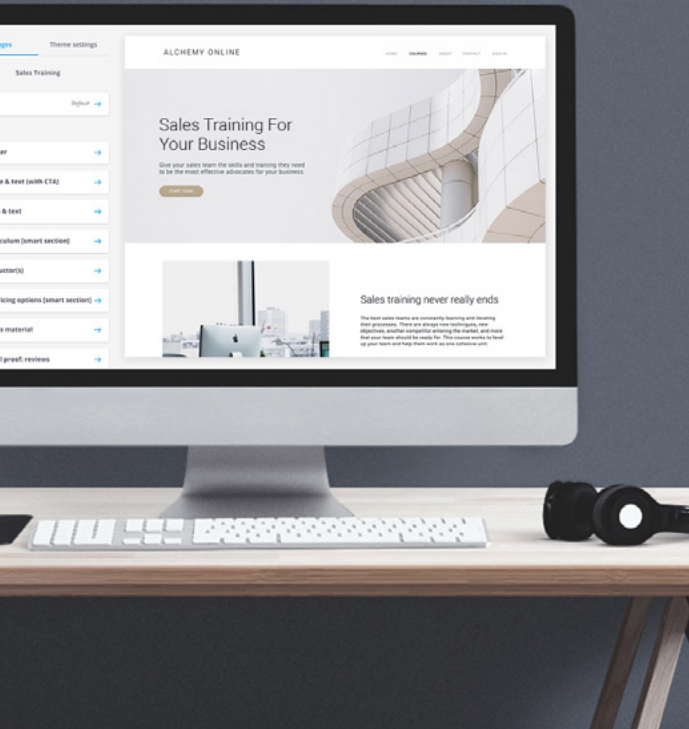


THINKIFIC



Your first 100k

A proven path to reaching \$100,000 in online course sales

We support over 25,000 online course creators, including the likes of Elizabeth Rider and Hootsuite to create, market, and sell online courses. We want to make the process of creating your course easy by hosting the world's greatest online course platform, and providing everything you need to build the business of your dreams.

This workbook is one of our many resources designed to help you create your online course.

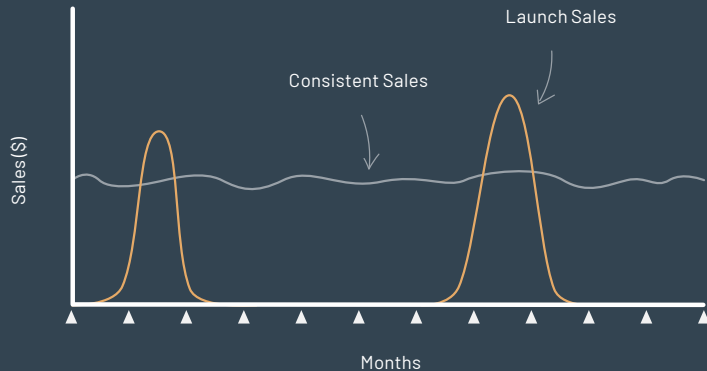
We reached out to our network of entrepreneurs who have generated over \$100,000 in annual revenue from their online courses.

In doing so, we identified a proven framework for growing an online course business to 6-figures or more in annual revenue. The best part? This framework can be applied by course creators at any stage, including those who are just getting started with teaching online.

Contents

- Introduction
- The math behind a 6-figure online course business
- A proven path to earning your first \$100,000 in online course sales
 01. Find your blue ocean
 02. Build your brand
 03. Validate demand for your course
 04. Build a sales and marketing engine to scale your business
- Conclusion

The math behind a 6-figure online course business



To kick things off, let's take a look at the math behind an online course business that generates \$100,000 in annual revenue.

This is what \$100,000 in annual revenue looks like in terms of average monthly revenue: For the sake of simplicity, let's round up to \$8,500 and use this number from now on.

$$\text{\$100K} / 12 \text{ months} = \text{\$8333.33/month}$$

Therefore, to achieve \$100,000 in annual revenue, you need to generate an average of \$8,500 per month in online course sales. The reason we like to focus on monthly revenue is because it removes the need to focus on short term course launches.

The problem with relying on launches to achieve your annual revenue goal is that it can take months of work of prepare for a launch, and not all launches achieve their intended revenue goal. If you fall short of your goal, you are forced to plan another launch for the same course, or create and launch an entirely new course. Dependence on this launch model can make it tricky to predict, with accuracy, future earnings and profitability of your business.

The price you charge for your online course has a significant effect on your ability to achieve your revenue goal

For more guidance on pricing your online course, check out our [Course Pricing Guide](#).

Course price vs # of sales

Here are the number of sales you would need each month, at various price points, to reach \$8,500 in monthly revenue:

Course Price	# of sales per month	Monthly revenue
\$50	170	\$8,500
\$100	85	\$8,500
\$250	35	\$8,500
\$500	17	\$8,500
\$1000	8.5	\$8,500

If you run a membership site with a recurring subscription fee, here are the number of active members you will need, at various monthly subscription fees, to achieve the same revenue goal.

Monthly subscription price	# of active members	Monthly revenue
\$10	850	\$8,500
\$25	340	\$8,500
\$50	170	\$8,500
\$75	113	\$8,500
\$100	85	\$8,500



A proven path
to earning your
first \$100,000
in online course
sales

01. Find your blue ocean

The demand for online courses has exploded over the past few years. There are literally thousands of online courses spanning across virtually every topic you can think of. So yes, you have some competition.

The best way to stand out among the competition is to operate where there is little or no competition. The riches are in the niches.

Amazon, for example, organizes their bookstore into different categories. Within each of these categories, there are subcategories. And within these subcategories, there are often more subcategories.

Organizing books into specific categories makes it easier for you, a potential book buyer, to find a book about the topic you're interested in.

Books

- Arts & Photography
- Biographics & Memoirs
- Business & Money
- Calendars
- Children's Books
- Christian Books & Bibles
- Comics & Graphic Novels
- Computers & Technology
- Cookbooks, Food & Wine
- Crafts, Hobbies & Home
- Education & Teaching
- Engineering & Transportation
- Gay & Lesbian
- Health, Fitness & Dieting
- History
- Humor & Entertainment

Business & Money

- Accounting
- Biography & History
- Business Culture
- Economics
- Education & reference
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Industries
- Insurance
- International
- Investing
- Job Hunting & Careers
- Management & Leadership
- Marketing & Sales
- Personal Finance
- Processes & Infrastructure

Accounting

- Auditing
- Bookkeeping
- CPA Test
- Financial
- Governmental
- International
- Managerial
- Standards

01. Find your blue ocean

It's easier for your book to stand out from its competition in a specific category. This same logic applies to selling online courses. Ideally, you are the only person with a course on your topic for a specific target audience.

Specific topic + Specific target audience = Unique Course

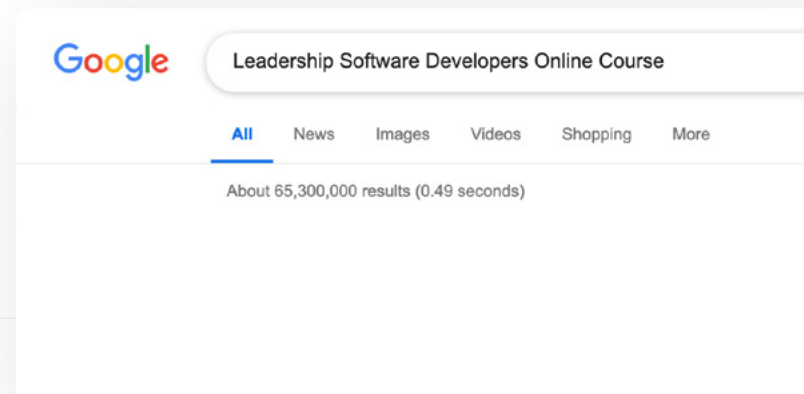
When your target audience is looking for a online course about your topic, you are their best (or perhaps only!) option.

This strategy was made popular by the book Blue Ocean Strategy. The premise of this book is that a business is most likely to succeed when it operates in what is known as uncontested market space (a blue ocean) as opposed to a market where existing competitors fight for dominance (a red ocean). The analogy is that an ocean full of vicious competition turns red with blood.

To find your Blue Ocean, combine a specific course topic with a specific target audience that is not yet being served.

Google's search engine is a great starting point for marketing research. Type your course topic, your target audience, and the term online course into Google and see what comes up.

For example: Leadership (course topic) + Software Developers (target audience) + Online Course





Pro Tip:

Competition is not always a bad thing. Competition is proof of market demand. If you can't find a combination of a course topic and target audience that has no competition, consider shifting your focus to creating a course that is better or different from existing courses.

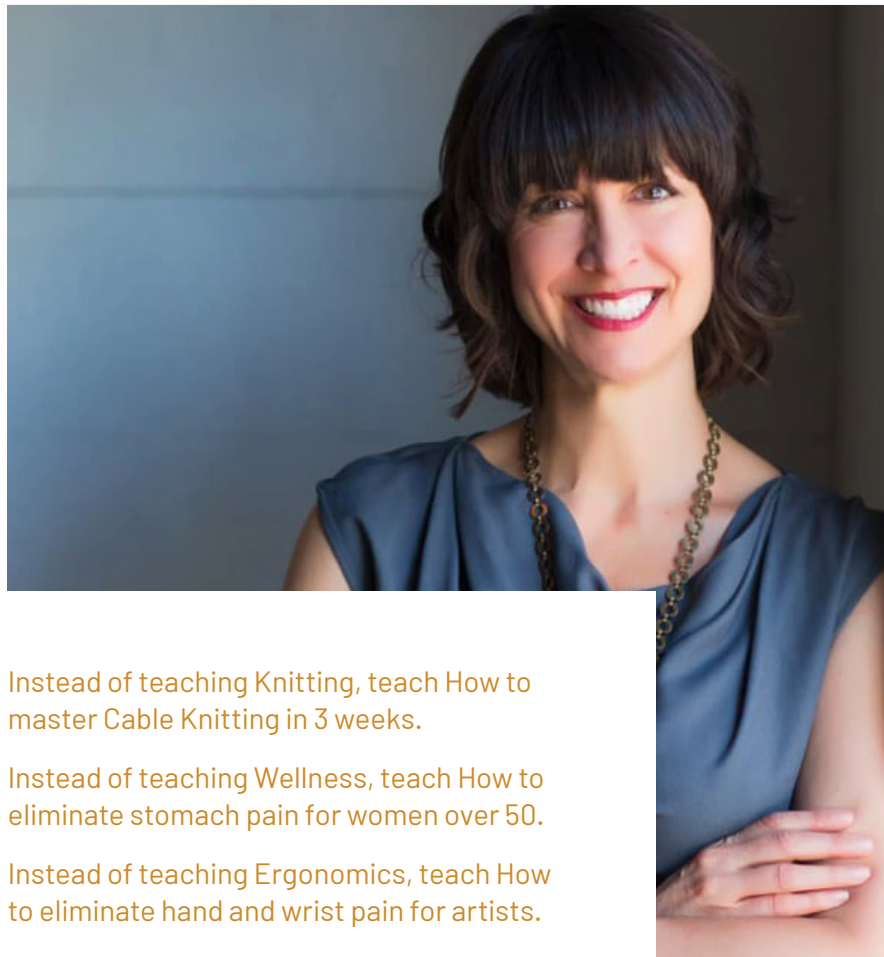
“The key to creating your highly profitable online course lies in figuring out what you need to include in your course to attract your ideal clients AND what you need to leave out.

There is a 99% chance you can get more specific in your focus and have greater success. It’s really easy to go too broad with your topic and put way too much content into your course. When you go too broad with your course focus, your course appeals to less people because it isn’t addressing the problems your ideal customers are dealing with right now.

When you get specific and focus on delivering a specific result your potential clients are looking to achieve (instead of teaching a whole bunch of content), your course instantly stands out as the choice to help your people.

The fastest way for you to create a highly profitable online course is to stay laser-focused on the results your clients will invest in achieving. Get focused by narrowing your audience, narrowing your result and narrowing your content and your course will instantly stand out.”

Jeanine Blackwell
www.jeanineblackwell.com



Instead of teaching Knitting, teach How to master Cable Knitting in 3 weeks.

Instead of teaching Wellness, teach How to eliminate stomach pain for women over 50.

Instead of teaching Ergonomics, teach How to eliminate hand and wrist pain for artists.

02. Build your brand

Once you've found your Blue Ocean, it's time to position yourself as the go-to expert in your market. This means building a brand that clearly articulates who you help, and how you help them.

The biggest mistake that people (and companies) make with their branding is trying to appeal to everyone. Don't do that. Be strategic with your positioning. Don't try to appeal to everyone, because everyone is not your ideal customer. Build a brand that appeals to your target audience.

When your target audience is searching for information about your topic, you want them to find you and immediately feel like they've come to the right place. They should feel like they've found the exact person (or company) that can help them, and that shares the same beliefs and values as they do.

An exercise that we recommend all course creators complete is creating a Unique Value Proposition (UVP). Your UVP is what will help you differentiate yourself from your competition.

Answer the questions below to create your UVP. Your answers will help you differentiate yourself from your competition.

Who do you help?

What do you help them do?

Why is that beneficial for them?

Anyone can position themselves as the go-to expert in their industry. Here's how:



Publish free content about your course topic (blog posts, podcasts, videos, etc.)



Get interviewed on podcasts and in traditional media (radio, television, magazines, etc.)



Write articles for popular online publications in your industry



Showcase customer testimonials and media you've been featured in on your website



Update your website and social media profiles to clearly articulate your expertise



Speak at live events (conferences, seminars, networking groups, etc.)



“The intersection of credibility, uniqueness, and relevance is where you want to best position your brand.”

Re Perez

www.brandingforthepeople.com

Pro Tip:

Make sure that your brand is authentic. We do not advocate positioning yourself as an expert on a topic which you have little knowledge and/or experience with. That's not cool. When word gets around that you're not really an expert (and it will), no one is going to buy from you.

03. Validate demand for your course



Validating the demand for your course before you create it helps to mitigate the risk of spending valuable time, effort and resources creating a course that no one buys. Here are the most common ways that top course creators validate demand for their courses:

Survey your audience

Surveying your audience helps you to formulate your course curriculum, while simultaneously building a list of potential customers for your course.

Tell your audience that you are planning to create an online course and ask them what they want to learn from you. If enough people request the same topic, then you know you have a winner.

If you can't find anyone willing to pay for your course, or worse, you can't even find anyone willing to take it for free, it's time to choose a different topic, a different target audience, or both.

Don't have an audience? follow these steps instead:

01

Contact people in your target audience directly (via email, phone, or social media).

02

Tell them you are doing some market research for an online course you intend to create.

03

Ask them if they would be interested in taking an online course about your topic, and if so, what sort of content they would like to see in the course.

04

Ask for permission to contact them when your course is ready, to see if they would be interested in purchasing it at a discounted price (or perhaps for free, depending on your goals) in exchange for feedback on the course.



“The first step for me is actually always looking for user feedback and signs of interest in a topic. I try to avoid the mistake of I’m going to build something that I think people want and then find out no one wants it. So instead, I will look at what my audience is asking me.”

Yaro Starak

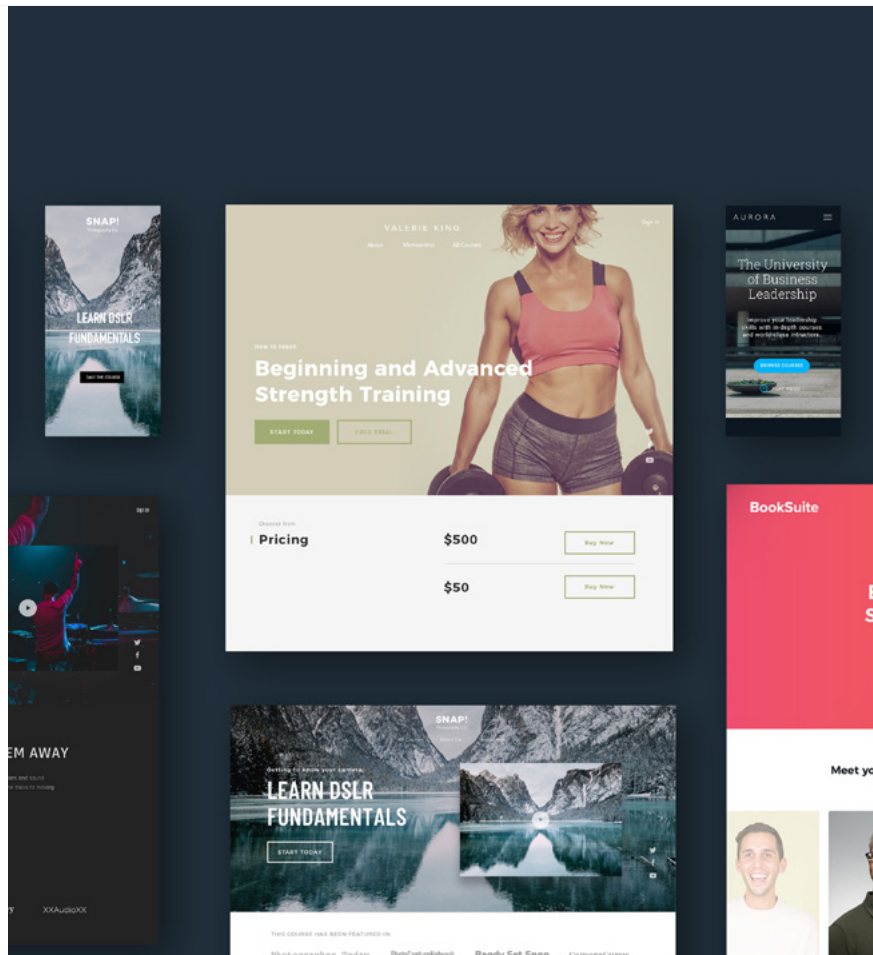
www.entrepreneurs-journey.com

Pre-sell your course

Selling your course before you create it, aka pre-selling, is the ultimate form of market validation. When someone tells you they will buy your course, you have proof of interest. When someone pays you for your course, you have proof of demand.

To pre-sell your course, simply create a sales page with your course title, an outline of your proposed training, and a link to a purchase form.

If you don't reach your minimum sales target to justify creating the course, talk to your audience to find out why they didn't purchase. Was it the topic? The price? The format? Before you abandon your course entirely, try to find out what went wrong, and how you can fix it.





“People will vote with their credit card. If they don’t actually put money down, the idea isn’t validated yet.”

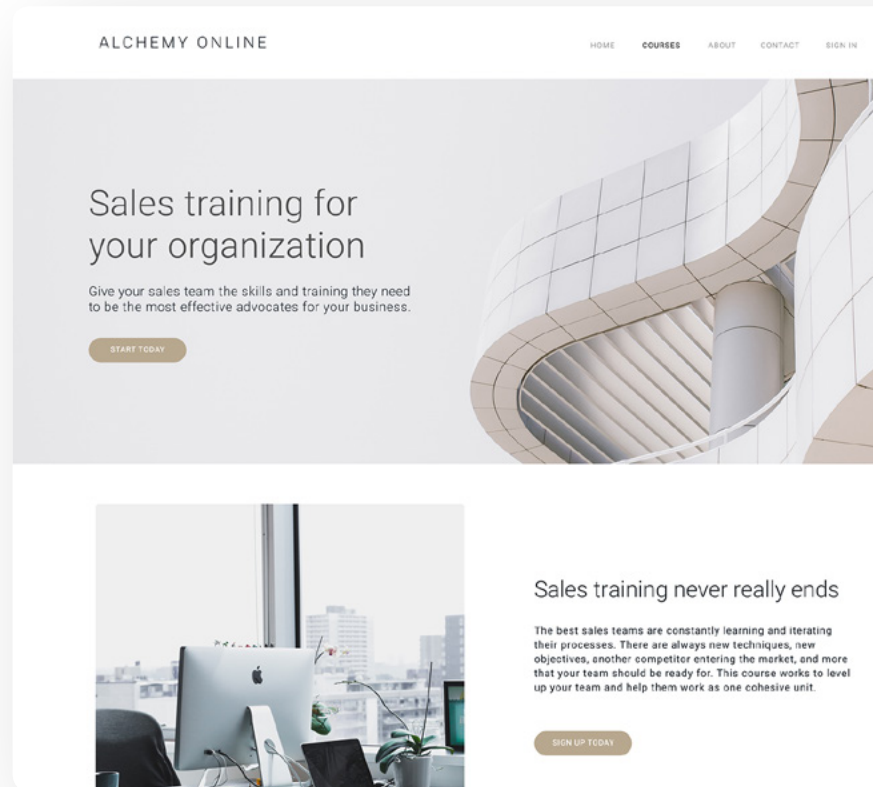
Michael O’Neal
www.solohour.com

Pro Tip:

If you decide to pre-sell your course, make sure you are completely transparent with your customers and have a clearly defined refund policy in place. In the event that you don’t generate enough sales to justify creating the course, or you aren’t able to create it within a predetermined period of time, refunds help avoid complaints.

Launch a Minimum Viable Course (MVC)

The goal with a minimum viable course (MVC), also called a beta launch or pilot launch, is to create the first version of your course and get feedback from real students as quickly as possible. Based on their feedback, and other important data such as engagement and completion rates, you can remove certain training, add more training, and make revisions to your course to make it better.



ALCHEMY ONLINE

HOME COURSES ABOUT CONTACT SIGN IN

Sales training for your organization

Give your sales team the skills and training they need to be the most effective advocates for your business.

START TODAY

Sales training never really ends

The best sales teams are constantly learning and iterating their processes. There are always new techniques, new objectives, another competitor entering the market, and more that your team should be ready for. This course works to level up your team and help them work as one cohesive unit.

SIGN UP TODAY

The screenshot shows a landing page for 'Alchemy Online' with a navigation menu (HOME, COURSES, ABOUT, CONTACT, SIGN IN). The main heading is 'Sales training for your organization' with a sub-headline 'Give your sales team the skills and training they need to be the most effective advocates for your business.' and a 'START TODAY' button. Below this is a photo of a desk with a computer monitor and a laptop. To the right of the photo is another heading 'Sales training never really ends' with a paragraph of text and a 'SIGN UP TODAY' button.



"I was embarrassed by the first version of my course. It was recording with a webcam and a blanket taped on the background. The microphone was my MacBook with a towel over it to try to reduce the echo."

Jonathan Levi

www.becomeasuperlearner.com

Pro Tip:

Since an MVC is just the first version of your course, you should charge a lower price than what you eventually intend to charge for your course once you've expanded and improved the training.

I created my first online course in 2005. I taught students how to prepare for the LSAT (Law School Admission Test).

At the time, I wanted to launch a massive 80-hour long course covering everything I could think of for the topic and charge a high price point. Instead, I started small to test the market, confirm that people wanted to buy the course and get feedback from students. I started with a short course (about 3-4 hours in length) and covered only a small part of the whole topic. I set the initial price at \$29.

Looking back, I definitely could have charged more but at the time, I wasn't sure if lots of people would pay for it. I wanted to test the water first, so to speak. In the first month, I sold 10 copies for a total of \$290 in revenue. Based on those initial sales my confidence in online courses was up and validated me investing further effort into the course.

Over the next year, I slowly increased the price while simultaneously increasing the value offered by the course and the sales processes and language around it. As I raised the price I found that more people bought the course. So I wasn't just earning more revenue, I was actually getting more customers! I continued to raise and test my price at different levels over the years, eventually settling on \$389 as the optimal price.

Greg Smith

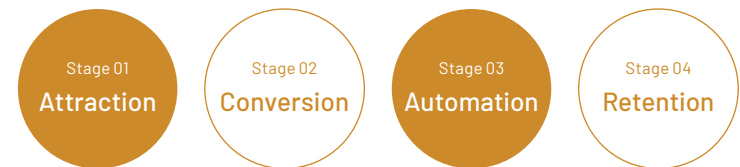
www.thinkific.com





04. Build a sales & marketing engine to scale your business

The most effective online course sales and marketing engines contain 4 distinct phases:



Before we show you how to build your engine, let's take a look at the typical journey of someone that buys an online course (or any type of product or service). That journey is known as the Customer Buying Cycle:

Awareness > Research > Comparison > Purchase > Retention

Only 2% of your target audience is ready to buy immediately. The other 98% need to be attracted, nurtured, and guided to a purchase decision over a period of time.

For your sales and marketing engine to be truly effective, it needs to contain Attraction and Conversion mechanism for every stage in the Customer Buying Cycle, not just the Purchase stage.

98% Awareness, research, comparison

2% Purchase

Awareness:

Buyer becomes aware of a problem

Research:

Buyer searches for a solution

Comparison:

Buyer compares different solutions

Purchase:

Buyer makes a purchase decision

Retention:

Buyer evaluates their purchase decision

Stage 01: Attraction

In the Attraction stage of your sales and marketing engine, your job is to have content and systems in place for attracting your entire target audience of potential buyers, regardless of which stage of the Customer Buying Cycle they're in.

Note:

we're using the term "problem" loosely here. Your target audience may not think they have a specific problem, per se, but they definitely have a result they want to achieve. Their problem, therefore, is not knowing how to achieve that result.



01

In order to bring a buyer into the Awareness stage, you attract them by illuminating the problem they are facing.

02

When a buyer is in the Awareness stage, you attract them by showing them the mechanism that can solve their problem.

03

When a buyer is in the Research stage, you attract them by showing them that your course can teach them to solve their problem.

04

When a buyer is in the Comparison stage, you attract them by showing them that your course is better than any alternative options. They're almost ready to buy a solution, they're just looking for the right one.

05

When a buyer is in the Purchase stage, you attract them with the sales process for purchasing your course. They are ready to buy a solution immediately. Show it to them.



“Your lead generation costs are directly related to the quality of your funnels. The less relevant your funnels, the more expensive your lead generation will be. You need to be relevant, which means providing the right message, at the right place, at the right time for your leads.”

Scott Oldford
www.scottoldford.com

Pro Tip:

Your target audience will enter your sales and marketing engine at different stages in the Customer Buying Cycle, and that is perfectly fine. Have a sales and marketing engine that attracts buyers at every possible stage of the cycle. This way, you're set up to acquire 100% of your potential customers, rather than just the 2% who are ready to buy immediately.

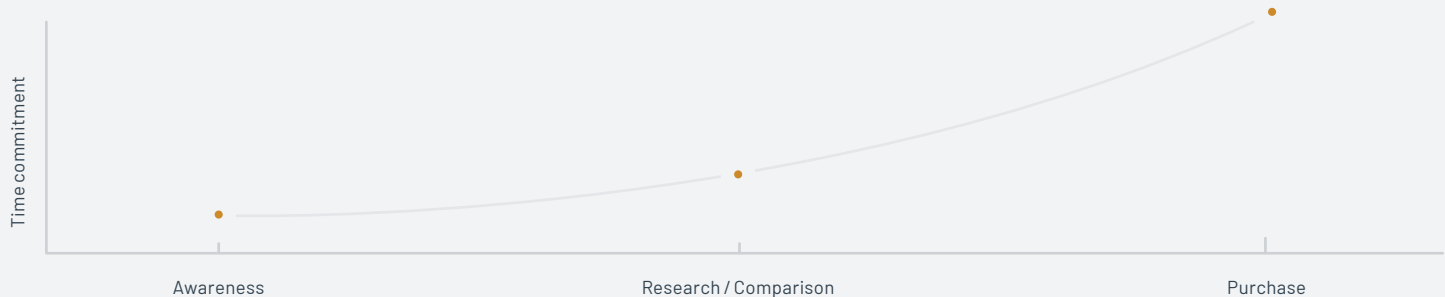
Stage 02: Conversion

A every stage in the Customer Buying Cycle, have a process in place to move your buyer into the next stage, eventually guiding them to the Purchase stage. This process is a conversion mechanism.

A lead is someone who expresses interest in your course topic and gives you permission to communicate with them directly. Email is the most common method, so someone who gives you an email address becomes a lead.

The method you use to obtain the email address of your buyer will vary depending on which stage of the Customer Buying Cycle they're in. The further along they are in the cycle, the more time they are willing to invest in learning about the solution.

Time commitment vs. Buying cycle



Stage 02: Conversion

1. Awareness stage

- Quizzes
- Short guides
- Worksheets
- Checklists

2. Research & comparison

- Free challenges
- Mini courses
- Email courses
- Longer guides
- Ebooks
- Case studies
- Video training series

3. Purchase stage:

- Webinars
- Sales page
- Video sales letters
- Free trials
- Phone calls



"If someone doesn't know who you are, keep the commitment level low. Take complete strangers and start a relationship with them. Eventually they'll move into a buyer mindset that knows their pain and knows that you're the person who can help them."

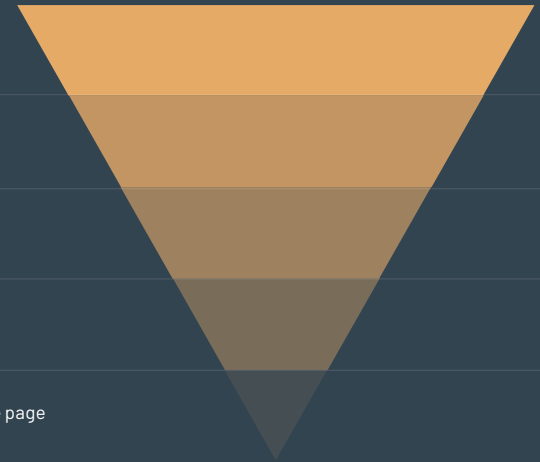
Scott Oldford
www.scottoldford.com

Stage 02: Conversion

When you have a conversion mechanism in place at each stage of the Customer Buying Cycle, with automated email communication that moves buyers along the cycle, you have a sales funnel.

Here is an example of a commonly used sales funnel for selling online courses:

- Blog post
- Checklist
- Free challenge
- Webinar
- Sales / purchase page



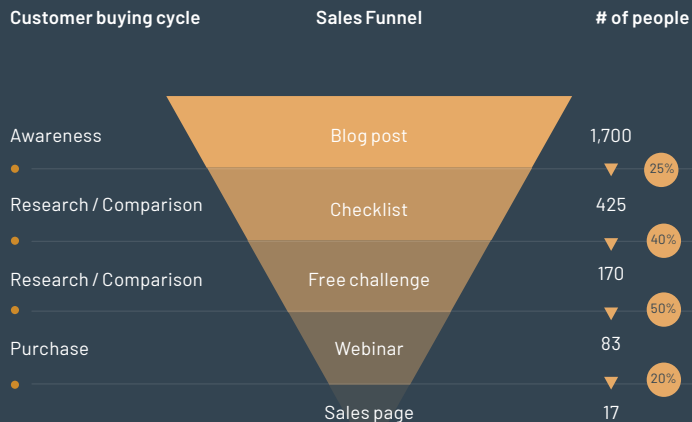
Stage 03: Automation

Let's calculate how many buyers you need to attract into your engine, at specific conversion rates, to generate \$8,500 in monthly revenue. We'll use the example from the previous step.

Assume you charge \$500 for your course. You need to acquire 17 new customers per month ($\$500 \times 17 \text{ sales} = \$8,500$).

These are hypothetical conversion rates, but they're not unreasonable when each conversion mechanism is targeting the right person at the right time. Your engine will likely contain different steps and conversion rates. The important thing is that you have these defined, and that you continually test ways to improve them over time.

Once you have done your best to optimize the conversion rates in your sales and marketing engine, it's time to focus on driving as much traffic (your target audience) to your engine as possible.



"It's all about going from doing everything manually and spending lots of time on marketing to building the evergreen systems that do all the heavy lifting for you so you can focus on creating courses and teaching."

Sergio Estevez
www.firesetup.co

Stage 03: Automation



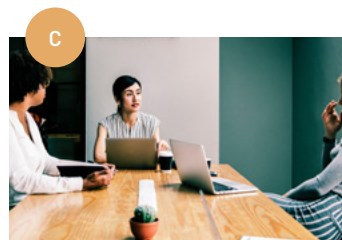
Content Marketing

Publish free content (blog posts, videos, podcast episodes, etc.) about your course topic on your website, social media accounts, and other platforms. Include specific keywords in your content, as well as headlines that you know your target audience will be searching for, so that your content ranks in search engines for those keywords. This will bring you a steady stream of organic traffic over time.



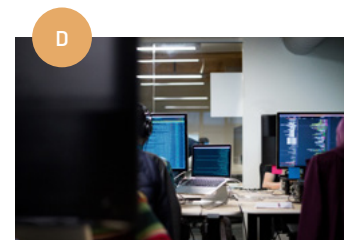
Paid Advertising

Run ads to your target audience using platforms like Facebook Advertising and Google AdSense. As long as you have conversion mechanisms for every stage of the Customer Buying Cycle, you're in a great position to create different ads for different conversion mechanisms.



Partnerships

Create partnerships with other people or companies who have access to your target audience. In exchange for promoting your course to their audience, offer them a referral fee or commission on any sales that occur as a result of their direct referral. You can also create an affiliate program for your course, so that you can easily track referrals and payments.



PR

Write articles for popular publications in your industry, get interviewed as a guest expert on podcasts, and get featured in traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers, print magazines, etc.). Always mention (or link to) your main website when featured in media. Even better, offer a free resource to help grow your email list.

“I grew my list during my launch by running Facebook ads directly to a webinar landing page. I ran the webinars almost daily. I reinvested the sales from the webinar I ran on Day 1 right back back into more ad spend on Day 2. I was able to quickly amp up my marketing and grow my list during my first launch. That small list I started with of 150 has grown to a community of over 50,000 coaches, consultants, authors and experts in an incredibly short period of time.”

Jeanine Blackwell

www.jeanineblackwell.com



Stage 04: Retention

If you are constantly having to invest time and money to attract new customers, but you're doing nothing to ensure the success of those customers, it will be very difficult (and expensive!) for you to build a profitable and sustainable business.

When someone buys your course, this should not be the end of your relationship with them. This should be the beginning. Your customers should be so thrilled with the training and overall experience that you provide to them that they purchase additional courses from you in the future, and they tell others about your courses too.

Therefore, the final step in your sales and marketing engine is to have processes in place to ensure the success of your customers, and to determine what other courses you can create for them

- New Customer
- Happy Customer
- Sustainable Business
- Repeat Purchases & Referrals

Stage 04: Retention

Here are some ways to increase your customer engagement and retention:



- 01 Create a private discussion group or community for your customers. Let them interact with you and each other. Send reminder emails to your customers to encourage their progress.
- 02 Reward your customers for achieving specific milestones.
- 03 Survey your customers after they've completed a course. Ask them for feedback, ways to improve, or suggestions for additional courses/training.
- 04 Create an affiliate program to compensate your customers for referring other customers to you.

Tips from the pros



“Look at the audience you’ve attracted. Even better, look closely at those who have already purchased from you.

If you already have a list of 5,000 or more, instead of focusing on adding to your email list or growing your social media audience, focus on creating new content for the people you’ve already attracted. What new product or program do they need next? Create for them and you will be building a product suite

I have a product suite of 3 core programs and each program builds into the next. It allows me to continue to support the audience I’ve already attracted while also growing my revenue.”

Amy Porterfield

www.amyporterfield.com



“You will be surprised how quickly you can find your ideal clients when you are offering an online course that is specifically designed for them. And, the best part is that those amazing, ideal clients will tell you what they want to learn next from you.

The development of every new course, program and event I have created since that first online course has been guided by the clients in my community. Your people will tell you exactly what they need and want next from you.”

Jeanine Blackwell

www.jeanineblackwell.com



“We’re not in this business to just get people to buy our stuff. We want them to see the change and the impact and create the success stories.”

Nick Unsworth

www.scottoldford.com



“It takes time and work, start small, focus on one thing at a time, and realize that even if it takes a year or two getting to significant passive income can be amazing. But also don’t think that doing the same thing over and over will have different results - if it’s not working at all do other things, if it’s working a little, do more and improve.”

Greg Smith

www.thinkific.com



Ready to take your online course to the next level?

Sign up for a free account on Thinkific today to start growing your online course business in 2019. Get access to our helpful guides, support and training materials to put what you've learned into action.