



MY FIRST PAID ECOURSE CASE STUDY

THE CHEAT SHEET

CHEAT SHEET

MAJOR 'S TO REMEMBER

If you don't have time to listen to the whole case study podcast and read the rest of this document, here are some key takeaways to consider.

BUILDING AN AUDIENCE BEFORE LAUNCH

- I launched with an above average number of blog posts live on my site
- I had a free course available before launch on a separate URL
- I promoted only through my Facebook page and by messaging friends, family, and acquaintances I was comfortable with
- Built my list to 71 people before paid launch

PLANNING THE PRODUCT

- Decided on the course based on something I'd done myself and been helping others do
- I didn't know if this was the best course to launch with or not, I just did it
- I made the course a 7-week course that I could build as I went
- I didn't want to incur any costs to make the course, so the first version was super scrappy

CREATING THE PRODUCT

- I spent an average of 2 - 5 hours creating each lesson; there were 21 lessons in total
- The course included text lessons, worksheets, and some pre-recorded videos
- The product was definitely NOT finished when I launched

LAUNCHING AND PROMOTING THE COURSE

- I promoted mainly through blog posts related to the course topic
- I used Pinterest during the launch and got my first one or two sales from there
- I sent information about the course and about the related blog posts to my 71-person email list

MAKING A PROFIT

- I brought in \$1350 net from the launch
- About 15% of my list purchased the course
- I made ~\$1000 per month for the next four months from the course until I stopped selling it for a complete revamp

EXPANDING BEYOND THE COURSE

- I used a small amount of the course materials to create free blog posts and resources that helped my brand grow and attract more people to the course
- I was able to take on less clients because of the course sales and thus focus more on building version two of the course

HIGHLIGHTS

How long ago was this?

2.5 years ago

What does it mean to scale something?

For something to be “scalable,” it has to be able to be sold to more people. Scalability does not necessarily speak to how passive or active the income is.

How did you build your audience and brand before the launch of your first paid online course?

- I had around 17 blog posts live on my site when I launched.
- I created a free, online 90-day course (say what? that was way too long) that people signed up for (on a separate page/URL before I launched) to kind of test out this new brand and inadvertently kick off my list of contacts beyond my mom, dad, brother, and best friends.
- I promoted said free course from my personal Facebook page (~250 friends at the time). I promoted the blog posts from my page as well.
- I messaged acquaintances and friends I was comfortable with and sent a personal note letting them know what I was doing and asking them to please share the brand with any friends they felt needed help with starting a business or a blog. I was a web designer before this so I had created probably hundreds of sites.

Did you decide the topic based on something you struggled with or did you solve a problem?

I created my first paid, online course by looking back at what I had done, unintentionally, and thinking, “It would be cool to teach this.” At the time, I was still happily meeting with some clients (in person and online), doing in-person classes, and selling a physical and digital book. The thing that I saw as most repeatable (at the time) should someone wish to start their own business that provided them more freedom, was the client work I was doing. Hence my course, Creative Coaching from Scratch was born.

HIGHLIGHTS

What was the product, exactly?

The first version of the product was an online 7-week course, where 3 lessons (or mini-modules) would be released each week. It was a total of 21 lessons on starting and growing your own creative coaching business.

Did it cost money to make?

I did not want any recurring fees when I didn't know how much income I would make, so I didn't sign up for anything that had unending monthly fees.

- I had previously purchased a \$99 course plugin on WordPress, for when I had my free course. So I used that.
- I was on the free MailChimp plan—I was too scared of the commitment to \$10/month. Even though I was making money in my business, endless monthly money commitment scared me. I didn't think it was necessary or wise at the time.
- I created all the worksheets myself in Apple Pages, and at the time, I was still using iMovie and QuickTime to make videos (screen recordings and otherwise) for free.

How did you pick the price?

Out of complete fear. But check out the podcast episode for the two things I feel I did do well with the pricing of my first paid course.

Was your product finished when you launched?

Absolutely not. At all.

How long did the course take to make?

Since I didn't have to do research, read books, etc. for the information—it was all coming from my experience of doing it myself and helping other people do it, each lesson took between 2 - 5 hours to outline and create.

How did you promote it?

Through blog posts on the topic of the course, my newly formed Pinterest account, and my 71-person email list.

HIGHLIGHTS

Which product promotion efforts gave the best results?

- The blog posts were clutch because my blog had the widest reach (of any of my channels) at the time.
- Pinterest was key because a \$75 product from a source that had some decent design and great information wasn't too insane. My first one or two sales came from a Pinterest pin.
- And my email list was super important because everyone on that list REALLY wanted to be there at that point. I hadn't graduated to using opt-ins or attention-grabbing promises to get people to sign up for my list.

What really helped the product sell?

I will address more of this in the workshop version, but for now, I can say what people told me at the time:

- The solid outline of what the product was made a huge difference.
- The supporting content (in the form of blog posts and worksheets) made it seem valuable and actionable.
- The visuals and great graphics on my blog really helped.

How much did you net?

\$1350.

What percent of your list purchased?

I didn't have great sales origin point tracking in place at the time, but from what I remember about 11 of the people who purchased were people whose names I recognized from my list. So $11/71 = 15.5\%$.

What did you do next?

- The \$1300 helped me to not take on as many clients the next month and free up my time.
- I revamped the course a little. Bought a domain. Got better design popping. Made more materials for a second soft launch, which helped me make about \$1000 per month with the course for the next few months until I stopped selling it to do a FULL revamp.

HIGHLIGHTS

How did you use it to continue to grow your audience?

I was able to take some of the content from the course and form it into different materials—I used some for blog posts (like the one on *30 ways to find your first clients*) that became some of my most popular pieces. That one has 47k repins right now.

What are some absolute “must knows” for first-time course creators?

- Help people visualize themselves with your product. With information products, you don't have the “luxury” (if you will) of being able to take epic photos of people wearing or using your products the way traditional product makers do. “Look at happy Sally on her beautiful yoga mat.” “Look at Edward using his new man journal.” So you have to get creative about HOW you help people visualize themselves using and benefiting from your product.
- Have a before and after product—whether paid or free—for people to use or move into/from.