



**Sample**

## **Keep the Learning Alive**

**Use Online Courses to Deliver  
High-Quality Educational Material**

**by Gihan Perera**

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## Introduction

If you deliver educational material, you'll know already that most people who attend a conference, training course or seminar don't take action. How do you address this problem? You can provide supplementary material for participants to take home; you can spend more time working with them on their follow-up actions; you can schedule more presentations to keep the learning alive.

Or you can use online courses.

With an online course, you *automatically* deliver on-going material to reinforce your live presentation. So you embed the learning, create lasting results, and create more value for your clients and customers.

In this program, we'll talk about the use of online courses for many purposes. One – which we've just mentioned – is for follow-up material to live presentations. There are others as well, and we'll cover them in this program.

## Who is this for?

I work mostly with infopreneurs – professional speakers, trainers, consultants, coaches, authors and other “information experts”. Online courses are particularly useful for infopreneurs because they are a natural extension of your current presentations. You're

already delivering high-value content to clients; it's now a matter of turning that into an online course instead. Of course, it's not a trivial task, but it's certainly easier for *you* than for people who don't have your intellectual property.

### Why me?

I've worked with dozens of clients on their online course strategy – you'll meet a few of them very soon. So I know what works – and doesn't work.

I also use online courses myself in my business – both as marketing tools and as paid products. So I have practical first-hand experience with them.

My company First Step has developed online course software for our clients. So we also know exactly what infopreneurs want in this regard. For more than a decade, we've been developing and enhancing our software to meet *your* needs.

### Why now?

Matt Church was my first client to talk about online courses. When Matt first described this concept – way back in 1998 – it was a novel idea. Over time it's become far more common, and many speakers and trainers are already offering online courses to their clients. If you're not, you might be missing out on a competitive advantage.

It's also become more common for people everywhere to turn to the Internet for their education. Although there's definitely a place for live training, many people turn to the

Internet instead – or in addition to – for their education. By offering online courses, you tap into that market.

Finally, it's becoming harder to fight your way through the mass of advertising and promotional material bombarding your clients. You can use a free online course to reach directly to them, staying "front of mind" with them while delivering high-quality content that continues to reinforce your expert status.

### **What is an online course?**

We'll look at this in more detail later. However, to get started, think of an online course as a series of educational e-mail messages, delivered to users automatically, in a pre-determined sequence.

That's a simplified definition, and you'll see later that it's much richer than this simple description implies.

### **Overview**

We begin with a few examples of our clients who are using online courses effectively.

Then we list a number of benefits of online courses – some you've probably considered and others might be new to you

Then we look at the four broad types of online course, and then how to position them from a marketing viewpoint

I'll then show you some examples of online courses / use

Then we turn to the details of planning and writing your course.

Finally, we turn our attention to marketing again, and consider ways of selling more courses and getting more subscribers.

Enjoy the program!

## Online Courses in Action

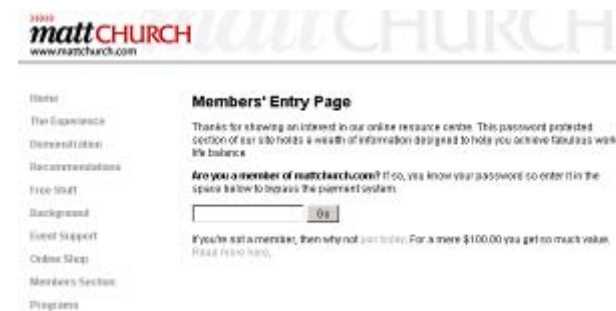
To give you an idea of how infopreneurs are using online courses in their business, I'll give you four examples here. These are First Step clients who are actively using online courses to boost their bottom line.

### Matt Church

Matt, at [www.mattchurch.com.au](http://www.mattchurch.com.au), is one of Australia's leading conference speakers. He was in fact our first client to use online courses.

Matt took an innovative approach to his first Web site: It had no promotional material, no marketing material, no information about Matt's presentations. Instead, the only thing on the home page was a password box.

Matt would sell access to his Web site to the corporate clients who booked him for a conference. He would give out the password at the conference, and everybody who had the password could sign up to follow-up online courses. For example, because his topic was related to health and energy, he had a 21-day follow-up course for attendees.



Now Matt's site does include promotional material as well, but it still retains that password-protected area and the online courses in it.

## David Penglase

David, at [www.salescoachcentral.com](http://www.salescoachcentral.com), also uses online courses extremely well. Like Matt, David started by offering follow-up courses to complement his sales training workshops. Unlike Matt, David would ask the client for the attendees' names and e-mail addresses, and would sign them up to the courses himself.

David has now "graduated" to a full membership site, SalesCoach Central, which still uses online courses as a key part of the educational service offering.

The screenshot shows the homepage of SalesCoachCentral. At the top left is the logo, and at the top right is the tagline: "Helping you sell more comfortably, confidently, consistently and commercially". Below this is a navigation bar with "Welcome To SalesCoachCentral" and "The Web's Best Sales Coaching Membership Site". A central section features a photo of David Penglase and text: "Hi, David Penglase here.....founding director of SalesCoachCentral." Below the photo is a purple button that says "Already a member? Click here to login". To the right of the photo is a testimonial: "I'm confident that you'll agree with me that to be successful in sales you need to be able to Find Clients, Win Clients, Keep Clients, Manage Yourself Better, and Solve Problems Creatively.....Right? If you're one of the lucky salespeople in the world, you might get to attend a sales training event at an annual conference or in-company sponsored workshop.....but then what? Or maybe you're one of the less fortunate salespeople who is being asked to win more new, repeat and referral sales, but not getting any (or little) coaching on how to constantly improve in an ever changing and competitive market place." At the bottom left of this section is a link for "My \$1 per day challenge".

## Keith Abraham

Keith, at [www.KeithAbraham.com](http://www.KeithAbraham.com), was another early adopter of online courses. For Keith, these were particularly important because his main topic area at the time was "customer loyalty". So, to practice what he

The screenshot shows the homepage of Keith Abraham's website. At the top left is the logo and the text "Best Selling Author Workshop Program Leader". On the right is a photo of Keith Abraham. Below the photo is a testimonial: "If you are looking for a Best Selling conference speaker, keynote speaker, or workshop program leader, look no further than Keith Abraham. He is a professional, experienced, and highly motivated speaker who has been speaking at a variety of conferences and seminars for over 15 years. He is a proven leader in his field and has helped many businesses and organizations achieve their goals. He is a true professional and a pleasure to work with." Below the testimonial is the text "Keith Abraham Inspiring, Insightful, Innovative Conference Speaker". At the bottom left is a section titled "What do you want for your business?" with a list of benefits: "Passionate Positive People", "Evolving Competitive Edge", "World Class Service", "Loyal Profitable Clients", and "Professional Selling Strategies". At the bottom right is a section titled "Keith Abraham is a leading expert..." with a list of services: "Professional, Inspiring & Innovative Presentations", "Practical Business Building & Life Changing Programs", and "Insightful, Cutting Edge Entrepreneur Development Programs". Below this is a "Quick Links" section with links to "Request Information Page", "Book Keith for your Conference", "Free Online Coaching Program", "Weekly Motivator", and "View Keith's Video Tips".

preached, he offered free online courses to his clients as a loyalty tool. Although he didn't charge money for the courses themselves, they did bring him a lot of business because clients saw they as high-value gifts.

## John Highman

John, at [commercialrealestatetraining.net](http://commercialrealestatetraining.net), also uses online courses to deliver follow-up educational material after the seminars he delivers in the real estate industry.

His approach has been so successful that he now works as a consultant to the REIQ (Real Estate Institute of Queensland), offering online training in the commercial real estate market.



## Benefits of Online Courses

Online courses offer a number of benefits, both for marketing yourself and for delivering your intellectual property.

### Identify potential visitors

When somebody visits your Web site, your Web site statistics package will show that *somebody* has visited, but you have no idea who they are. If you offer them a free online course that's interesting enough for them to subscribe to, you know them by name – and e-mail address.

### Stay front of mind with prospects

The next step is to set up a **system** for marketing to them, so you can do it repeatedly and consistently for all your potential customers. Again, an online course helps, because you write it once, and then it keeps in touch automatically with subscribers.

### Present a highly-visible profile

The advantage of having somebody's e-mail address in this way is that *you now have permission to talk to them*. And provided you can continue to provide information of value to them, you can continue talking to them. An online course allows you to do things that

simply aren't practical with other marketing techniques. For example, you could even send somebody a "tip of the day" – something that would just cost way too much if you're trying to do it by phone, fax or post.

### Create more personal connections

An online course creates a more personal connection than some other electronic products, such as e-books. With an e-book, you're relying on the reader making use of the material. With an online course, *you* prompt them to take action on a regular basis.

### Get published fast

If you've got material that is "almost ready" for publication in another form – such as a book – release extracts of it as an online course first. That book might be "almost ready" for a long time! In the meantime, the material can be out there in the online course already. And when the book is ready, you've already got your first group of potential customers!

Another advantage of releasing it as an online course first is that you don't have to write the entire course first. Because it's doled out in instalments based on *your* schedule, you can write later parts of the course even while people are using the earlier parts.

## Keep the learning alive in your participants

One of the most effective uses of an online course – particularly for infopreneurs – is to continue the learning process started in a live presentation, such as a conference keynote, training session, public seminar or even a coaching session. This is not only effective for the student, it can also be highly profitable for you (because you increase your presentation fee by adding the online course).

## Take control of the delivery

With online courses that you deliver one piece at a time, you control the delivery of the material. You decide in what sequence to send it, how much time to leave between each message, and so on. With some other formats – such as books, e-books, audio packages, and membership sites – you can *suggest* a way for the customer to use it, but there's no guarantee they will follow your suggestion.

## Build loyalty with value-added gifts

Even if you don't *sell* your online courses, they can be extremely valuable gifts to promote loyalty with existing clients. It means they don't only hear from you when you're sending them your bill!

## Test, measure, experiment

It might take months to write a book, and only minutes for readers to find flaws in it. The problem is that creating products can be an isolated process.

Online courses are different. Because you're doling out the material in chunks, you give yourself more opportunities to get useful feedback on those chunks. You can incorporate that into your future messages, and even into the messages you've already sent (so that new subscribers benefit from the improvements).

## Spread your message further

As with many other electronic products, because it costs nothing to deliver them, you can offer online courses freely to anybody and everybody. If you've got material of value, you can spread your message further, which helps more people and also improves your own marketing.

## Make money selling, upselling, cross-selling and downselling

Of course, many people want to make money from selling online courses – and you can certainly do so. We'll talk about this in much more detail later.

## Gain a clear competitive edge

Finally, despite all these wonderful benefits of online courses, it's still astonishing to see how few infopreneurs are using them – and even fewer who are using them effectively.

Even among our own clients who have the online course software available as part of their Web site package, most of them are using it only for a simple e-mail newsletter. That's valuable – *very* valuable – but there's so much more you can do as well.

## What is an Online Course?

Different people have different ideas when they think “online course”. So it’s useful to consider the different types.

We’ll group these based on the differences between the ways you deliver the material. I’m not talking about different formats (such as text, audio, video); I mean the sequencing of the individual lessons in the course.

Broadly, they fall into four groups, each with benefits and drawbacks.

**In this program, we’ll focus mostly on the “Rolling” method.** However, we do describe all four here for reference.



### One-Off

The first type is where you deliver all the course material at once. For example, e-books, membership sites and MP3 downloads all fall into this category.

Some people might not even consider this to be a “course”. However, it’s certainly possible to deliver course material in this way.

The **advantages** are:

- ⇒ For your customer: They can review all the material; they can go through it at their own pace; they can customise the learning to suit their particular circumstances.
- ⇒ For you: You don't have to keep track of each customer's progress; there's no expectation of on-going support.

The **drawbacks** are:

- ⇒ For your customer: It's easy to lose motivation and focus; it can be overwhelming; there might not be any support offered if they get stuck; it's tempting to just put it aside and never get started.
- ⇒ For you: For the reasons just mentioned, you might get more dissatisfied customers; there's usually lower perceived value than a course delivered in a series, so you can't charge as much as for the other methods; you have to write all the material in advance.



## Calendar

The second type of online course is delivered in a sequence, with the sequence determined by actual calendar dates. For example, in the physical world, this could be a series of public seminars, a series of workshops or a newspaper/magazine subscription. In the online world, this would typically be a combination of e-mail and group teleseminars.

The **advantages** are:

- ⇒ For your customer: They can plan their schedule in advance; they are forced to “keep up” with the schedule.
- ⇒ For you: You don’t have to keep track of different people at different stages; you can schedule additional events along the way (e.g. a “Getting Unstuck” teleseminar part-way through the course); participants can co-operate with each other during the course; the entire group progresses as a “team”.

The **drawbacks** are:

- ⇒ For your customer: If they miss one course, they might have to wait a while until the next course is scheduled; the scheduled dates might not suit them; they might miss a lesson in the course and fall behind.
- ⇒ For you: You have to arrange your schedule well in advance; you might not get enough participants to make a profit; unexpected events can throw the schedule off the rails.

## Rolling



The next type, called “rolling”, is where the course lessons are delivered in a strict pre-determined sequence, but the course *starts* whenever a participant signs up. For instance, if you’re a conference speaker, you can sign up one group of participants at a conference this month, and do the same at another conference next month. Each group starts receiving their course whenever they sign up, not based on the calendar date.

This typically doesn't happen in the physical world, because there's too much work keeping track of each participant's progress. But in the online world, that calculation can be automated.

The **advantages** are:

- ⇒ For the customer: They can subscribe when they're ready, not because they have to meet an arbitrary date.
- ⇒ For you: You don't have to schedule course dates; you don't require a minimum number of participants, because each person is working independently of the others; but you *can* still enrol groups of participants together, to get the advantage of teamwork.

The **drawbacks** are:

- ⇒ For the customer: It's easy to procrastinate and never sign up; some people find it difficult to work independently, without others to interact with; it's tempting in busy times to fall behind and never catch up with the schedule.
- ⇒ For you: It's more difficult to convey a sense of urgency for signing up, because there's no specific start date; it's more difficult to schedule supplementary events (e.g. a "Getting Unstuck" teleseminar), because people are at different stages.



## Demand

Finally, you can offer courses “on demand”. With this method, again you package up the material into discrete units, and deliver them in sequence. However, this time the customer decides on the frequency of delivery. When she finishes the first lesson, she requests the next lesson; and so on.

In some cases, the customer can even decide on the sequence. For example, if you create a content-rich membership site, in some ways you can consider that to be an on-demand online course. When a member wants to learn something new, they dip into the membership site, download the relevant e-book (or whatever), and learn it. When they’re done, they can move on to the next topic, which will vary for each person.

The **advantages** are:

- ⇒ For the customer: They can progress at their own pace; they don’t have to worry about “falling behind”.
- ⇒ For you: You don’t have to pre-determine the best frequency for the lessons.

The **drawbacks** are:

- ⇒ For the customer: There’s nobody pushing them to take action, so it’s easy to fall behind or give up altogether; some people are perfectionists, and will never be “ready” to move on to the next lesson; if the sequence isn’t clear, it might not be easy to

determine the best sequence themselves; it can be overwhelming if they have too many choices.

⇒ For you: You have fewer opportunities to guide your students and keep them on track; you're not "front of mind" with them regularly.

As I said earlier, in this program we'll focus mostly on the Rolling method. However, do keep the others in mind as well, as they can come in useful for certain situations.



## About Gihan Perera

Gihan Perera is a business consultant, speaker, author and entrepreneur – with clients throughout Australia, and in New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, the U.K. and Canada. He works with professional speakers and trainers, consultants, business owners, CEOs and strategic leadership teams to improve their marketing, sales and persuasion skills in one-on-one meetings, group presentations and on the Internet.

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