Elizabeth Rider uses Thinkific to educate over 10,000 students on how they can live happier and healthier every day.

A step-by-step guide to creating an online coaching program that drives client results

Hi, we're Thinkific!

We support over 36,000 online course creators including the likes of Elizabeth Rider to create, market and sell online courses. We're on a mission to offer the world's best online course platform and provide everything you need to build the business of your dreams.

As a coach, you may be new to creating online courses and have a lot of questions. Like, how can you create a digital version of your program that allows you to charge higher prices, grow your reach, and spend more time on what really matters, all without sacrificing value for your clients?

This blueprint will walk you through how to structure your course in a way that drives results for your clients and offers a great experience. You'll learn:

- How to build a milestone-based online coaching program that drives client results

- A proven framework for crafting your online lesson plan

- When and how to use different content types to deliver a great client experience

Let's get to it!

STEP 01

Mapping your client's journey to success

Even if you have a thriving coaching business, translating your program to an online course format requires thoughtful prep-work. Being intentional about your online program starts by articulating your client's journey, and baking that into your course from the get-go.

What is the transformation you help your clients achieve? Will it be the same or different from your current coaching program? Use the map on this page to write down at least three points for each point in their journey.

Point A: Their current circumstances and frustrations

Point B: Their desired end results and feelings

Put yourself in your client's shoes. Imagine that you've just finished taking your course. Complete these sentences as if you were describing your course to someone else.

Expert tip: Don't try to cram everything you know and coach on into one course! Pick a sub-topic that is important to your audience. For example, if you coach on social media, you could focus on how to automate social media processes to boost engagement, rather than covering social media 101.

I took a course called

....

Which helped me

....

And now I

....

STEP 02

Developing your course curriculum

"Milestones are major accomplishments. Lessons are steps required to achieve each milestone"

AARON MORIN, LEAD EDUCATOR AT THINKIFIC

When designing online lessons to support your clients, you'll want to use a combination of elements to build a curriculum that suits your coaching program.

On Thinkific, online courses are made up of chapters and lessons. A chapter is essentially a main section of your course, and generally contains multiple lessons.

Lesson 1: How to articulate value to prospects
PDF download

Lesson 2: 10 steps to overcoming objections
Video lesson

Determine Major Milestones
A good approach to structuring your course content is to create a chapter for each milestone your client will hit on the way to their desired outcome. Then, the key concepts and talking points you'll cover within each milestone become your individual lessons.

What are the key milestones your client must achieve to move from point A to B that you outlined in the first section? Write these in the first column of the table.

What do they need to learn or do to complete each milestone, and what resources do they require from you? Use the next column to outline this.

Milestone #1

Need to know or do:

Key resources:

Milestone #2

Need to know or do:

Key resources:

Milestone #3

Need to know or do:

Key resources:

Milestone #4

Need to know or do:

Key resources:

STEP 03

Creating your lesson plan

Once you have your milestones outlined, the next step is to organize the key concepts and/or steps required to achieve each milestone into separate lessons.

As you create your lesson plan, make sure that you're not creating any extra work for your clients. Take a really critical look at your lesson plan, and remove any unnecessary steps or concepts.

Remember, your online course is supposed to expedite the journey your clients are on. More information does not necessarily equal more value.

Use the lesson planner worksheet on the next page to create your draft layout.

For each lesson in your course, ask yourself:

- Is this step crucial to achieving the corresponding milestone?

- Is the information shared in this lesson absolutely necessary?

- Can this lesson be combined with another lesson?

- Would this lesson be better as a bonus lesson instead of being included in the core curriculum of this course?

- Is this lesson too long? Can it be trimmed or divided into multiple lessons?

- What additional resources (checklists, worksheets, templates, etc.) would help my students implement the information in this lesson?

- What format should this lesson be taught in (talking head, slideshow, screenshare, etc.)

Sign up for a free Thinkific account to put what you've learned into practice.
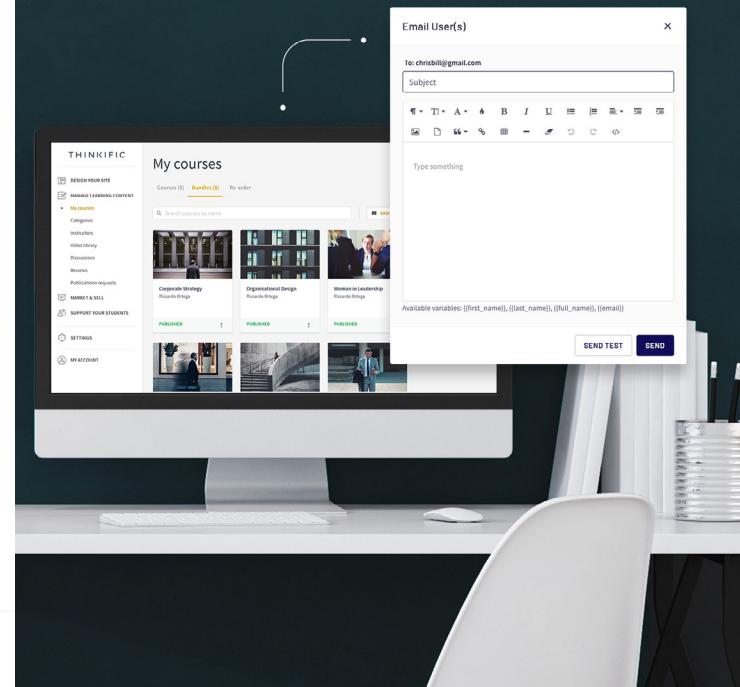
STEP 03

Course lesson planner worksheet

Course lessons / modules	Format	Resources	Length	Talking points or key concepts
Introduction	Video	N/A	7 mins	Welcome to the course / what you will learn

STEP 04

Optimizing for client success & engagement

Putting your coaching program online for the first time raises a common question: how can you maintain high-touch client experiences online and operate at scale without sacrificing quality?

We analyzed over 16 million student experiences on the Thinkific platform, looking for the highest completion and student success rates for courses. We found that the top performing courses had several things in common.

In this section, we're going to outline some of these elements, and how you can use them to achieve great client experiences in your online coaching program.

Use video

More often than not, courses with the highest completion and satisfaction rates use video lessons throughout the course. This helps create a relatable, digital version of your coaching sessions, simulating a 'face to face' touch point with them.

On average, videos work best when kept to seven minutes per chapter by giving student time to absorb the learnings. If you're new to using video, start by making one to introduce yourself at the beginning of the course to build rapport with your student. You could then you use slides or other media types for the remainder of your course modules.

Use different practice resources

Using quizzes and surveys helps clients put what they've learned into practice. Our research shows that adding this layer of interactivity provides a feedback loop for learnings which is correlated with higher levels of course completion.

Embed community

Whether you are doing group or one on one coaching, embedding community is a great way to cultivate commitment and camaraderie between your clients. Thinkific offers course modules that facilitate discussion among students, giving them an opportunity to share inspiring wins and learnings.

Build in regular touch points

Depending on your program, this may look like periodical in-person or digital check-ins. For example, you can set up simple automated emails to trigger based on client behaviors. For students who are falling behind, send a reminder email. Or for students who achieved a tough milestone, set up a congratulatory email and certificate of completion. Thinkific makes it easy to add in these elements as you build your course outline.

Congratulations!
You now know the fundamentals to building an online course for your coaching program, and are on your way to scaling your business through online learning.

What's next?

Now that you've got an idea of what to include in your course, you can use the information from this workbook to create your course on Thinkific.

If you want to get plugged into our community of course creators and be the first to know about free training and resources, sign up for a free Thinkific account and start building your course today!