaging.

You don't have to have any special knowledge or degree in order to have a winning online course. Pull from the skills,

talents, and life experiences that you already possess. As long as there are people who want to learn what you want to teach, you will be able to monetize your topic.

If your course doesn't appeal to your target audience, you'll have a hard time selling it. People are looking for a transformative experience from an online course. They want to go from their current reality to the future they've been dreaming about.

One simple way you can zero in on a course topic is to start a list of your passions/interests, skills, and experience. Try breaking it out into three columns.

Interests Passions	Skills	Experience

Remember, you're looking for a topic that people will be motivated to pay money to learn about.

NARROW DOWN YOUR IDEAS TO THOSE WITH HIGH-MARKET DEMAND

Don't spend a minute creating a course if you're not certain there will be a demand for it in the marketplace.

Once you've settled on a course topic, do some research in the market to see what the demand for your course will be. You might be hesitant about a course topic because you think there's too much competition, only to find out that your particular niche has high demand and little competition, making it well worth investigating further.

There are a few ways to check for the demand for a particular topic:

- Are people searching for it and asking questions that would be answered by the course?
- Are there gaps in what the competition is offering that you could squeeze into?
- Will someone be willing to pay money to solve the problem that your course solves?

If the answer to these questions is yes and you can fill gaps left by the competition, odds are you have a winning idea.

Use tools like Google Trends to see if people are searching for the topic of your online course. You can also enter keywords to get some insight into exactly how many people are searching for the course ideas you've come up with.

This is also a nifty way to find ideas for lead magnets you can use to build your email list.

Here are a few other things you can consider when trying to narrow down your course topic:

- What exactly are people asking about your course topic?
- What's the competition offering?
- Can you offer a fresh take on a popular topic?
- How can you present your topic so it appeals to a different audience?

Engage with your audience to gain more insight about their challenges and if they'd purchase a course that could help overcome them.

CREATE COMPELLING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are a critical piece in the success of your online course. **People want to know exactly what they're going to learn about in your course and how that information will impact the problems they're trying to solve.**

Remember, people who purchase online courses are looking for a transformation from their current reality to their awesome future. If your potential students don't know how your course is going to help them, they won't be very likely to enroll.

Learning outcomes clearly define what the student will be able to do, know, and feel by the time they are finished with the course.

- What new knowledge will they obtain from the course?
- What skills will they be able to demonstrate?
- How will they feel about the subject once they've completed the course?

Learning outcomes also help to ensure that the people joining your course are in the right place which contributes

to higher satisfaction and completion rates as well as fewer refund requests.

GATHER YOUR CONTENT AND STRUCTURE YOUR COURSE

This is the point where many course creators get stuck. There are so many things you want to cover in your course, and those things lead to other things, and before you know it, you have way more content than you need and it's a jumbled mess.

There is no magic bullet to the length of your course. It doesn't have to be a certain length in order to be successful. It has to be long enough for the student to achieve the learning outcomes that you promised in your marketing.

That being said, make sure that each of your learning outcomes has content aligned to it.

Then start grouping together content with similar themes into modules and structuring the content within those modules into a logical progression to create a sequence of lessons.

It's helpful to create an instructional design storyboard. This helps to keep your course focused and assures you hit all of the important points in your training.

You'll also want to spend some time structuring your course and your overall academy because you'll likely create more courses related to the same subject. For example, what media do you plan to use? Will there be some written material as well as video material? Planning this out ahead of time will really help you to stay on track.

From here, you'll create a course outline and plan individual lessons. A structured path to delivering content to your students helps them to absorb the material and feel like an expert on the subject by the time they're done.

Consider these points:

- What are the basics that your students already know?
- What do they need to learn?
- What's the best way to teach it to them?

Then you can determine the most engaging and effective way to deliver the information to your students.





STEP 5: LAUNCH YOUR OFFER

Once you have an email list and a course in place, you can start launching your offer. Don't get caught up in how many people you have on your email list. You've already built that part of your funnel, so you're going to keep adding addresses all of the time.

You will definitely want to segment your email list according to who you've already sent the offer to and who bought the course and who didn't. You'll learn more about that later.

There are three main stages of an online course launch:

- Pre-Launch
- Launch
- Post Launch

Let's go through each stage, step by step.

PRE-LAUNCHING YOUR ONLINE COURSE

Pre-launching your online course entails a lot of what's already been covered. For example, if you're a coach of some kind and are offering one-on-one coaching but want to make the leap to course creation, this is where you're going to start.

- The first thing you'll decide on is your target audience for your course. You want to make sure you create the content that will compel them to action.
- Find out what your target audience already knows about a particular subject and how you plan for your course to fill in the gaps.
- Research your competition to see what they're offering so you can do it better.

Dig into their problems and pain points.

- Survey your target audience so that you're clear on what specific problems they're trying to solve.
- Create a social media strategy so you know which platforms to focus on.

- Watch for social media mentions regarding your online course topic. Try to join in on the conversation and ask participants detailed questions so you will have a clear idea of the problems they have and the solutions they are seeking.
- Share details about your course in the Facebook groups you're participating in but don't spam the group members. Subtle hints regarding your launch will work best.

Review your course's goals and learning outcomes.

Reviewing your online course as you're getting ready to launch will help you stay on track to not only offer a quality course to your customers, but also market it for maximum results.

- Review the content you already have and determine what should be included with your course and what could be used as marketing materials.
- Plan your course according to step 4 and outline your course and modules.
- Establish a consistent brand voice throughout your course and content to create a seamless, sincere

experience for your audience. This will increase trust with your audience for your course.

PRICING YOUR ONLINE COURSE

There is no exact science for pricing your online course. Ultimately, the price you put on your course will come down to the value you place on what you've created. Yet, you have to also consider what else is available that is similar within the market. You definitely don't want to price yourself out of the market.

Here are some tips for pricing your online course so you can deliver the best product while also making a profit.

1. Focus on Value.

The way customers perceive price is just as important as the price itself. Your customer will attach a value to your course and the price you put on it is one way that they will do that. If you price it too cheaply, your customer may form a perception that the information has little value.

By providing quality content and positioning yourself as an expert in your industry you can boost the value of your course. **You can also consider these tips for boosting the value of your course:**

- **Highlight the benefits over the features.** Benefits are what your customer is going to get out of your course. Features are what the course has to offer. By focusing on the benefits, you can dial into your customer's pain points and explain how your course can put them on track to the future they want or make their life better.
- **Help them see it as an investment.** Travel on a journey with your audience from where they are now to where they will be once they have completed your course. Highlight the fact that the price they will pay for your course is an investment in their future by saving them time, helping them lose weight, achieving financial security, etc.
- **Give access to an exclusive community.** You can also boost the value of your online course by creating a community online for members only for your customers. This is a group of people who are all taking your course or have taken your course, who can then

build relationships with one another to ask questions and bounce ideas.

- **Provide extra support.** By providing specialized coaching, you can offer extra support and reassurance on a one-on-one basis. If the thought of meeting with each student one-on-one is daunting, consider some small group chats for people who are experiencing similar issues.
- **Create downloadable resources.** By allowing students to download your lessons, you give them the convenience of learning any time and any place. You can also give them downloadable templates, checklists, or e-books to help them reach their goals.
- **Provide a certificate of completion.** There's just something about having a certificate with your name on it that says you've accomplished something that feels good. Certificates are also highly valued by potential employers.

Pricing your online course to create value for the customer means over-delivering on expectations and ensuring your students succeed.

2. Avoid *Race-to-the Bottom Pricing*.

It can be intimidating to enter the online course market. It may seem like there are a million new courses popping up every day. You will be tempted to offer your course at a rock-bottom price in order to have an advantage over your competition.

Don't fall for it - it's a trap! Here are some of the pitfalls of pricing your course this way.

- **It takes the same amount of work to make a value-packed course.** You're going to have to put in the same amount of effort no matter what you charge for your course. You'll still have to acquire and nurture leads and do the same amount of marketing. A higher-priced course may require a more detailed funnel but in the end, the extra effort will be worth the extra income you could make.
- **A lower price might cause you to lose interest in finishing your course.** It's hard to get motivated to get your course finished knowing you're going to make less money. Especially since a lower price doesn't mean people will be lining up for your course.

- **You won't have as much to spend on marketing.**
Selling your course at a really reduced price means you won't have as much profit to reinvest into marketing the course.

More than likely, you have valid reasons for charging a reduced price for your course. **Try to change your point of view from reasons you *can't* charge a premium price to reasons why you *can*.**

Sometimes, it takes a real mindset shift to avoid underpricing your course. Remember, there's an audience that really wants what you're teaching and your method is going to resonate with them. Your course will help people deliver on the promises they've made to themselves and they are willing to pay for the opportunity.

3. Offer Payment Plans.

If you price your course at a premium, it might be a good idea to offer a payment plan. Payment plans can increase the sales of your course because it gives an option for those who really want to take the course but can't quite commit to your price point in one lump sum.

If your price point is \$300 or more, consider giving a payment plan option to spread the cost out.

There are great benefits to offering a payment plan:

- **You can charge more.** Because offering a payment plan makes your course more accessible to those who can't pay in one lump sum, you can actually charge a little more for your course. Especially when you believe in the value of what you're offering.
- **Better sign-up rates.** If you offer a payment plan, more sign-ups are inevitable as more people can afford your course.

Of course, before you decide to offer a payment plan, you should consider whether your course is long enough to break into at least three monthly installments. You don't want customers to feel like they didn't get enough value in return for what they paid.

Also, you need to make sure your course delivers on the promises you've made. If the customer feels like the course has value, they will continue making the payments and not cancel and quit the course.

PROMOTING YOUR LAUNCH

Even if you've launched your course, no one is going to know to sign up unless you promote and market your launch. But here's the thing. You don't have to finish creating your course before you can successfully launch.

Pre-selling your online course is actually a great way to test the waters to see if your target market is willing to spend their hard-earned dollars on your course and if you're going to get enough recurring revenue from your course.

If the pre-sell is successful, you'll have some extra money to invest in creating and marketing your course.

Consider enrolling beta testers for your course. These are people you trust that need what you're offering. You can pre-sell your course to them for a discounted rate so you can get their feedback about what works and what doesn't. This is a great way to get in-depth feedback with a soft launch to get you ready for the real deal.

Once you've gotten some feedback from the beta testers, you can tweak your course accordingly. As you make the changes, continue to consult with your beta users to make sure you're on the right track.

Start stirring up the excitement for your launch. There are a lot of great ways for you to promote your launch.

Consider implementing some of these great ideas:

- Write about your course in your blog. You can take a small part of your course and go in-depth in a blog article so you show your audience that you're an expert.
- Use SEO to attract new, organic traffic to your site.
- Have some of your beta testers give testimonials about your course. This is a great thing to include on your sales page or course site.
- Consider using a mini-course as a lead magnet for your real course. Then, you can use any comments or questions to fine-tune your course content.

You definitely want to create an email sequence to build excitement for your launch. This is when that email list you've been diligently building is going to shine. An automated email sequence can start out building excitement for your course and gradually make your offer.

If your subscribers have already trusted you enough to sign up for your email, they'll likely be excited to hear about your course.

Consider these types of emails in your launch sequence:

- Your first online course launch email should be aimed at building your subscriber's anticipation, so they're excited to hear about your course.
- Next, you can give the details about exactly what your course covers. Let them know the lessons, modules, and specific learning outcomes they can achieve.
- In the following email, you can address FAQs. For example, payment plans, refund/cancellation policy, as well as information about the course itself.

- **An email that provides a sneak peek into the course is a great way to create some buzz. Consider a promotional video or sales letter.**
- **Offer a bonus in the next email. This could be a free gift, extra module, or discounted price if they use a promo code or sign up by a certain date.**
- **Send an email with social proof, like the testimonials from your beta group.**
- **Schedule a live webinar or social media live that you'll host which will include some sort of special gift or bonus for sign-ups.**
- **Finally, send an email laying out the reasons (benefits) they should purchase the course during the launch. Focus on the transformation.**

Don't forget to segment your email list as you go. You don't want to keep sending the same emails to the people who signed up as the people who didn't.

LAUNCHING YOUR COURSE

The big day has finally arrived and it's time to launch your online course. Preparation and planning will go a long way to making this day run smoothly while signing up as many subscribers as possible.

While there are probably as many ways to launch an online course as there are online courses, **here's a list of things you can do to have a successful launch:**

- 1. Prepare two emails for your subscribers.** Send one the morning of the launch to announce the launch. Send another later in the afternoon or evening to remind them about any special gifts, discounts, or bonuses that they will miss out on if they don't sign up soon.
- 2. Host a live event on social media or via webinar** to demonstrate the value of whatever problem your course is solving. Let them see you're an expert who can be trusted to get them through their current reality to their perfect future.

- 3. Host a Q&A for anyone who's on the fence about investing in your course.**

POST-LAUNCH

After you've launched your course, you'll need to continue to nurture your new students to prevent churn. You want to ensure that they are getting more than they expected in order to reduce drop-outs and refund requests.


Try these tips:

- **Develop an onboarding process that welcomes them and clearly explains how to navigate and use the course to its full potential.**
- **Create a thriving community that prevents customer churn and takes some pressure off of you to be everything for everyone. Encourage students to interact with one another and they will help and encourage each other.**
- **Continue engaging with your students. Launching a course is the beginning of your relationship with this**

customer. Check-in to make sure things are going well and offer additional support to prevent abandonment. This is probably a great place for another email sequence.

- **Encourage students to share their successes within the community you've provided and how they implemented what they learned in your course. Keep the community motivated by continuing to engage and motivate others in the group.**





FINAL THOUGHTS ABOUT BUILDING A SALES FUNNEL FOR YOUR ONLINE COURSE

Building a sales funnel for your online course sounds complicated but it's really not. All that a sales funnel does is direct your target audience to your product so they can buy it.

At the top of the funnel, you're pinpointing your target audience and giving them value-packed content to solve a problem they are experiencing. This starts a relationship and builds trust. Then, you're going to collect email addresses from people who are interested in what you have to offer in your free content. They want more from you. Create a landing page to collect their email address in exchange for some sort of lead magnet.

Finally, launch your course. Then refine it, make it better, and launch it again.

That's it! Now get out there and build a funnel that crushes it.