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Using this Workbook

Unlike a regular book to read and listen to, this workbook is specifically designed to give you the steps and the exercises to create your first online course. This course can be online live (a la Zoom or webinar) or automated.

You are also invited to participate in a webinar series on How to Create an Online Course. Visit members.howtobuildanonlinecourse.com and register. Use coupon code Stack20 to gain free access.

There is also a list of Resources and a complete list of the Exercises at the end of the book. Use the links in the Table of Contents to easily move through and directly to the sections you need.

Supplemental Files Available

Ebook formatting guidelines and audio recordings don't support printable checklists, infographics, and other files common in 8.5" x 11" printed workbooks. These files are downloadable and printable, for the readers of this book. You'll see them called out as Extras in this text and they are available at <https://members.howtobuildanonlinecourse.com/extras>.

Introduction

Have you heard the hype? According to some pundits, launching an online course is the panacea of business opportunities. For others, creating a course seems to be daunting to even try. If you do create the course, where do you find your customers?

As with much of the hype on the Internet, the reality of online courses is somewhere in between.

This book provides a 6 Step Process to help you Build and Launch your first online course.

I'm Kim Shivler and I've been building web pages since 1995 when HTML was first invented and built my first online course in 1996. My background is actually in education. I hold a Master of Education from the University of Florida and from the beginning my interest in creating online courses was to build educationally sound classes.

I wanted to always give my customers top quality so that they would: 1) Finish the Course and 2) Actually learn something they could take away and use in their life.

If you're thinking of creating 3-5 videos, linking them together and calling that a course, this is probably not the book for you. If you want to create a quality course that engages your students, teaches them and brings ongoing revenue, then you're in the right place.

Why Build an Online Course?

Aside from the hype, why would you want to create an online course? How can it help your business? How could courses actually become a business?

Online courses can help business in many ways.

- They can serve as audience builders.
- They can establish expertise.
- They can be used to add value to your current customer base.
- They can be the core of your business.

Lead Magnets

If you haven't heard yet, that you should have a "Lead Magnet" or even several "Lead Magnets" to build your audience, then let's introduce that now.

A Lead Magnet is a piece of content that is very valuable to your target audience. It is something so valuable that people will give you their email address and sometimes other information in exchange for.

This brings them into your sales funnel and helps build your audience. These are people you can reach out to with your offerings and information and becomes step 1 in building your tribe.

Online Courses can Establish Expertise

If you run a product your service business, you want to be an expert in your field.

Being Seen as an Expert = Easier Sales

Many people like to buy from people they see as experts - those who know a lot about the topic that interests them. When you are seen as an expert, people may seek you out for information and to hire you. This expertise can also make the sales and pricing discussion easier. We often expect to pay more when we are buying from an expert.

Think about your own buying habits. Do you want to purchase from someone who doesn't know what they are doing, or do you want to buy from an expert?

Why Teach?

Teaching what you know is one of the fastest ways to be seen as an expert. After all, if you're the one who teaches it, you must know what you're talking about.

Teaching = Trust

Online Courses can be a Business in Themselves

For some people creating and running online courses is their core business. Instead of doing live workshops or providing products and other services, the courses they teach are the whole of the business.

In these cases, you'll often find that a free course is their lead magnet which moves you to a course or courses that are paid options.

Monetization Strategy

Even if online courses are not the whole of a business, many businesses use online courses to add income to their business.

While free courses can be a great way to build your email list, online courses can be a significant monetization strategy for your website. Courses have a higher “value” consideration for most customers than other products like ebooks. They command higher pricing than most ebooks and other static products, and provide you more options for touch points with the customer that can lead to future sales opportunities.

As a monetization strategy, online courses can also help certain types of businesses scale. For example, a massage therapist can only physically see a certain number of clients in a day. If she sells online courses that teach people stretches or massage techniques they can use at home to reduce pain, she can help more people than just those she can see.

Competitive Differentiation

All of us who are business owners are working to differentiate ourselves from others who are similar. While we may not see them as one to one “competition,” the reality is that for others to see us as the obvious choice we do need to differentiate ourselves.

Tribe Building Tool

Unless you are selling a product that is only needed once by a person in their entire life, and if you are I suggest you find something else to sell - or at least sell some major add ons, you want to build a tribe of loyal customers who buy everything you have to offer. This tribe follows you, recommends you, and even, defends you against Internet trolls.

Smaller Commitment than Forever Membership Sites

While ongoing membership sites with frequently updated, premium content can be a very successful monetization strategy, an online course doesn't require continued updates. Even if using in conjunction with a

membership plugin, the course can more easily be setup for specific access times and a set amount of content.

Introducing the Course Creation Process

The course creation process is fairly simple. Remember, however, that simple isn't always easy.

Simple means that there are basic steps you can follow to create the course that serves your audience perfectly.

It's not necessarily easy in that doing so requires a lot of work.

Having said that, don't edit forever. Create your content. Proof it and tweak as needed and then publish. There are people who create beautiful content and never release it to the public. That doesn't help anyone.

A course sitting on your computer isn't helping anyone. Not you and not your customers.

Do the work and then publish it!

Whether you are creating an automated online course or a live one, the process is similar.

Step 1 Planning

Entrepreneurs and small business owners sometimes like to jump right in to projects with little to no planning. In this case, taking time to plan ahead will help you create the best course, possibly even multiple courses, for your target audience. It also makes the content creation process much easier.

Step 2 Discovery

In the Discovery phase, you brainstorm and dump every idea and thing you want to teach onto the page. This is not time for editing. Just get

everything on the page. We'll organize and edit later. The good news is that most people end up with content for multiple courses and workshops.

Step 3 Curriculum

Here we edit and organize our content into a curriculum that we can develop and teach.

Step 4 Content

This is the biggest, most time-consuming piece of the course creation process, although if you don't have a large audience yet the time and effort commitment required for marketing and launching may be just as intense.

Here you actually create the content laid out in the curriculum. This might include slides for a presentation, videos, a workbook, infographics etc...

Step 5 Upload

The upload step is focused on automated online courses where someone will sign up and move through the course. It may also include uploading a resources page for a live, webinar event.

Step 6 Launch

You have to launch the course for you to get anything out of it. A presentation sitting in your desk drawer, isn't going to do anything for you.

If you're running an online course, either live or automated, you'll need to reach out to both your in-person and online contacts and send them to the landing page for the course. Get this information out to your email list, and possibly consider a Facebook Ad Campaign or other advertising strategy.

Extra – 6 Step Process Plan Infographic available.

Process Step 1 - Planning Your Course and Content

There are several types of planning you'll need to do for your online course. The first two, we do before we ever start. Content Planning and Launch Planning will be included under their associated Process Steps.

- Customer Planning - Who is your target audience?
- Course Delivery Planning – How will you deliver the course?
- Content Planning – What will you teach?
- Launch Planning – How will you market your launch?

Audience/Customer Planning

As with any product or service, knowing your target audience is critical.

Exercise: Defining Your Student Audience

1. Who is your target student?
2. What is their Why for taking the class? This is different than what you want to teach. This is why they are interested in learning about this topic. For example, someone might take a course to improve their job skills or pursue a new career. That is their end-goal.
3. What do you want them to learn?
4. What level of knowledge do they currently have?

Extra – Audience/Customer Planning Checklist

Course Delivery Planning

How will you deliver the course? Do you want to hold live webinar sessions or series of sessions? Do you prefer to create automated content and upload it into a Learning Management System?

By deciding this ahead of time, you'll be able to properly plan and create the content needed for the specific course type.

For example, webinars often run similar to live, in-person courses. These include an instructor or instructors with a slide deck and live interactions in the chat. Depending on the software selected, you may actually allow students to talk and ask their questions instead of keeping everything in chat.

If you are going to create fully automated, self-paced courses you'll need to make registering and taking the course doesn't require you to be there. Testing sure that the use of the course is intuitive to use and that the students are able to easily follow along.

For either method, you'll need to make sure you select software that meets your requirements for your delivery. For example, some webinar software allows for evergreen content replays while others don't and automated systems have different options for what type of quiz questions can be created.

Process Step 2 – Discovery

For people just getting started with content creation and online courses, sometimes it's hard to find what to teach. They spend large amounts of time trying to focus on picking out some of their knowledge they want to share and get frustrated.

In reality, you probably have many years' worth of experience and expertise to share and teach. The best way to find, plan, and create this information is to start with a brain dump.

Take a time to get everything you know out on paper, whiteboard, list building software – whatever works for you. Just free flow and write. Don't edit. Don't organize.

Personally, I like to use list-builders or project planners that allow me to easily drag things around, or if doing physically whiteboard with post it notes. This allows me to easily organize things related when I move to Step 3 of the process.

Process Step 3 - Curriculum Design

After you have completed your brain dump and discovery process, it's time to organize it into the course or courses and lessons you'll provide. This is also where you define what you might pull out and have them complete as a pre-requisite.

Organize Your Discovery Information

Once you have completed the discovery process, it's time to organize what you have into courses. Start by organizing the information into topics. What goes together?

If you had the idea of the course you wanted to build first before starting, go ahead and place information that fits this course together while moving others to separate lists. These separate lists, give you outlines for future courses.

At this point, you may delete things that you don't think are relevant for any classes or those you aren't interested in teaching. I recommend keeping a Cuts file of your work always. You never know when you'll want

some ideas and going back to things you've discarded sometimes brings up new ideas or gives you a new way to use what you once didn't need.

Once you have this high-level course layout, you'll move to Planning exactly what you'll teach for each topic. First, you'll want to keep in mind the Keys to Creating Great Content.

Keys to Creating Great Content

People learn in different ways, and they learn best when they are presented with various forms of stimuli.

Create multiple touch points for your course including:

- ✦ Audio
- ✦ Visual
- ✦ Tactile - having them do something
- ✦ Reflective - moments to reflect on what they have completed

If you are teaching an automated online course, building tactile and reflective exercises into the course works well because it is self-paced. Students can take the lesson and then try the task. You may want to have them check back in with a comment or email upon completion. Sometimes sharing their work in an online forum or Facebook group is an option for interaction surrounding these.

If you are teaching a webinar, there are times you may take a break for small tasks for completion.

For example, I teach a quarterly 2-hour Business Planning and Goal Setting Workshop online. In this workshop, I teach a short lesson, then we break for 10 minutes for the attendees to complete a task. We come back, share around our work and then move on to the next session.

This mainly works in longer sessions. If you are holding a shorter webinar class (between ½ hour and 1 hour), you may want to provide exercises for them to complete after the class and give them a way to share later similar to what I explained in the Automated Course paragraph.

Always remember that your goal is to use multiple touch points to connect with your audience. Teaching, over just motivational speaking, has the additional goal that they will actually be able to accomplish something. That's why the Tactile and Reflective points can be so powerful.

Keep the above touch point options in mind as you layout your curriculum.

Planning What You Will Create

Now that you've organized your brain dump into topics that fit your course, and you understand more about the types of content to provide in a training, it's time to get further into configuring the actual course.

In your favorite online editor, on a whiteboard, paper or your project management list break your topics into smaller sections for example Sections > Lessons > Topics > Quizzes. Note that LMS software has rules on how courses are laid out, so you may need to check with your software.

Exercise: Plan the Content for your course.

Take your discovery information and plan your curriculum. Use the Planning Guide extra below for help.

Extra – Word Document Planning Guide with Prompts

Consider Creating a Minimum Viable Course

If you're working with a new audience, I recommend creating a short intro course 3 – 5 lessons and asking a group of your target audience to take it.

Perhaps you give this for free or provide it at a low cost. This allows you to make sure you're building the right course for this audience and delivering the information in a way that works for them.

For example, you might want to create a subset of what you plan to teach in the complete course. If you are teaching a cooking class, perhaps the mini-course teaches knife skills. In the case of my WordPress Introduction Class, I taught how to install WordPress and understand the Admin Dashboard.

Track people's progress through the course.

- Check course completion rates.
- See if people are able to accomplish what you are teaching once they finish the course.
- Survey the students about the experience and what could be improved.
- Look at what questions you receive as people take the class or areas where people seem to be confused.

Extra – Student Progress Checklist and Survey

Process Step 4 - How to Create Your Content

While simple, the content creation portion is possibly the hardest for creators of online courses.

As with other areas of course creation, a quick planning session can make this step easier.

First, decide what touch points you will include. Are you going to have video, audio, infographics, text, quizzes, assignments etc...

Video

For video, does your video require screengrabs or is it solely you speaking to the camera? Does it potentially have a video animation with voiceover without you on camera?

For each of these, determine how, when, and by whom they will be shot.

For screengrabs, you'll probably be taping your computer screen using a tool like Screenflow, Camtasia, or Loom.

Animation with Voice Over

If you are recording an animation with voiceover, this might actually be done using a Microsoft PowerPoint or Keynote presentation with a screen capture software. It could also be a specific animation voiceover software like <https://www.powtoon.com/blog/make-your-own-animation/>

Live – In Studio/In Office Shots

If you plan on being on screen as a talking head, this can be done in many ways. If you are on a budget, don't worry about hiring a video production crew. Get some decent lighting and a good camera. The truth is that late model smart phones have pretty fabulous cameras.

Buy quality lighting and test it with your setup before taping the complete video. Once you have the video laid out the way you want with setup and lighting, go ahead and tape it.

Make sure you copy it to a hard drive or cloud drive between takes. You don't want to risk having your camera fail with your videos on it.

Recommended Video Length

For most automated systems, short bite-sized pieces of content are recommended. Engage your students, teach them something and then have them actually complete what you've taught.

For example, if you're teaching meditation, deliver a 5 - 10 minute presentation on how to complete the meditation and then have the students try a meditation on their own. If you're walking them through a guided meditation, then do so at this time.

Consider having them come back after the meditation for a quick survey or quiz about the experience. If it's a task that might be difficult for some people, this is a good time to provide options for help such as a bulletin board, email support or even a Facebook group.

Managing Longer Videos

If you have longer videos that you want to share. For example, if you delivered a presentation at a conference that was taped or you want to enhance replays from longer webinars, timestamp the videos to make it easier for your users to jump to specific areas for review.

As always, provide a transcript or supplemental text so people can quickly search for and review the information.

For video editing, there are many options at many costs.

Adobe Premiere Pro is available as a monthly subscription and is available for Windows or Mac. This is one of the most powerful software applications available and also comes with a fairly steep learning curve.

If you choose to use the Adobe products, you will probably want to invest in some online training on how to use them.

There are also some companies who sell settings for these products. For example, Mike Russell of Music Radio Creative (<https://musicradiocreative.com>) sells audio processing templates to help podcasters easily edit and improve their audio quality.

You may also choose to hire a videographer and/or a video editor to help with your course video content.

Selecting Your Video Presentation Platform

In most cases, you will not want to host your videos on your regular web host. Videos require high bandwidth and most web hosting packages are not equipped to handle this. You may even find some high overcharges if you try to do this.

For hosting video, you want to use a specific video hosting platform. Popular ones include YouTube, Vimeo, and Wistia.

YouTube is best for free content. When you are creating and posting videos to your blogs and other free articles, use YouTube. Create a YouTube channel and use this to help build your audience. YouTube is not best for private content.

If you are providing an online course or other private content select an option like Vimeo Pro or Wistia.

Note that if you are using a 3rd Party Course Delivery Option like Thinkific, Teachable, or Kajabi, they may include hosting of your videos as part of their service. Check your package before selecting a different service.

Vimeo Pro

Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/>) is a very popular video hosting provider with a variety of pricing plans that provide some low-cost ways to get started

publishing. They also allow you to configure specific options for how the video player will display on your site.

Note that Vimeo videos are not encrypted, so they don't have as much security as Wistia. This means they can be grabbed by nefarious software. Having said that, based on the price difference, I am willing to stick with Vimeo because even with encryption, if someone wants to steal a video they can purchase/watch the video and run a screen capture to grab it

The reality is that if you publish content – online or off, it can be stolen. As creators, we have to protect our content and the content of others as much as we can but not use it as an excuse to not publish.

Wistia

Wistia (<https://wistia.com/pricing#standard-features>) provides an excellent service of video delivery. The challenge is that if you have more than a few videos the price can start adding up.

I recommend reviewing the pricing and options for these and/or other video hosting platforms to decide what works best for your needs.

Planning Your Videos

As you layout your course curriculum, you may find it helpful to plan for each video you'll need. For example, if you have X number of lessons go ahead and plan for which lessons have videos, what type of videos (live person talking versus screenshare or animation) and the topic of the video.

You may want to batch the actual shooting of the videos into a single session, particularly if you're going to use a videographer to help.

Audio Only

For many online courses, the video is combined with the audio. For example, if you are creating and providing training videos, the audio and video are combined in your deliverables.

There are however times when pure audio is delivered. I have seen this when working with meditation instructors and psychics. In these cases, the editing is audio only and can be done with Adobe Audition, Mac Garage Band, or Audacity for either Windows or Mac. These are just a few of the audio editors available

Text Supplementation

One of the biggest mistakes people make in online courses is to make it solely video. There are several reasons and options for including supplemental text to the video.

Captions/Transcripts

At the least, you will need to have captions for your videos. This allows the hearing impaired to also enjoy your content.

Transcripts can also help people use the information for quick reference. People don't usually want to scroll through video to find a specific area where they just need a reference.

Tools like Temi (<https://temi.com>) provide AI services to transcribe and caption your videos. At 15 cents a minute, this is a very affordable resource. Please make sure you proofread the transcripts because they are not always completely accurate. This is particularly true with the spelling of names.

From Temi, you can download the transcript and also download a caption file that you can then attach to your video in your video delivery system. YouTube, Vimeo and others support uploading of caption files.

NOTE – Many of these platforms will provide their own version of captions if you don't upload your own. NEVER use theirs. They will usually be very inaccurate. Create your own. Proof them to make sure you are providing the information you intend to create and then attach them to your video.

Accuracy of transcription/captions is particularly important on videos open to the public, for example those marketing your courses and programs on YouTube. The search engines catalog the words in the captions. They can't listen to the audio.

Detail the Steps in the Text

If you are teaching a step-by-step method in your course, for example if you're teaching a technical "how-to" like I frequently do or a cooking class with recipes, make sure that you break the steps out and include them in the text for your lessons.

When people are following a step-by-step lesson, they need to be able to easily reference the steps in order to complete the tasks they are trying to learn. Think about following a recipe when you cook. You need easy access to the steps in a text-based format to follow a recipe successfully.

Infographics

For some uses, infographics can be very helpful. These can provide informational and impactful content for your students. Infographics can be professionally created or created with online tools like Visme, Vengage, Canva, or Picktochart and can be a core part of a course lesson.

Slide Decks

For many presentations especially for live webinars, you may use slide decks in the same manner you do for a live, in-person presentation. Some webinar and meeting software allows you to share your screen and deliver a slide presentation while others have you upload your slide deck to the platform and then display it from there. Either way, traditional slide presentations can be a core part of your webinar.

If you are using a slide presentation, you'll want to decide if the slides will be available to the students or if other resources and documents will be the student deliverables.

Well created slide decks should not have too much text, although in online presentations you can have more text than you should if presenting live in front of a large room. In large rooms with projectors slides with small text are not legible. Online the slides display much better.

Even in the case of online, slides shouldn't be too text heavy. You want your students listening to you not focusing on reading your slides. Provide a workbook, resources page, or other documents as the course texts and student deliverables.

How to Create Quality Quizzes

Are Quizzes part of your interactive content. Hint – it's a good idea to add quizzes.

Sadly because of the way many teachers handled quizzes in our early school years, many people view quizzes as punitive tools of judgement instead of learning tools. Well written and implemented quizzes should be learning tools to let the students understand what they are learning and how well you are teaching.

Hint – if no one is doing well on your quizzes, then maybe you're not successfully delivering your information, or you've written problematic quiz questions.

Be careful in your wording of quizzes.

Quiz questions need to be clear and easy to understand. This is particularly true if using fill in the blank type questions.

My brother's teacher once asked on a quiz: "Where was Lincoln shot?"

Her intention for the answer was "Ford theater." My brother's answer, "In the head" had to suffice as accurate.

Don't be afraid to give away too much information – again remember this is a learning tool not a punishment. When creating quiz questions, provide the amount of information needed for the student to fully understand what is needed to answer appropriately.

When selecting your Learning Management System (LMS) look at the option for quizzes and make sure it fits the type of quizzes you want to use. Some systems are limited to true/false and multiple choice while others allow for short answer and even essays.

Provide a variety of question types. This helps keep your students thinking. If every question is True/False, people fall into a lull of answering without reading.

Unless you are creating a final exam on a certification track, keep your quizzes fairly short. Eight – 15 questions allows you and your students to evaluate how well they are absorbing the material.

Using Quizzes in Live Webinar Training

If you are opting to use webinars as your delivery method and are teaching live, you can still use quizzes and other interactions to keep your audience engaged. Ask your questions and have people enter answers in the Chat.

Exercise: Create Five Quiz Questions for Your Class

Use the instructions above to create a quiz with at least five questions for your course.

Are your questions True/False, fill in the blank, or multiple choice?

Test these with 10 students to make sure the questions are clear and make sense.

Create Homework Assignments, If Needed

Determine if your class will have homework or not. Homework can be particularly valuable in classes that are blended learning where a portion of the class is automated, and a portion is live webinar. It can also be helpful when people are working to complete specific tasks.

Homework can simply take the form of asking people to comment on the lesson or send you feedback about how easy it was to follow the instructions.

If you require specific work be completed that is uploaded, then make sure you review it and provide feedback. If they take the time to complete it, you owe them the time to review and respond. This helps you gauge their progress as well as your teaching.

Because this is time consuming, you may only want to do this in higher-priced classes. Alternately, your assistant might serve as your Teaching Assistant and review the homework for you. If you opt for this route, make

sure to spend time training your teaching assistant to review the material in a way that you intend.

For tips on getting the most out of your virtual assistant or if you would like to explore the opportunity of creating a VA business, please visit VirtualAssistantOpportunity.com.

After years of working with, training, and coaching Virtual Assistants, I have created a program designed to help people build a VA business and help entrepreneurs hire and work with VAs to increase their productivity.

Exercise: Create, Edit, and Format your Course Content

Process Step 5 – Upload Your Content

Depending on your chosen delivery system, uploading content can be time consuming. You may want to do this yourself or hire someone to configure the course for you.

If you are using a Learning Management System such as Thinkific or your own WordPress site with an LMS plugin, the steps for this might include Uploading video, attaching captions to the videos Uploading text and images.

If you are familiar with adding blog posts to a website, learning to use an online LMS will be fairly easy.

Once your content is uploaded, make sure that you test your course and have a few others go through and test also. You want to make sure that people understand how to follow the course, quizzes etc...

While this workbook focuses on creating the course content, I do have classes available on various WordPress LMS configurations. Visit <https://howtobuildanonlinecourse.com> for more information.

You'll also find information on Thinkific and Kajabi on the website, though for detailed training I recommend visiting their platforms.

Exercise: Upload your content into automated courseware or plan deliverables for your webinar class.

Process Step 6 - Launch Your Course

Plan your Launch. How will you market the course? What size audience do you currently have? What marketing channels do you use?

Does paid advertising make sense?

Consider having a Launch Webinar that provides valuable information and then points to the course at the end. This works particularly well if you have an established audience, or if you can partner with someone and share audiences.

Make sure you provide valuable information in the webinar. If it's just a sales pitch, you'll lose people.

Launching an Automated Course

If you are launching an automated course, first make sure that you have fully tested the automated content. From signup to completion, make sure your course works and is easy to use.

Have a small group of students test before your full launch making sure that it makes sense for them, too. Consider having a beta group of 15-50 people go through at free or low-cost.

During the beta is where you'll find the challenges people have and know what you need to fix. For example, if the process of moving through lessons includes clicking a button that reads "Mark Complete," you may find that you have to include instructions to make sure people understand.

After the beta, when you push the course live, perhaps after a webinar make sure that you are available for customer support and that people understand how to contact you. Anytime you launch a new technology product there is a possibility that you'll have difficulties. Payment gateways can fail. Pages can time out. People can sometimes not understand the signup process. If you are not available to help onboard people, you have a good chance of losing a sale.

Once you have the process flowing, you can answer many questions through FAQs and email support. It's the big initial launch push that requires extra support.

Running Your Course as a Webinar

If you're comfortable delivering presentations and want to interact live with your audience, running your course as a webinar can be a great option. For many, this is also the fastest way to get a course online because the up-front content creation is usually less.

To Run a Webinar Class You'll need to

- Plan your curriculum
- Create Your Presentation
- Rehearse and test your presentation making sure to time it.
- Create quizzes questions or other options for interactions within the webinar.
- Upload any resources or other supplements you'll be providing to the students, or optionally send via email.

Compare that to creating an automated course where each video and other piece of content must be created and uploaded ahead of time.

Because it's easier to get started for many people, running webinars is their first entry into online courses. Even though there isn't as much content creation ahead of time, you'll still want to make sure you take the

time to plan and prepare the webinar properly or you have a good chance of a mis-launch.

Webinar software can be tricky to use. You do have to depend on high-speed internet access during the presentation and supporting people online in chat while trying to present can be a challenge.

Select your webinar software

There are multiple webinar options available each with different features. Make sure you define your webinar requirements and check capabilities before purchasing.

Some platforms are more stable than others, also. If they have a trial use it and run several tests before purchasing.

What are your requirements for the webinar software?

Does everyone need to register ahead of time and receive their own special link, or do you want the option to send someone a link that they can join from similar to what you do with a private meeting in Zoom or Google Meets.

Do you want your webinar software to integrate with your email management system? Adding people to your MailChimp or other email marketing system when they register for your webinar is a great way to build your list and stay in touch.

Will you offer a replay?

This decision is a controversial one in the industry. It is convenient for people who can't make it live to have the option of watching at a later time, however, how many actually do? Some trainers choose to only offer it live.

If you opt not to have replays, you may want to hold the course multiple times at different times to provide options for people's schedules.

Do you want evergreen webinars and on-demand watching? This is very popular for online trainers, and not all software platforms provide it.

Ethical Webinar Replays

Many webinar platforms allow you to provide what are called evergreen webinars. This means you can record once and people can register and watch later. This can be ongoing available.

There are some course creator trainers and internet marketers who recommend and teach people to create an evergreen webinar and then later advertise it as "Live" In my opinion, this is unethical in that it tries to fool people into believing that they are live with you when they aren't there at all.

I'm a huge believer in passive income and believe that it should have transparency. Tape once and replay, just don't hype it up as though it's live just for this audience.

So, if you want the passive income from an evergreen offering while maintaining ethical standards, what can you do? Let people know that the class portion was recorded and that you'll be available for answering questions in the chat or however you choose to do it.

Transparency and honesty are the answers to most business ethics questions. In this case, it's no different.

Testing Your Webinar

Whatever webinar software you choose, run several test webinars before launching a live course. Run a few by yourself just to understand the controls. If you accidentally close a webinar, most software doesn't allow

you to easily relaunch. You may have to create a completely new webinar, people may have to re-register, etc... You want to know the software well to avoid those issues.

After running a few on your own, run a few with a small group. Invite a few friends or customers and see how they interact. Make sure you're using the chat and any features that you want to use in the webinar. If you have survey or quiz options, test these.

Test your webinar presentation speed. Is everyone seeing you okay? Is your connection running slow? Most advertised "internet speeds" are download based. When running the webinar your uploading data, so the speed can be different.

Make sure you test the slide sharing functionality and go through your presentation, rehearsing as though it's live, checking for timing and your comfort with the content.

Running Your Live Webinar

After you have rehearsed and made sure you know your webinar software, do your final prep the day of the webinar.

- Make sure your presentation is ready to go.
- Prepare your lighting if you're going to be live on-screen.
- Prepare other pieces of content you might use in the class.
- You may want to reboot your computer to make sure everything is working right and no previously run software is taking control of your microphone, video etc... Make sure you do this a few hours before you launch. You don't want a slow reboot to make you late for your webinar.

If running a webinar with more than a few people, consider hiring a virtual assistant to help you run it. Your assistant can welcome people and

manage questions in the chat. They can be available to help if someone is having trouble with access.

Live Streaming Your Classes to Social Media

If you are running a free class, you may opt to live stream to Facebook and/or YouTube. Many webinar platforms allow this. This can help you get in front of more people and build content for your channel.

Sometimes these platforms will lose the connection, but for certain classes, like free introductions, it's worth trying.

Exercise: Launch your course.

Summary

From streams of income to audience builders and competitive differentiators, online courses can benefit many small businesses.

Whether you opt to create webinars or self-paced automated courses, following the 6 Step Process can help you get the ideas out of your head and onto your delivery platform.

6 Step Process

1. Planning
2. Discovery
3. Curriculum
4. Content Creation
5. Upload
6. Launch

This same process can be repeated to build more courses to support your current business or can be used to create a platform completely based on online teaching.

Best Success in your course creation efforts. For more information, please visit <https://howtobuildanonlinecourse.com>

Featured Resources

Below you'll find the resources I have mentioned in this book. For a more complete and updated list of resources, see <https://howtobuildanonlinecourse.com/resources/>

Video Hosting

Vimeo <https://vimeo.com>

Wistia <https://wistia.com>

Audio and Video Creation and Editing

Adobe Audition <https://adobe.com> – audio– Subscription pricing from Adobe

Adobe Premiere Pro <https://adobe.com> – video - Subscription pricing from Adobe

Audacity www.audacityteam.org – audio -Free works with both Windows and Mac

Garage Band <https://apple.com> – audio - comes with Macintosh computers

iMovie <https://apple.com> – audio - comes with Macintosh computers

There are also some companies who sell settings for these products. For example, Mike Russell of Music Radio Creative (<https://musicradiocreative.com>) sells audio processing templates to help podcasters easily edit and improve their audio quality.

Loom <https://loom.com> – create and edit screenflows from your desktop

Image and Chart Creation and Editing

PicMonkey <https://picmonkey.com> – low-cost image creation and editing with templates, annual subscription pricing

Canva <https://canva.com> – low-cost image creation and editing with templates, some free options others pay as you go

Venngage <https://venngage.com/> - info graphics

Piktochart - <https://piktochart.com/> - charts, graphics and slides

Visme – <https://visme.com> – graphics, infographics, ebook layout

Automated Fully Hosted Online Course Delivery

Thinkific – <https://thinkific.com>

Teachable – <https://teachable.com>

Kajabi – <https://newkajabi.com>

List of Exercises

Exercise: Defining Your Student Audience

Exercise: Plan the Content for your course.

Exercise: Create Five Quiz Questions for Your Class

Exercise: Create, Edit, and Format your Course Content

Exercise: Upload your content into automated courseware or plan deliverables for your webinar class.

Exercise: Launch your course.

About the Author

Kim Shivler M.Ed. has been a technology and business instructor, writer, and instructional designer for over 30 years.

Her experience includes technical training and writing, computer network and database administration, project management, web development, along with technical marketing and sales. Much of her work in technology focused on the intersection of business and tech helping non-technical and technical teams work together.

Kim's corporate background includes Tivoli, an IBM company, where she was part of the worldwide technical sales and marketing team; medical device manufacturing, and contract work for large computer manufacturers.

She currently works as founder of KS Training & Consulting, LLC a coaching and consulting company focused on helping small businesses with instructional design, business processes, and maximizing the use of their technology for better business outcomes.

As a writer and trainer, Kim has worked in a variety of fields including software documentation and instruction, manuals for aesthetic and medical devices, and general health articles.

Kim Shivler holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and Master of Education degree in secondary English education from the University of Florida.