

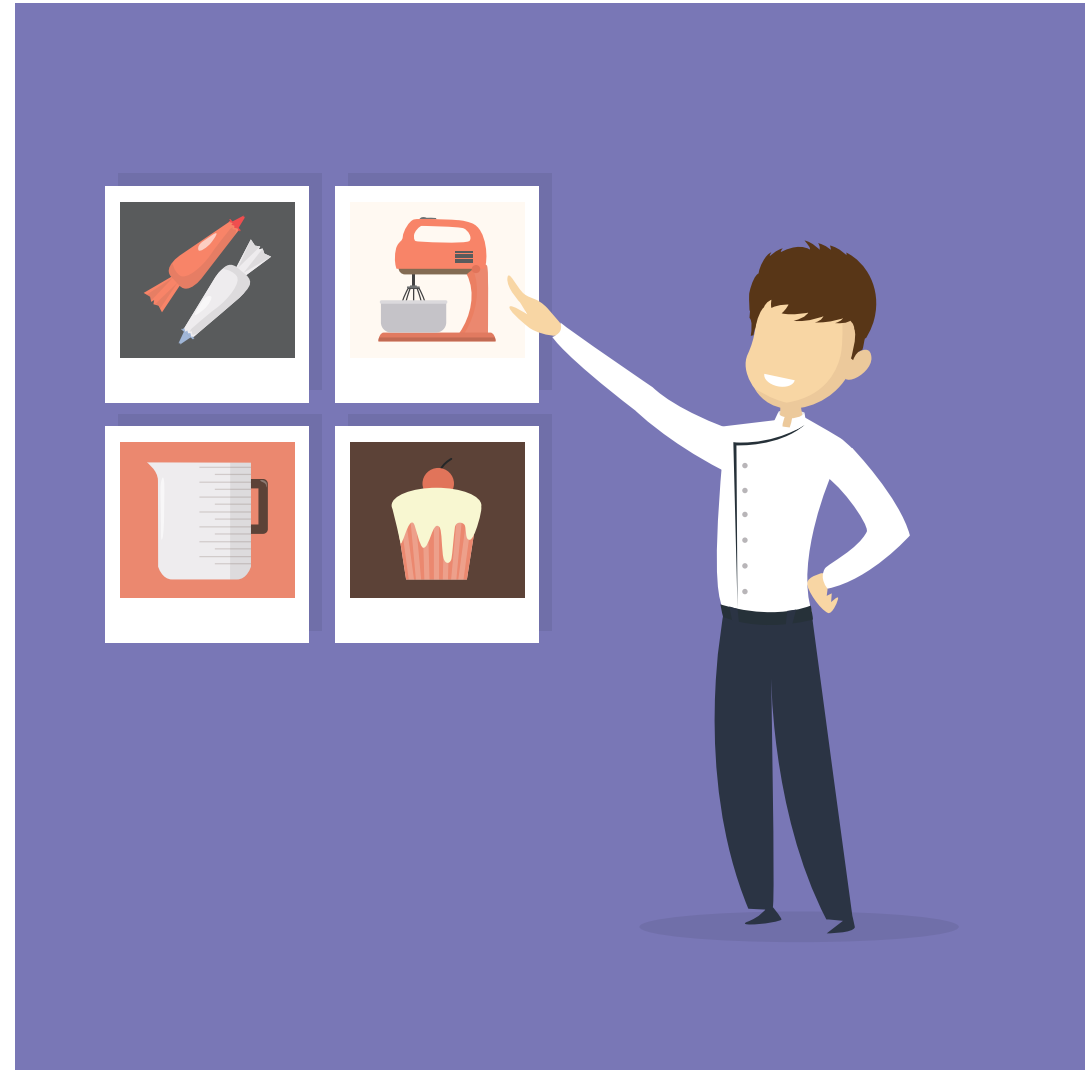
A man with dark hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a brown and black plaid shirt, is sitting at a wooden desk. He is smiling while talking on a mobile phone held to his ear with his left hand. His right hand is on the keyboard of a silver laptop. On the desk, there is a white mug, a blue pen holder with various pens and pencils, and some papers. The background is a bright, modern office or home workspace with a white chair and a potted plant.

5 BULLETPROOF STEPS TO

MARKETING ONLINE COURSES

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Introduction

You're an expert on something and you know that many people — maybe hundreds, maybe millions — can benefit from that knowledge of yours. You know they would pay for what you know, because your knowledge is valuable.

So you create an online course and share it with the world. You chisel and polish it until you think it's perfect and then you hit the publish button. Hurray! Your online course is on the Internet! Anyone in this world can find it and buy it.

Except that few people do. Too few actually.

Sooner or later you realize that the Internet is no longer how it used to be. You can build and publish whatever you want; but that alone does not mean people will flock to buy it. They still could, but they most probably won't. Your online competition — and their online choices — are just too many.



Yet some people still manage to sell their online courses — and sell a lot! — even today. What kind of ace do they have up their sleeve? Well, they actually keep it in their hands, right where everyone can see it. It's called online marketing.

In this day and age, the Internet is the most powerful way to profit from selling your knowledge. And its success principles are the same as ever; they're just more complex:

You build it and they'll come.

Has turned into

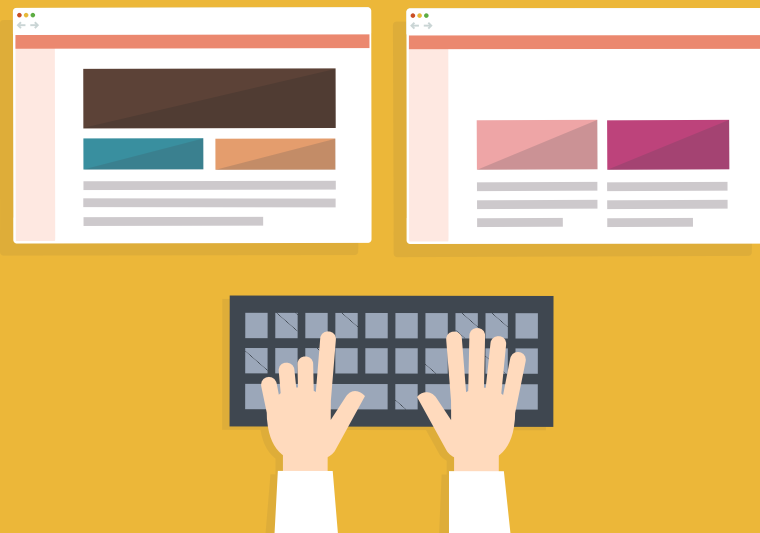
You market it, you build it, you market it even more, they come, you continue to market it.



The recipe for success

There are many people who generate pretty nice figures each month by selling online courses. No matter what any course is about, the success of these people is based on two things:

1. They create **valuable** content
2. They market it **continuously**



One simply can't be successful at selling online courses if their content is less than stellar, no matter how good they are at marketing it. Conversely, one can't be a successful online course creator and seller if nobody knows about the course, no matter how valuable the content might be.

So what's the best course of action? How to intertwine the two – creating valuable content and marketing it – so that the right people find it, are impressed by it and buy it?

Well, while there is no perfect recipe, as every course and its potential buyers are different, there are plenty of tactics and strategies that can pave the way to success. These fall into five categories, corresponding to the new Internet success principles mentioned:

1. Start with marketing
2. Create valuable content and finish the course
3. Market it like there's no tomorrow
4. Manage your audience
5. Keep marketing

Let's go into more details for each one.



Start with marketing

Too many people first create the course and only after that think about how to put it in front of as many eyeballs as possible. But there are some things that's better to happen before the actual creation of the course. Those who start marketing before they start creating the content will have a better head start than those who realize they also need marketing only after the already created course does not bring in the expected profit. So what's to be done before creating the course? You've heard this before:

Build an audience!



This step is number one assuming you already know what the course is going to be about. But building an audience takes a little time, and can be quite challenging for online course sellers, especially for those that do this for the first time. However, not one minute spent on this endeavor will be wasted.

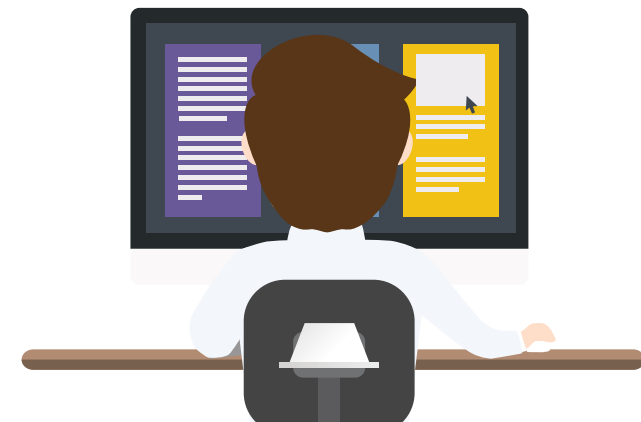
Here are a few things to be done early on in order to build an audience for your online course:

Imagine your perfect buying learner. In other words, know who you're selling your course to. Imagine what they need, what type of message they respond better to and how your course can meet their needs.

Develop your unique selling point (USP). Study your online competition by searching for keywords related to your course main idea and see what others have to say about that topic, and especially how they position themselves. Identify what you can bring new – and useful – to the table and develop your unique selling point.

Craft up a compelling title for your course. This should be based on the most relevant keywords for your course and may reference your target audience and unique selling point.

Create a short description for it. This will go hand in hand with the title whenever you'll create new marketing materials for the course. Make sure you'll explain what problem your course will solve and how people will benefit from it.



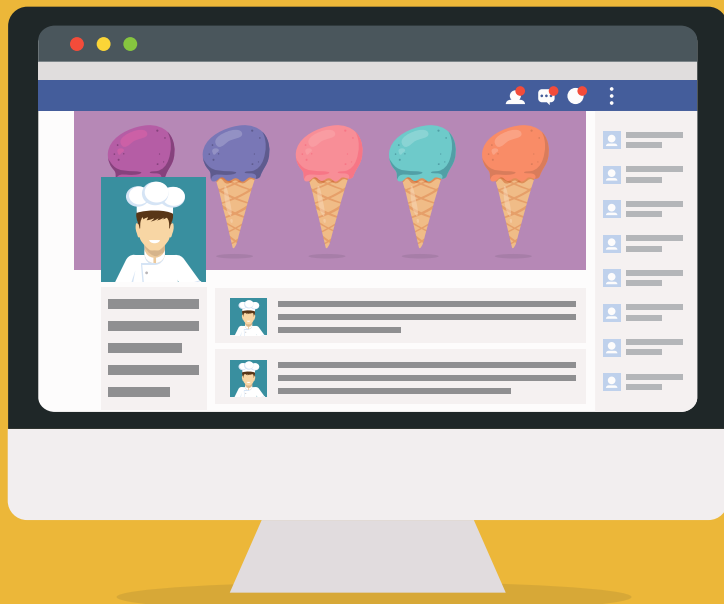
Start collecting emails. Now that you know who are the people that are most likely to buy your course and how to differentiate yourself on the market, start collecting emails. Find out where these people like to hang out online and tell them about you and your course. Here are a few tools and ideas on how to do this:

- Have a **website** for your course, or at least a **landing page**. You can't sell an online course if it's not online, after all.

If you go for the more comprehensive option of the **website**, you'll have more tools later on to use in your online marketing strategy. You can create more pages — about the course, about you and your story (how did you become an expert in your field?) and you can even create a blog. Write articles on various topics in your niche but try not to mention your course in them; the blog is the space where you can convince your audience that you really know what you're saying. Make sure to do some on-page SEO for each post, to increase the number of related keywords people will find you online.

Create a separate **landing page** for the course — or use this as is — and include the compelling title and description you have previously created and a short form for people to leave their email address if they're interested in receiving the course content. At this point, people who sign up should receive more than a broad description of what you have in mind the course will be. You can opt for giving them money, either in the form of a 50% discount, or you might tell them you'll offer the course for free to the first 50 (or any other number of) subscribers when the course will be complete. Another way to do this would be to have one or two learning modules ready; by the time people will finish these, you'll manage to create at least the next one and drip it into the course flawlessly.





- **Build social media profiles.** *Facebook* and *Twitter* kind of go without saying. If your topic has potential for great visuals, rock on *Instagram* and *Pinterest*. If your subject is more dry but professionals have a great interest in it, go on *LinkedIn* and *SlideShare*. Almost anyone likes videos over too much text, so *YouTube* should also be on your list. *Google+* helps a little with SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages).

Just go wherever the audience you want to reach is on; if they're not on *SnapChat*, or if you simply want your content to exist forever, don't create a profile there. Build engagement on these profiles and make sure the link to your website (or course landing page) is easily found. Social media marketing has one of the lowest conversion rates, but it's amazing at building awareness and interacting with your potential buyers.

- **Use other people's audiences.** During the keyword research you made when deciding upon the course title and description you surely stumbled across various websites that were not competitors, but addressed topics related to your online course. Reach out to the people behind these websites in your niche. Create guest posts for free and put the link to your course landing page in your author bio. Introduce yourself to people who make podcasts and webinars, explain how you're an expert in your field and some of them will invite you to speak at their events. Once you got a foot in the door, casually mention your course at the end of the podcast or webinar and invite people to check out your website. If they want to learn more about you, they'll find the course landing page and give you their details.

You don't have to aim for the stars in the beginning. All you need is a confirmation that your course idea is great and that people would buy your course if they had a chance. This small yet targeted pool of emails will be your propelling force. Now that you have that, you can move on to actually creating the course.

Create valuable content and finish the course

Get back to your course idea and put pen on paper, fingers on keyboard, eyes on the screen and actually create the course. Or the remainder of it if you chose to offer the first few modules to a few subscribers. Put your expert hat on and share your valuable knowledge. This is the main reason you started everything.

Consider any kind of feedback you got from people in the pre-marketing phase and tweak whatever is necessary to make each learning module speak to your target audience in a better way. They've surely given you some ideas you didn't consider at the beginning.

Remember that only valuable course content sells. You'll lose the trust you got from the first people that showed interest in your course if you overpromise and underdeliver. And if this happens, no matter what you'll do afterwards, you'll have a harder time convincing more people to buy your course. But since you know that your course idea is great and you managed to create some buzz around it, you're on the right track.

Aside from the awesome content in it, make sure your online course is visually appealing as well:

- Choose a **nice design**, the base of a great user experience.
- Have a **clear format**, with titles, subtitles, lists, resources, and so on.
- Choose an easy to read **font combination**.
- Pay attention to the **color scheme** and make sure you have the three main colors: background, main text and a statement color.
- Add images, videos, and other types of **visual content**.



Don't worry about the course being perfect at this phase. No matter how much you want it to be perfect or how much time you put into it, it won't be. It can't be. But that's ok; finishing the course does not mean that your job is done.

Now you need to put your marketer hat back on and move on to the real part of promoting your course.

Market your online course like there's no tomorrow

Only now have you reached the meaty part of online marketing. There are an incredible number of ways to increase your online audience, to target more people and to make them reach an obvious conclusion: that your online course can help or support them in overcoming a challenge in their life and that the money they give in exchange for it, is actually a small price to pay.

20 ways to market your course online

The following ideas on how to promote your online course will weigh differently in the final outcome, but even the lightest contributions can make a positive change if they are enough, or if they reach the right people at the right time.

Update your social media profiles. Add the link to the landing page of the complete course and write some posts about it. Make sure the pictures or any other visual content that you use with the post meet the size requirements for each social media platform.

Update your email signature. Add the link to the landing page of the finished course in your email signature as well. You do send emails probably every day and even if they're on different subjects, people will still notice your course.

Announce your course to your audience. Send an email to your current list of subscribers to inform them that the course they were waiting for is now fully available. Some won't waste too much time before they'll show interest, especially if there's a chance they'll get a discount.

Promote the finished course on your blog. You can do this through writing more posts on various ideas and concepts that are discussed in the course, but on a

more surface level. Invite the audience to buy your course if they want to dive deeper in that subject, at the end of each post. Remember to interlink all these posts. You can also add a link to the course landing page on the sidebar or in the footer, two places that are visible on any page of your website.

Create a mini-course. This can be based on the related blog posts and you can add them to an email campaign. Those people that were still not convinced by your first announcement might appreciate this possibility of having a taste of the big valuable course before they actually buy it. You can also consider publishing this mini-course in an online course marketplace.

Make a short video to promote your online course. There are plenty of free tools online that allow you to create nice short videos without having too many technical skills. If you can afford it, consider making an investment in the time of a professional video creator. Upload the promotional video on YouTube, Vimeo and other video sharing platforms.



Make more videos of different topics discussed in the course. The series of blog posts can come in handy at this stage. You only have to transform the written content in video format. If you're not comfortable speaking in front of the camera, you can create animations or even make screen recordings while you talk. Just as with the related blog posts, interlink these videos and cross promote each of them.

Add those videos in an email campaign. Just like with the mini-course mentioned before, this will give your audience a free taste of the course, more than enough to make them interested in what you have to say about the topic. If the written words were not convincing enough, the videos should do the trick.

Create more lead magnets. The written mini-course and the one in video-format are alright, but you can move beyond the course and create new forms of content related to it to attract more subscribers. The lead magnets as they are called can be free ebooks, white papers, case studies, checklists, more free videos, infographics, and so on.

Write more guest posts. Continue your online research and contribute to more websites in your niche. Once you can say your posts have already been featured on other websites and blogs, it will be easier to get new contributions. Make sure your author bio includes the link at least to your website if not to the course landing page. Share this new content on your social media accounts.

Participate in more podcasts and webinars. Contact more people that create content related to the main topic of your course. Once you have a few that interviewed you and you prove you know how to create even more valuable content, the ball will keep rolling and you'll eventually get invitations to participate in these types of events without much work from your side. Amplify this content by sharing it on social media as well.

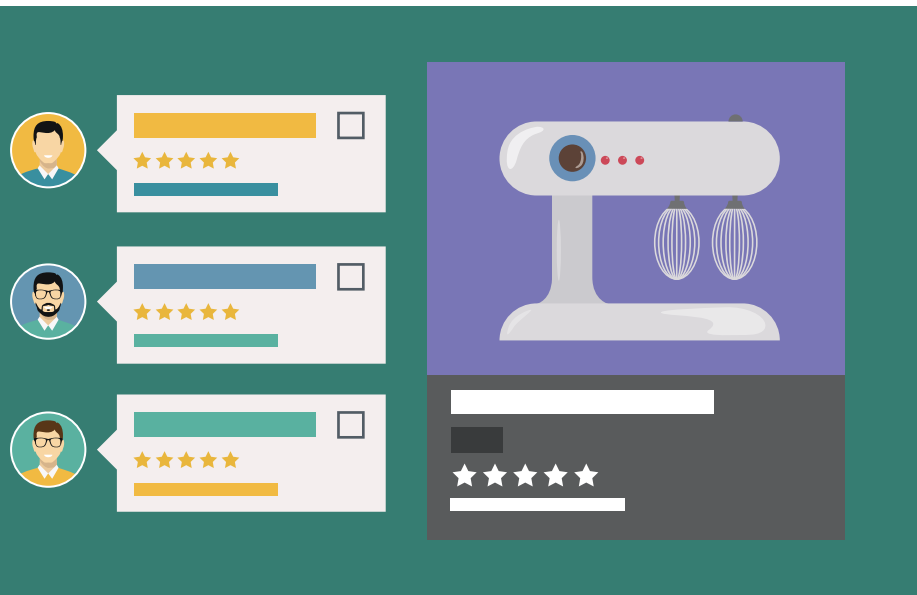
Start your own podcasts and/or webinar. Your audience will get bigger and bigger and more people will be interested in an event hosted by you. Making your voice available or putting your face on the screen gives your audience a chance to relate to what you have to say in a more personal manner.



Leverage online communities. Find relevant *Facebook groups* and make sure to familiarize yourself with the group rules so that you won't promote your course when it's not allowed. *Quora*, *Reddit* and other *forums* relevant to your niche are full of members that could benefit from your course, so try to answer questions there. Write posts on *LinkedIn Pulse* as well. Make thoughtful, considerate and helpful contributions to each of these communities, to establish your name as an expert in the field — who happens to have an awesome online course about an interesting topic and people can buy it.

Add learner testimonials to the course landing page. This helps a lot in building social proof, especially if you sell your first course. Ask those people that got your course for free or at 50% off to give you a testimonial. People will buy more easily if they find validation that your course is worthwhile.

Ask influencers to review your course. Start with the people you collaborated before (the hosts of your first podcasts and webinars) but do some more research to find influencers in your subject area or genre. Reach out to a few of them and let them know that you're providing a detailed course on a specific topic, and ask if they would like to get access to it for free, in return of a review. Their good words about your course can do wonders.



Publish a book on Amazon. You might not consider yourself a writer, but who wrote the content of your online course? Anyone can be a writer and now it's easier than ever to self-publish a book in digital format with Amazon Kindle. Write about the same concepts from your course in the book. Mention your course in it and make it easier for your readers to find out more about it. In plus, your book can become a great revenue stream to your online business.

Start an affiliate program. There will always be people in your niche with a bigger audience than yours. And they will always be looking for new valuable content to keep their audience happy. Reach out to these people and show them the value of your course, and propose an affiliate collaboration. Consider returning the favor and promote their content as well. You can also contact your most enthusiast students and give them a piece of the pie if they convince other people to buy your course. Give each affiliate a unique code, record each person who buys your course using that code and finally give the affiliate the agreed percentage of the sale. In time, you'll build a powerful money-making machine with affiliates.

Run a price promotion. Think about special events like Black Friday, which is almost synonymous with bargain prices. People simply enjoy the satisfaction of getting a bargain, so they'll pay attention to courses on sale. Find out some relevant International Days for your course and run a price promotion beforehand. Just don't overdo it; if Back to School does not speak to your audience and has no relation to your course, don't do a price promotion for it.



Consider online ads. Money is a great fuel for making more money. Consider investing in online ads for your course and even hire a professional if you're not sure how to run them. Paid search (Google AdWords, Bing Ads), paid social (Facebook Ads, YouTube Ads, LinkedIn Ads) and display ads (banners on other websites) can really make a difference to the bottom line of your online course. However, you need a budget for this strategy, as hard work and brain power are not enough. But if you do it right, online advertising will not only pay for itself eventually, but will also give you profit.

Speak at local events. This is the only strategy in this list of ideas that happens only 10% online. The online world is great, but real people with real money live in the real world. And they sometimes get together at various networking events. Check the local scene of these events, perhaps build some trust online beforehand, and ask to hold a presentation at one. You'll have the advantage of face-to-face interaction while speaking about your expert topic. Make sure your business card has your details and course details on it.

This online marketer hat surely seems more grueling than the online course designer one, right? Well, it's at least as. The above 20 ideas on how to market an online course do not make an exhaustive list on the topic.

You can apply all or as many as you like. Some of them can be done in no time, others require a degree of perseverance. You'll see results immediately for some, while others will test your patience. Some of them can have a huge impact on your course's sales performance, other are simply supporting activities. You can only scratch the surface on some, or you can dive even deeper into others. You can follow your own other ideas if you think people will listen.



The point is, you can't complain about not having enough options when it comes to marketing your online course.

Manage your audience

By marketing your course online you'll get more people to find it, be impressed by it and buy it. And once they'll make your prospect list expand with their emails and contact details, you have to also put on your Organized Online Data hat.

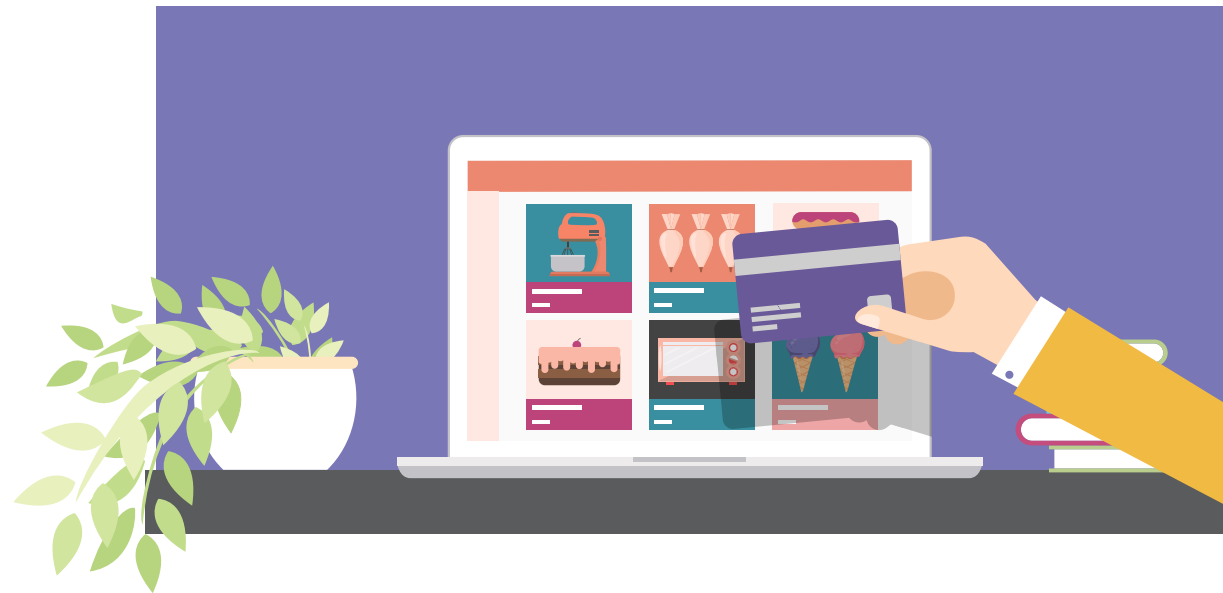
Because not all emails are created equal. Your prospects are on a spectrum of interest about your course: some want it more than others.

At any point in your online marketing strategy you need to have a clear vision of your sales funnel:

- In its **wider part** stands your new audience. These are people you barely know, from social media, blogging, forum threads, or other supporting online activities. They gave you their email address but this doesn't mean they'll ever buy your course. It's your job to find out, and move them further down the funnel.
- In the next and **narrower part** of your sales funnel are those people who were impressed by your depth of knowledge — or your free samples of amazing content — and express a clear interest in your field of activity and course topic.
- In the final and **smallest part** of the funnel are those who put your online course in the shopping cart and *actually paid for it*.

Whenever you want to reach your audience you have to keep these categories of audience organized and you have to personalize your message for each one. You won't send a free learning module to those that already bought your course, and you won't ask for reviews and testimonials from those who just followed you on Twitter. You have to always adapt your conversation to where your prospects are in the sales funnel, so that you'll convince them to move along to its narrowest part.

You built it and marketed it and people came. But they're always on the move, so you have to be on top of that as well. The good news is that you can rely on more online marketing for this.



Keep on marketing

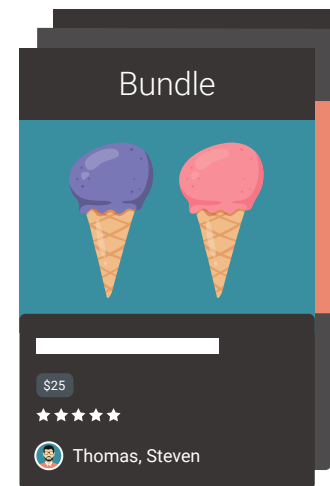
Remember what makes successful online course creators and sellers successful? Besides the valuable content they create, they market it continuously. They know they shouldn't stop marketing their course once they made a few sales. So why should you do any different?

Rinse and repeat

Once you have your online marketing machine up and running, keep doing what works. You'll always get new people in your audience, some of them will move along your sales funnel, and the number of paying customers will increase.

- Remain active on social media and online communities. Keep posting, keep answering questions, grow your expert brand.
- Keep on blogging. On your blog and on others'. This means more keywords, more insightful articles, more online exposure.
- Create more lead magnets. These always work.
- Get interviewed on more online events. At some point, you'll rarely have to reach out to people to include you in their podcast or webinar. They'll come to you. Until then, make yourself available.
- Make more videos. And cross promote.
- Ask for more reviews and testimonials. With more people taking your course, these should be easier to get than the first ones.
- Keep on running online ads. You gotta feed the dragon if you want it to spit fire.

- Run more price promotions. There are plenty of international days.
- Translate your course. English is not the only language on earth. Spanish can cover numerous other countries and Chinese can open the door to many potential students as well. Do your research, establish your target language(s), find a professional translator (or more), and let your course conquer the world.



- Create more courses. You're an expert; you can't have said it all in just one course. Use your expertise to create more – and even better – courses and market these as well. Of course, you should cross-promote them. Mention in each course that you have another one on a related topic and invite your learners to check it out.
- Bundle your courses. Sell two or more courses in a bundle, so people who buy more than one will get a discount. Who doesn't like a bargain, anyway?

- Keep nurturing your affiliate relationships. They'll surprise you.

Just keep on marketing.

Once you get into the game of marketing your online course, you have to keep playing. Otherwise, other players will steal your hard-won audience. Keep on creating valuable content and keep on marketing it, and you know you're on the right path to online selling success.

Conclusion

Or How to market online courses – the TL;DR version:

The Internet is the best way to make a profit from selling your knowledge in the form of an online course.

First you have to build an interested audience, based on the outline of your course. Then you have to complete the course and make its content as valuable as possible – and visually appealing. Then you have to market it like there's no tomorrow. While growing your prospects list you have to keep it organized and stay on top of its mobility. Finally, you have to keep on marketing.

All the while, you have to love what you do and remember that your course helps people. And that makes this world a better place.

If you're looking for a tool to create a great online course and easily market it, check out **CYPHER Learning**, a learning platform designed for entrepreneurs just like you. CYPHER Learning is the perfect solution for entrepreneurs that are looking for an accessible way to market their knowledge by creating, delivering, and promoting online courses.

www.cypherlearning.com

