E81 - How to make sure your course sells.

Welcome to the Empowered Edupreneur Podcast. My name is Michelle Smit, and I am an ex-teacher turned online business coach for Edupreneurs, the owner of Digiteach and a six-figure entrepreneur. I am in love with empowering educators. Just like you to create freedom filled online businesses and lives they love.

If you are looking to up level your skills, your finances, your mindset, and change the trajectory of your life as an educator in business, then you are in the right place. Think of this podcast as your weekly dose of business and mindset development to help unlock the infinite potential within you. To play bigger with your life and go after your dreams.

We are going to have so much fun together. So, thank you so much for pushing play today. Now let's dive in.

Hello. Hello. I hope you are having an amazing day today. It is so good to be chatting to you today. So, if you hear some meows in the background, it's because my cat is on heat, and she is meowing. So don't be alarmed. There's nothing crazy happening in the back here. But there's not much I can do about it. And hopefully this microphone actually works and blocks out that sound.

But we will potentially be having Nola babies in the next couple of months, which is super exciting. But yeah, it's not very exciting and great to have a cat on heat meowing all day.

Any who's. So, I was thinking, okay, what should I chat to you about this week? And I came into a few discussions recently about, how do you make sure your course actually sells?

Or your group program. So, when I mentioned course, I mean product, group program, membership, whatever offer you're trying to sell. How do you make sure it sells? And yeah, I thought I would just record an episode on that because for me, it's quite a simple answer. The answer is probably not something you want to hear.

It's probably something that's going to freak you out, but it's quite simple in theory. So, the very simple answer of how to make sure your course or group

program sells is to sell it before you make it. That's it. Sell it before you make it. Now I know. You're probably thinking, Michelle, you're crazy.

How on earth could I ever do such a thing? You probably are feeling anxious just at the thought. But I'm telling you, just stay with me, it is not as crazy as you think. It's quite simple. Okay. So, this is how it works. You market, sell and launch the program online. And then when actual human beings take out their credit card and pay you for that program and buy it and say, hey, I want this offer. You then create and deliver the program live with them week by week, either by doing the sessions live in calls and recording those calls.

And making that your product later, or if you don't want to do it live in calls, you prerecord the module and you drip feed its week by week. So, all you need to be is a week ahead. That's it. So, you just need to be a week ahead. You just have to have the first week done. And then as the week goes while the students are learning module one, you then create and record module two, then you drip feed that.

And then when they're learning module two, you create and record module three, and you drip feed that, or you just create the slides for the module and then you host it live in a zoom room or whatever. There's lots of ways to do it.

Now that's really it. You then might be asking, because I have this conversation all the time. The first most common question I get is how do I sell something that isn't created yet? How is that even possible? And it's really quite simple. Your offer, your course doesn't have to be built for you to sell it.

All you need to know is exactly what your offer is and what your course is going to be. And you need to know that very well. So, what that means is you need to flesh out on paper your offer in detail. So that includes what is the program promise? Who is it for? What are you helping them achieve? How many weeks it's going to be?

How are you going to lay out your modules? How many modules it's going to be? What are the lessons within the modules? You don't even need to go into that granular detail. You don't even need to know the lessons within the modules. You can just know the modules. And then depending on how well you know the topic, you can just, create the lessons as you go. You need to know the price, the payment plan. If there's a money back guarantee, and you need to know what are the bonuses.

So basically, you need to know what that offer is on paper, in theory, as a concept. And you need to know that quite clearly, because once you know that quite clearly, you can then go and sell it. You can just sell it online. No one sees your course before you sell it. So, there's no product that needs to be made.

You just go and sell the concept and the offer itself. And you launch it strategically. You know, I'm a big fan of launching strategically. And when actual human beings, living, breathing entities purchased your program, that then validates the offer, and then you create it with them.

Okay. So, it's really quite simple. Now, the next thing is that I get all the time is, anxiousness. Like as soon as I tell someone this, they get anxious. Their body gets all tight. Their heart starts beating, their palms start to sweat up and they start like panicking. That makes them feel super uncomfortable.

And I'm sure you probably resonate with that. You might've felt that when I told you to sell it before you create it, you might've been like, Ooh, that is crazy. So, if you feel really anxious and stressed at the pressure of that idea, knowing that you're selling something that hasn't been built and when people buy, you have to build it.

And that just makes you stressed. Because you're going to be on this intense deadline where you have to deliver on what you've promised and sold to people. And you've got no way of going back. Once you've sold it, you have to create it. But if the magnitude of that project just feels too big, then it's quite a simple thing to solve though, because I can relate to that.

I'm an anxious person, I live with anxiety, and I have to manage my anxiety and when I first started my business. The way I did it based on my mentor's advice was to sell the course before I built it. And so, I sold my course before I built it. And then seven people, I think it was seven. Yeah.

I think seven people purchased it. And yeah, I remember feeling so stressed because this thing wasn't built, and I had to now deliver this thing. But I knew that I was super anxious about it leading up to it. And so, what I did to manage my anxiety and make this more achievable is I built out module one and module two.

So, I had module one and module two built and recorded. And so, when people bought, I knew that I had two modules already built of the program. And so, week one, they got week one, they got whatever was included. I did it as a prerecorded program. So, I just prerecorded the lessons and release them.

And then while they were doing week one and week two, I was building out week three and week four and so forth. And it was a very busy time. I'm not going to lie to you. I was working a lot in that month, but I was building out an asset that would make me I think $150,000 that course.

So even though I worked extremely hard for that month, I generated like $150,000. And so, it's worth it. It's worth it when you look at that. Yeah, that's how you counter the anxiety and the stress of knowing that you're going to sell something and then you're going to have to create it.

Is you just create the first module or two and you create it, you record it, you script it, you do the whole thing. So, it's ready to go. You upload it onto your course hosting platform. It's there or you don't upload it. It's fine. It depends on how you want to do it, but at least you've got it.

So that the first week comes, you're out of the launch. Because obviously launching is going to take a lot of energy out of you. You then don't have to go and create intensely that week. You have a bit of breathing space. So, I absolutely recommend giving yourself breathing space.

I recommend building out at least week one, module one, whatever is delivered in that week, build that out ahead of time, have it done. That's going to reduce your anxiety. If you can build out module to do it, give yourself two weeks of breathing space. So, once you finish the launch, you can have a couple of days of just doing nothing and you know that the things that you need to deliver are going to be delivered.

You're on time and you're creating space for you to just breathe. So, this is just through trial and error and experience. This is the best way to do it. So don't go and create your whole program. Just create the first two weeks, modules, lessons, deliverables, whatever it is that they're going to get in those first two weeks.

Okay. So let me tell you now why this is the way it should be done. And it is a mistake to do it any other way. Now there is an exception to this. If you've

been in business for a long time, or not necessarily in business a long time, but you've been serving your students for a long time, you've got a very good idea of what they want.

Like you are certain of what they want, you know, what your students or your audience wants based on either you've been teaching them for a long time. Or you've just been in business for a while. You just know. They've told you countless times via surveys, market research that they want X and Y. If you know that information and you know exactly how to give them that.

And you know, the process in which to do it, and you know exactly how to do it. You can then go and build out the course because you know, it's going to sell. You have certainty it's going to sell because you've already asked your audience, checked in with your students, check that they're willing to invest in it.

You've done thorough research. Then you have the confidence to go and build out the product beforehand. Because you know, it's going to sell. But most of the time. You don't actually know it's going to sell most of the time. And so, the best thing is to sell it first, validate the offer idea. And then once it's validated by people purchasing it, you then deliver on it, create it.

Okay. So, these are the reasons why you want to do it. Number one, you validate your offer before you spend six months to a year building it. It sucks when you sell a program, a course, and no one buys it. It sucks. But you know what sucks more spending a year of your life, building something, selling it, and then no one buys it.

Now this can be avoided by selling it first and then making it because technically if no one buys, then you don't have to make it, which would save you a lot of time, money and pain. And so, it's quite simple. You validate your offer first. By testing the market with it, testing how it sells, when you launch it, when you sell it, how the responses to it just because if you don't have a good first launch response, that doesn't mean the offer isn't good.

You might have just needed to refine your launch process and your sales and you're messaging and your articulation and things like that. There's a lot of things that go into selling your offer. But you just want to validate it before you go and build the whole thing. It's just going to save you so much potential pain, right?

The second reason is, because you're selling it and marketing at first, and you're not spending all your time building out this course or program, you actually have more energy and capacity for marketing, growing an audience and selling. And when I look at my last five years of selling courses. I know that the marketing and selling and growing an audience is the hard part and the building of the product is the easier part.

If you are an expert or you know what your topic is, and you are very good at getting people a result or a transformation, and you know the process and the way in which you do that. Building out a course is actually going to be quite easy for you, especially if you're an educator at heart. Teaching is a skill in itself.

I wouldn't say everyone knows how to teach effectively most people don't, but if you're an educator, which most of you are. As my audience are mostly educators in business. If you're an educator, you know how to teach. And when you're creating a course, you also know how to lay out curriculum and get people a result because that's what you do as a teacher.

So, creating a course is actually going to be the easy part for you. The part that's going to be the challenging part. Which is the challenging part for almost everyone. Is the marketing, creating an audience and an email list and selling and launching. Those are skills that most people don't have or really struggle with.

They are foreign. No one taught us how to do it. It's not what we studied, most of us. That's the learning curve. And you need more energy, capacity, and time to put into that rather than building out the course, because it's going to take you more time and energy to acquire those skills and to actually do it semi well.

You don't have to do it amazingly to have results, but you have to do it pretty well. You have to hit the nail on the head with your messaging and you're selling in order to sell something. So that's really huge. I see people who are spending all their time creating this course and they're creating it in isolation.

They're just behind their computer mapping out these slides and these workbooks and creating all this stuff, and they haven't spent a single minute building an email list, building a social media following. Learning the art of

selling, learning the skill of launching, they haven't done any marketing for this thing.

And then they come to a point where they've built this course. And then they're like, cool. Now what? And then nothing happens. No one buys that course. No one ever sees that offer again. It happens so often. And that's because they've spent all the energy and time on the thing that is not actually the most important thing.

Of course, having a program that is effective and gets your people results is important, but it doesn't matter how good your course is. If you can't sell it, no one's going to take it. No one's going to do it. So, you do have to value selling and marketing. If you want to build a thriving online business that is reliant on scalable offers that stops, you from having to teach all day.

All right. So that's number two. Then number three is. You end up making a better product because you create your program or your product in collaboration with your students rather than isolation. So, you are actually creating your program with your students as part of that, and you want to see it as a co creation.

In real time, whilst you're going through your program, you can get feedback. You can ask people, how's this going for you week by week? Or if you're in calls with them, you can just have conversation with them finding out, how's the program going? Is there feedback?

Is there something missing? What can I add to make it better? What pains have I haven't addressed in it? What are you still struggling with? And then you can think of, okay, solution wise, how can I serve those students? How can I create solutions to solve those pains? It makes you push yourself more to create a better program, because then you might realize, okay, there were too many, there was too much information and it's overwhelming.

So that means, okay, let me strip back on the information and give them the core essentials. So, then you actually are improving the product by doing that. Or you might find that they need more of a live component. Say it's a speaking fluency program and they feel the need to speak more than you can pivot and offer, two speaking sessions a week as opposed to one.

But you can only do that if you're doing it as a co creation with your students and you're adaptable and flexible in, in your program and how you're going to deliver it. Your deliverables can easily change based on what your students give you, and that's kind of what you want. You want to know how it's going in real time so that you can make it a better experience for them. And you're just going to learn so much more by doing that. And you're just going to make a better program by doing that. And the only way to do that is to do it with feedback and in collaboration with your students rather than isolation.

And I see so many people create their programs in isolation where they just sit behind a computer. They haven't spoken to anyone. They've done like one hour of market research to find out something of their audience. And then they go and think, this is the best idea ever.

I'm going to create this whole product. And then they create something that either doesn't work very well, or people don't want, and that's the biggest mistake. Most of the time people are creating offers in things that people don't want. They want it, they think it's important, but no one else does or their audience doesn't.

And that is like one of the biggest mistakes I see as well. So, if you don't create the program and people buy it. You're much more guaranteed to create something that they want and deliver something that they want. Because you're going to be talking to them, learning, evolving, adapting. And that is the best way to go about it.

And then number four. You can inject money into your business much faster if you sell first and then create later. So, your launch could actually pay for your product to be built if you wanted to outsource it. So, for example, say you have all these things, you want to create slides, you want to have your videos edited.

All of this stuff requires a lot of time and energy. Maybe you don't want to create your own slides. Maybe you don't want to edit your videos. It's a very good chance you don't even know how to edit your videos. And that you need to actually outsource that to someone else. And you need to stay in your zone of genius, which is teaching, coaching, educating, and all of that.

And so, once you launch it, you're going to make money. You're going to have cash. Once you have cash, you can then go and pay people to build your

program. Obviously not build it. You're going to have to record it and stuff, but then once you've recorded it, you can hand it over to an editor and they can edit it.

And then, a virtual assistant could uploaded and manage the emails or whatever. That's smart. You're injecting cash into your business faster and cash is King. Generating cash flow is essential and doing it sooner rather than later is essential. Because cash is King.

And when you have it, you can invest that money into your business. That's what I did in the first two years. I didn't take any money out of my business. Every single bit of money I made went back into marketing and my marketing expenses, virtual assistant, paying people to do stuff, but it was basically just investing right back into the business.

And I was able to launch quicker because I wasn't spending all my time making a product. I just launched and then delivered the product with the students, made money, relaunched, delivered, relaunched, kept cycling that money into the business and it kept making the business grow and get bigger. And that's what you need.

If you want to grow, is you need cash. If you want to invest, you need cash. Launching and selling is basically I like to say it's like an ATM machine, like learning how to launch is literally an ATM machine to print money. It brings you cash injections into your business that you can then invest and makes your life a lot easier in general as a business owner.

So yeah, if you are not spending time on marketing, selling, building your audience, launching, this is my reminder that you should be doing that. And if you really want a business that makes money, that's where you want to focus your energy on. Of course, you want to make great products and great courses. But you're most likely an educator and you're most likely very good at what you do and what your expertise and so ultimately, you don't need to spend all your energy on creating the course.

You need to spend your time learning how to solve the course. And that's it. That's why you should sell your course before you make it. So many good reasons. It sounds like a crazy thing. Everyone freaks out when I tell them this, and then I have to walk them through it step by step, but it's not that crazy and pretty much all online businesses.

Do this like the ones that are doing well, they sell, they validate the idea, and they create, and they reiterate, and they refine, and they sell it again and they get better at selling it because you're flexible. You're testing it with your audience in your markets. You're not doing it in isolation.

I hope this helped you. It might've blown your mind a bit and might have freaked you out a bit, but I hope it at least showed you that it isn't as big of a deal. And as I said, I've got anxiety too. I need to manage that. I'm not going to do anything that's completely reckless. I found this to be the best way for so many reasons.

And once you get your mind around it, it's totally doable. And you're going to actually thank me later because you're going to be like, oh, imagine spending a year creating a course and no one buying it. Like, no, It's not necessary. It doesn't have to happen. And it won't happen if you do it like this. I hope you enjoyed this episode, and it was insightful for you, and I guess I will chat to you again next week.

Bye.

Thanks so much for listening to today's episode. If you are a teaching business owner, freelance teacher, or online teacher, and you are interested in creating a digital course or group program to scale your income and impact without teaching more hours, then I have just the thing for you.

Grab my free Scalable Digital Course Roadmap, and it will walk you through the six steps to turning your one-on-one classes into a scalable offer that frees you from the teacher burnout trap.

Creating scalable courses and programs have allowed me to 10x my hourly rates, hit six figures in my business, and impact hundreds and hundreds of people around the world without having to be actively teaching all day. If this is what you desire, grab my guide in the show notes and let me help you. I appreciate you so much.

I can't wait to connect with you in the next episode. In the meantime, go create a business and life you love.