

# How to Create an Online Course – Summary Checklist

## Introduction – The Benefits of Creating an Online Course

- ✓ The benefits of online courses for both your business and your clients are extraordinary
- ✓ Online courses have revolutionized learning
- ✓ There's never been an easier time to create your own online training program

## The Benefits of Online Courses for Your Clients

- ✓ Convenience
  - Reach more people and enable them to participate when normally they wouldn't be able to
- ✓ Affordability
  - An affordable alternative to coaching or one-on-one learning
- ✓ Networking
  - Participants can meet people in the same field and widen their network

## The Benefits of Online Courses for You

- ✓ Reach a Wider Audience
  - Reach a far wider audience of potential new customers with your knowledge, experience and content
- ✓ Flexibility
  - Your course can be stand alone or a valuable complement to other teaching
- ✓ Competitive Advantage
  - An excellent way to position yourself as an expert
- ✓ Networking
  - Meet like-minded and similarly motivated people
- ✓ Increased Income
  - Make more money teaching what you know

## Learning Objectives

- ✓ Pick the course topics your target customers want to learn about
- ✓ Create a clear structure for your course
- ✓ Write results-focused learning objectives and activities

- ✓ Build engagement, interaction and accountability into your course
- ✓ Select the best media formats
- ✓ Create the distinct types of content and resources you need
- ✓ Set an appropriate price
- ✓ Choose your [delivery platform](#)
- ✓ Run an engaging course that leads to successful students
- ✓ Measure results and gather feedback

## Choose Your Course Topic

- ✓ Choose a course topic based on solving a specific problem
- ✓ Identify your audience's needs and then think about how your expertise fits in
- ✓ The decision on what topic to cover determines success or failure
- ✓ An online course can be on any topic as long as it's teachable
- ✓ The topic needs to be broken down into a step-by-step process to follow

### Step 1: Take into Account You, Your Audience, Your Content, Your Competitors

- ✓ Your Areas of Expertise
  - What do you already know about that your customers don't?
- ✓ Commonly asked questions
  - What questions or problems do your clients commonly have?
- ✓ Your Own Questions
  - What questions have you asked and found solutions to?
- ✓ Online Analytics
  - Where do people spend the most time on your site?
- ✓ Conduct a Survey
  - What topics would your audience most like you to cover?
- ✓ Use Facebook Ads
  - What's your audiences' #1 challenge?
- ✓ Your competitors
  - What courses are your competitors offering?

### Step 2: Use Other Sources of Market Research

- ✓ Forums and online communities
  - Identify common problems for which people are seeking solutions
- ✓ Question and answer sites
  - Look for questions related to your market
- ✓ Google and Bing search
  - Conduct a search for the biggest problems in your field
- ✓ eBooks
  - Look for information products in your niche

- ✓ Reddit
  - Search by topic for niche problems
- ✓ Feedly
  - Subscribe to blogs and see what they're writing about

### **Step 3: Choose your topic**

- ✓ Ask yourself questions:
  - Which ideas are the most urgent or crucial?
  - Which can be taught in course of 5-7 step-by-step modules?
  - What topics do you already have content you can use for?
  - What do you already know about these topics?
- ✓ Put it all together
- ✓ Which is the most obvious course for you to create?

## **Outline Your Course Design**

- ✓ Your course is valuable because it collects information and puts it into a logical, easy-to-digest format
- ✓ Ensure your students get the results they want
- ✓ There isn't a standard format, but there are some essential elements
  - ✓ A Clear Pathway
    - The course should progress logically from beginning to end
  - ✓ High-Quality Content
    - Offer great value to the student
  - ✓ Multiple Learning Modalities
    - Present your course in diverse ways to engage as much as possible
  - ✓ Interaction and Engagement
    - Interacting and engaged students understand and remember better

### **Create Your Course Outline**

#### **Step 1: Identify and Write Your Course Goal**

- ✓ Define one clear goal for the course
- ✓ When it's finished, what knowledge or skills will your students have mastered?

#### **Step 2: Create Your Learning Objectives**

- ✓ Define all of the things the student will learn to reach the course goal
- ✓ Create measurable and specific learning objectives

- ✓ Use action words to tell students what they'll be able to do by the end of the course
  - Create
  - List
  - Customize
  - Outline...
- ✓ Avoid non-specific and unmeasurable words or phrases
  - Learn
  - Understand
  - Comprehend
  - Appreciate...

### **Step 3: Outline Your Course**

- ✓ Your course should have five or six main modules
- ✓ Many people will study during the time they have available, so they need it in chunks
- ✓ Select four or five highest priority areas of content for course
- ✓ Start with overall goal and create each module to teach what the student needs to know
- ✓ Modules must *always* support course goal
- ✓ Break down each module into three to five steps
- ✓ If you have more than seven modules or more than five steps, break it up

### **Step 4: Create Your Learning Activities**

- ✓ Learning activities help students apply what they're learning
- ✓ Write a learning activity for each module and try to vary them
- ✓ Make the learning activities steps toward the main goal
- ✓ Connect learning activities to real-life situations wherever possible
- ✓ See learning activities at the end of this course for examples

### **Step 5: Build More Interaction and Engagement into Your Course**

- ✓ Interaction and engagement help students learn and provide value
- ✓ Course is already engaging if it's valuable and relevant but other ideas include:
  - Private email messages
  - Q&A sessions
  - Webinars
  - Discussion forums [I like using private FB Groups]
  - Live chat
- ✓ Choose a combination of methods
- ✓ Mixing up Media
  - Your course will be more engaging with different media formats
  - Use image based, text, and video formats
  - Select formats according to expectation and characteristics of

- target learners
- ✓ Polls and Quizzes
  - Get quick engagement when you're live online
  - Determine where a group's current knowledge is

### **Step 6: Build Accountability into Your Course**

- ✓ Accountability ensures that students have learned the material
- ✓ Emails at the end of modules to check progress
- ✓ Participants may need additional help after the course has finished
  - Create accountability partners with students
  - Create an online group for people who have completed the course
  - Post-course emails to follow up and get feedback

## **Create Effective and Engaging Content for Your Course**

- ✓ It's time to create your content
- ✓ Present it in a way that makes your course as interesting and engaging as possible

### **Create a Short Version**

- ✓ A short version gives you a chance to test before you launch the full version
- ✓ Take just one module out of your course and adapt it
- ✓ Benefits include:
  - Motivate yourself and your students
  - Launch sooner
  - Get early feedback
  - Generate revenue
- ✓ Write a basic script outline with a summary of key points
- ✓ Get feedback from those who take the short course

### **General Guidelines on Creating the Full Version of Your Course**

- ✓ All content should be directly related to learning objectives
- ✓ Don't overload with irrelevant content
- ✓ Decide which media formats to use with each module
- ✓ Vary content as much as possible to keep it interesting
- ✓ You'll update your content again, so it doesn't have to be perfect now
- ✓ Try to use evergreen content

## **Create Your Main Content**

- ✓ Lay out the key points the student needs to know to complete each learning activity
- ✓ Create worksheets to go along with the learning activities
- ✓ Write or create any additional materials such as:
  - Cheat Sheets
  - Additional Worksheets
  - Calendars
  - Checklists
  - Presentation Slides
  - Resources Lists
  - Step-by-Step Graphics
  - Downloadable Transcripts
  - Mind Maps
  - Infographics
- ✓ Visual elements should be clear and easy to read
- ✓ Write narration scripts for audio clips, webinars and videos

## **Create Interaction Content**

- ✓ Create polls and quizzes
- ✓ Elements of complex quizzes
  - Open Ended Questions
    - Pose a simple questions that allows students to write the answer with free text
  - Multiple Choice Questions
    - Give students a set number of answers to choose from
  - Ranking
    - Give students a list and ask them to rank items in order of importance
  - Clickable images
    - Give students a series of images and ask them to choose which they like, or don't like
- ✓ Publish results for all students to see where they stand in relation to others

## **Create Remaining Content**

- ✓ Create any other content connected to evaluating progress
- ✓ Include things like a list of graded activities, due dates, etc
- ✓ Write and schedule post-course emails to check progress
- ✓ Put your lesson content into your media delivery formats
- ✓ The final task is to review and edit

## **Plan and Prepare Your Course Delivery**

- ✓ It's time to address the question of what to charge
- ✓ Decide on the specifics and get your course scheduled

## **Set Your Price**

- ✓ If you've chosen a topic well, your course is already highly valuable
- ✓ If you're already a recognized authority, you can charge a higher price
- ✓ A low price might lead students to be noncommittal or unmotivated
- ✓ Look at competitors' pricing to get ideas

## **Choosing a Platform for Your Online Course**

- ✓ [Membership sites](#) or WordPress plugins
- ✓ Online course delivery marketplaces
- ✓ Standalone platforms and plugins
- ✓ Choose depending on the features you need for your course

## **Deciding How to Collect Payments**

- ✓ How you collect payments depends on the delivery platform you've chosen
- ✓ Online course marketplaces and platforms process payments for you

## **Schedule and Set up Your Course for Delivery**

- ✓ Decide when you'll run your course and set a start date
- ✓ Schedule dates for webinars, live chats, etc.
- ✓ Get your content elements uploaded in the meantime
- ✓ Prepare anything else you need for delivery and test

## **Run an Engaging, Results-Focused Course**

- ✓ Ensure your students get the most out of their learning
- ✓ Run your course to encourage engagement and create a supportive environment
- ✓ Be available in case there are questions or problems during the course
- ✓ Encourage discussion in your online course environment
  - Welcome new members and invite them to join
  - Create community and forum guidelines
  - Be active and present to encourage people
- ✓ Structure Forum Content
  - Organize discussion areas into topics or modules
  - Include both topic-driven content and social content
- ✓ Icebreakers

- Encourage discussion from the start
- Students can get to know each other, share ideas and discover mutual interests
- Include things such as:
  - Ask students to introduce themselves
  - Have students say 3 things about themselves
  - Self-introductions using 3 descriptive words
  - Brief bios of 150 words or less
  - Ask students why they're taking the course
  - Ask them what they're good at
  - Ask for favorites
- ✓ Q&A Discussion
  - Set up a Q&A discussion board where people can ask questions and help
- ✓ Encourage Engagement with Course Content
  - Ask questions, create polls and quizzes, ask for votes and opinions on relevant issues
- ✓ Invite a guest speaker
  - Ask an expert to talk to students and spark discussion around your topic
- ✓ Reflections and Debriefing
  - Run a debrief after each activity to make sure students understand the work
  - Ask questions such as:
    - What was the most challenging part of the module or learning activity?
    - What was your biggest takeaway from the module?
    - What was particularly significant or surprising?
    - Is there anything you don't understand?
    - What's working well and what isn't?
    - What goals have you set for yourself?
- ✓ Stimulate Participation if Things Get Quiet
  - If you're not getting much of a response there are things you can do to encourage participation
    - Reach out via email
    - Remind everyone of the benefits of the course
    - Remind students you're there for support
    - Create an activity that encourages interaction
- ✓ Q&A Sessions
  - Run Q&A sessions to help people understand course content and implement activities
  - Tips include:
    - Ask students to send in questions
    - Make sure you know subject matter well
    - Prepare answers to frequently asked questions
    - Keep answers brief and direct
    - Research anything you don't know



## Follow up and Improve Your Course

- ✓ Monitor once your course is running, and identify where it can be improved
- ✓ Gather feedback, especially negative feedback to develop and improve
- ✓ The most valuable feedback is from your students
- ✓ Quantity and type of interaction is a useful indicator of engagement
- ✓ Use emails or forum posts with questions or problems as feedback
- ✓ Ask for feedback via email or an end-of-course survey
  
- ✓ Follow up later to see how students have used what they learned
  
- ✓ Ask them:
  - How far have you gotten?
  - Did the course solve your problems?
  - What have you done with your new skills?
  - Encourage them to share their successes
- ✓ Use this data to assess and determine which areas need improvement
- ✓ Make changes and run the course again

## Conclusion and Next Steps

- ✓ Review and finalize the outline and activities and launch your first online course
- ✓ You've learned how to:
  - Research your market and identify a need as your course topic
  - Design a clear structure and learning path for your course
  - Build interaction and engagement into your course
  - Create content for your course
  - Define your strategy for delivery, launch and running
  - Measure your results and gather feedback from students
- ✓ Now you've designed your course structure you'll be able to use it for future courses
- ✓ Using a similar structure for each course saves time and makes it easier for students

