Case Study:

HOW TO LAUNCH AN ONLINE COURSE IN 3 WEEKS

Without Tech Headaches, Time-Consuming Production, A Fancy Sales Funnel, Or A Course Website

In March 2020, when the pandemic hit, my client, Alexandra, lost more than half of her income sources over 48 hours.

Her freelance gigs as a choreographer, theater director, and movement analyst were delayed indefinitely. The only income that remained would come from her position as an adjunct professor at Princeton.

We hopped on a call to discuss her options.

"This is scary. I've got two kids to support living in New York City. I feel like my career identity has been gutted because so much of what I do has suddenly just vanished. What can I do?"

After empathizing with how stressful the situation was, I proposed a solution.

"Have you thought about launching an online course or program? It would generate cash quickly, create a new source of income, and reach new clients, even with everything going into lockdown."

You Already Have 90% of What You Need for an Online Course

Alexandra had thought about creating an online course before but worried it would require a lot of time and money to create something new.

I explained she wouldn't be starting from scratch. Like anyone who works with clients, creates content, or teaches, she already had a 90% of what she needed.

We made a list of assets she had to work with.
- Her book manuscript
- Syllabi from courses she'd taught
- Articles and videos she'd created
- Experience teaching various workshops
- Experience as an artist, choreographer, and director

She looked at me with pleasant surprise on her face. "I guess I do have a lot to work with. Maybe I can create an online course? But where do I even start? How do I choose a topic to teach or which stuff to talk about?"

"You don't," I replied. "If you focus on the topic or solution first, you risk creating a course no one wants. Keep it focused on the customer, not the topic."

2 Essentials for a Profitable and Impactful Online Course

I continued by explaining we first needed to define two things to have a profitable course idea.

1. The intended customer
2. Their desired outcome(s)

After brainstorming her options, she arrived at the intended customer she wanted to reach with her course.

"I want to teach actors and performers new ways to explore and embody characters on stage."

"Great!" I followed up. "Now, let's list the highly desirable outcomes they will achieve."

I further explained the course outcomes needed to be things her intended customer was...

1. Actively looking for help with and
2. Ready to invest time, money, and energy into

Based on conversations Alexandra had with stage performers, she knew they wanted to shake up their usual approach, extend their range of expressivity, and develop characters without having to delve into their personal life or reinvent the wheel every time.

Intended customer. Check.

Their desired outcomes. Check.

We had the perfect idea for a profitable course.

NOTE: [Click here to access a worksheet](#) that will help you uncover the intended customer and ideal outcomes for your online course. This link will prompt you to create a copy of a Google Doc to fill out. [Click here to download the PDF version](#).

I pulled her list of assets out again. "Now we can talk about the solution or process you will teach in the course. Which of the things on this list can you draw from to guide your intended student to their desired outcomes?"

She examined the list.

"I've been using something called Effort Theory to work with a client on his one-person show. I use it in my choreography all the time. I've also taught it in classes and workshops."

I nodded and replied, "Great! The next step is to create a high-level outline of the course. Break the process of learning and applying Effort Theory into milestones. Each milestone comprises one module of the course. Shoot for between two and six modules, eight max."

She hopped off the call to get to work.

A few hours later, she texted me, "I've got my course outlined!"

I smiled and texted her back, "Awesome! Now, we are going to launch this course in the next three weeks."

I watched for several minutes as the speech bubble with three dots popped up and down in my iPhone messaging app until finally, her stunned response arrived.

"But how am I going to record all of the videos in that time? Don't I need to set up some kind of course website? I keep hearing I need a sales funnel, too."

The Lean Launch Method

I reassured her, "You're not going to do any of that. We'll use my Lean Launch Method to sell your course quickly and easily with as little cost and risk as possible."

"How do I do that?" she asked.

"You don't need to create any videos because you'll teach the course as a live pilot via Zoom the first time. You have six modules. That's six weekly calls."

Her look of disbelief softened a little.

I showed her how I'd used the Lean Launch Method to run a $3000 pilot course using nothing more than:

1. A Google Doc as a simple sales page
2. Paypal links for payment
3. Zoom for teaching and group discussions
4. A shared Google Drive folder to store course materials

"Technology won't be an issue. We'll use free and inexpensive tools that are easy to use."

She nodded slowly, then suddenly furrowed her brow, "Didn't people hesitate to take a pilot course that sounded unproven?"

I shook my head, "My students didn't care that it was a pilot. In fact, they loved getting direct access to me. I also told them they would help me craft the course to their needs by giving feedback."

I outlined four reasons why launching a pilot first was beneficial.

1. You get to verify people will buy the course before investing a lot of resources into producing it.
2. You get paid to create the course.
3. You generate cash faster.
4. You get valuable feedback to help test and refine the course before spending resources on production.
5. You get testimonials to use as proof when selling the course in the future.

"But what about making a beautifully produced course?" she asked.

"That will come down the road, I explained. "We'll make a 'nicely produced' course once we know it will sell and you've refined the course based on feedback."

Her disbelief had now dissolved. "Let's do it!" she said, smiling.

10k in Two Weeks with Minimal Time Investment

Here's what Alexandra had to say after running her pilot.

"The pilot was great. Double the students signed up than I expected. It felt so inspiring to know there was a market for this course. It gave me enough confidence and optimism to spend more time further improving the course."

Alexandra now sells a pre-recorded, polished version of the course. Her most recent launch brought in more than 50 students and 10k in two weeks, requiring only a few hours of her time to run.

If you'd like to discuss how I can help you create and launch your online course, book a free strategy call with me here.