Ultimate Course Formula for How to Create and Sell Online Courses in 60 Days or Less: A Book Review

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Introduction

Digital marketing and entrepreneurship are two of the main and crucial topics in the digital age, and almost every field of science is unaffected by this subject [1]. The principles governing the digital economy are generally different from traditional approaches [2]. In transitioning from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based one, it is essential to provide students and instructors with the necessary training to adapt to the new era [3]. This transformation requires significant changes in the educational system, focusing on developing skills that are essential for the knowledge economy [4, 5]. In recent decades, the issue of digital marketing has gained significant attention from authors, resulting in the publication of numerous books on the subject. One notable figure in this field is Iman Aghay, an accomplished Iranian entrepreneur now residing in Canada. With a wealth of experience in digital marketing, Aghay has been at the forefront of this industry for many years. He is also a best-selling author, international speaker, and the founder of Success Road Academy, one of the largest information marketing training centers in the world.

He has collaborated with over 15,000 business owners, assisting them in expanding their businesses, and has aided numerous professionals in building their reputations as experts within their respective industries. He created the "*Ultimate Course Formula, a step-by-step process that helps experts create and sell online courses in 60 days or less*" [6]. In this book, he provides a comprehensive guide to creating and marketing online courses, focusing on achieving financial, time, and location independence while positively impacting people's lives. He believes that to help learners achieve their goals, online courses should focus not only on providing information but also on the necessary support and accountability.

Book Title: Ultimate Course Formula: How to Create and Sell Online Courses in 60 Days or Less
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Statement

The book emphasizes understanding the business model and provides strategies for creating and selling online courses. The author highlights selling your course before you teach it online or before you actually

create the course's digital content. He further mentions that following the step-by-step process and completing the homework provided in each chapter before moving on to the next one is necessary to attain the results. It is worth mentioning that the authors have used a descriptive approach to review this book. Therefore, the review of each chapter is presented descriptively.

Body

Chapter 1: The Business Model

Chapter 1 discusses the importance of having a business model when creating online courses. A successful business model is associated with market positioning, product strategy, and marketing means and is a key factor of enterprise success (7). In today's dynamic market, innovative business models are crucial for survival and competitiveness (8). In this chapter, the author emphasizes the business model as the fundamental strategy and structure essential for online course creators and signifies viewing the courses as integral components of a broader marketing strategy. Furthermore, the author categorizes the online courses into three levels according to customers' level of involvement, including interested customers who seek knowledge through free events and content, qualified customers who desire structured guidance and are willing to pay for it, and committed customers who are deeply invested in their success. The author highlights the necessity of catering to all three customer segments, particularly emphasizing the importance of attracting interested individuals at the commencement of course development. For example, in his business, Aghay has divided the ultimate course formula into three levels: a book version providing knowledge which costs $25, a boot camp training including recorded videos supported by a coach on social media costing $2000, and a mentorship level at the price of $8000 providing a mentor one-on-one for six months. In addition, the author delineates three categories of experts: results experts, who possess expertise in a specific area and can guide others, regardless of their own personal achievements; role model experts, who have attained significant success and aim to systematize and impart their knowledge; and interviewer experts, who specialize in interviewing other experts within a niche market. Moreover, the author stresses the integration of the online course within a harmonized business model, a system targeting a specific niche market, and offering escalating solutions. It is emphasized that the niche and course topic alignment is critical, emphasizing the importance of selecting a topic with substantial potential.

Chapter 2: Technicality vs Results: How to Find the Sweet Spot?

Chapter 2 delves into developing a marketable product, highlighting the necessity of effectively explaining its value proposition to customers. In some studies, the need for a clear and compelling articulation of the product's core benefit or unique value has been stressed (9, 10). This involves understanding the customer's perspective, quantifying the monetary value, and proving the value proposition (11). In this regard, the author emphasizes describing the offering in a language the customer easily understands by clearly distinguishing between the product's technical aspects and tangible results. To identify the sweet spot, the author advises engaging 8 to 20 individuals from the exact target market by sending a template requesting cooperation on social media and asking them 8 golden questions regarding the customers' biggest challenges, fears, and frustrations about the topic, what they want to learn about, what their dream day look like after achieving the results, what features the course should have to feel highly supported, how much they would pay for such a course and whether they like to be the first students or not. Subsequently, the author recommends consolidating these insights into one file (your client avatar) that provides the language needed to effectively engage with clients and create a compelling product. He puts stress on having a two-way conversation with customers and adhering to the process to ensure a successful outcome.

Chapter 3: Content Structure

The structure and content of online courses are crucial for effective learning, and its importance has been highlighted in online learning, particularly in terms of purpose, sequence, clarity, and organization (12). In Chapter 3, the author reviews the diverse options for creating an online course package and structuring content to deliver desired outcomes to clients. These options may encompass recorded videos, audios, PDFs, blueprints, and live online sessions. Content delivery can be either immediate or gradual, supplemented by online support groups through social networks and accountability partners providing one-on-one student support, particularly in high-end packages. He also emphasizes the importance of establishing a program success formula comprising five essential conditions that should be integrated into the course. These conditions include being a person to look up to, having a common goal to achieve, giving students a system to follow, creating a community to belong to, and building a mindset and better environment to look forward to. Additionally, the author introduces a succinct three-word naming strategy to create an impactful program title. This strategy incorporates elements such as the course's location, target market, content focus, level, and topic to craft a compelling and concise program name. As an example, the author provided his course title which is "The Ultimate Course Formula", and the subtitle of his course that clarifies the promised result is "How to Create and Sell your Online Course in 60 Days or Less" (6).

Chapter 4: The Course Guideline

Chapter 4 focuses on preparing a course one-pager so you can offer your course to beta users and start selling your course. Since the one-pager is the shortest form of your course/package presentation, this limitation makes it one of the most challenging documents to prepare. As Mark Twain once said, "I didn't have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote you a long one." This quote highlights the importance of brevity in communication. To craft an effective one-pager, one must clearly understand the intended message and purpose (13). The author further explains that one-pager should include necessary information such as your program title and subtitle, some self-qualifying questions with positive answers, a credibility builder sentence that tells people why this course is the course they should take, program features and outcomes, your course content and its steps, date and time of your live course and its price and offerings. Furthermore, the author has provided an instance for self-qualifying questions, which is "Do you want to share your knowledge and expertise on the Internet, change people's lives, and build a successful business for yourself?" the answer to this should always be yes. Afterward, the author draws attention to setting up a live course instead of creating a recorded course and calls it a hidden gem inside this program. He puts stress on selling your course first and then teaching it alive to your beta group. After teaching each session, you collect student feedback to improve your next teaching session and create a recording of the previous session. Furthermore, to set a good price for your course, the author suggests going back to that market research in Chapter 2 and comparing your package to the package clients wanted to buy and the price they were willing to pay (6).

Chapter 5: Setups for Recording Your Course

Chapter 5 deals with how to record the content and what technology to use, the different setups you can have, and the features and benefits of each technology option. The author offers 3 main ways to create a course, including recording your live group classes by using online platforms like Zoom and recording them, recording live events in person by a videographer, recording webinars and teleconferences (screencast), studio recordings (not necessarily in a studio, sitting in front of the camera and teaching), and a combination when you use one larger piece of content then turn it into many other

pieces of content. For all 3, you need to prepare guidelines, handouts, documents, and other support material. Afterward, he recommends some proper tools and explains their features for recording your course, such as a good camera, microphone, lighting, and editing tools (6).

Chapter 6: Membership Platforms

Chapter 6 discusses building your membership platform, which is an online website where you can upload and secure your course content, manage students, track their progress, and sell your courses. The author mentions that the key is to choose the right platform, like Thinkific. The good thing about Thinkific is that it allows you to have all the following functionalities in one tool: video hosting, document hosting, multimedia hosting, payment processing integration, upfront payment, payment plans, subscription type user management, affiliate tracking, landing page builder, sales page builder, and integration to other platforms directly, or through Zapier which is a tool to build your entire membership platform completely, and even sales funnel (6).

Chapter 7: The Webinar Funnel

Chapter 7 is all about creating your funnel. The author notes that to build your webinar funnel, you need to set up a free webinar, which you invite people to attend. The webinar is anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes, and at the end of the webinar, you invite people to buy your full course. He mentions that the initial phase of the webinar funnel involves sending pre-webinar invitation emails. These are emails that your joint venture partners will send to their mailing list 3-5 days before the webinar to promote your webinar. Promotion should be designed so that registrants can share the ad on their social media and announce that they are attending the webinar. Webinar advertising banner and registration link to promote the event are added to the email signature daily by the customer-facing colleagues. In the next step, a wrap-up page is offered - a shorter sales page version usually presented at the end of a webinar to convince the participants to buy the

offered program or product. The final step of the webinar funnel is the post-webinar follow-up series. These are the emails you send to remind people who attended the webinar that they had expressed interest in purchasing the course but have not done so yet (6).

He also presents some ways to calculate the value of the course based on its content, access to the recordings, and support group membership. In the last part of this chapter, he introduces some tools for building your webinar funnel, such as ClickFunnels, Active Campaign, and Webinar Jam.

Chapter 8: Five Types of Promotional Partners

Finally, in Chapter 8, the author explains how to find joint ventures (JVs) to promote webinars, presentations, and secure speaking opportunities. Businesses can leverage several types of promotional partnerships to drive sales and grow their customer base. Some of the most effective types are: loyalty programs, influencer marketing, affiliate marketing, co-branding, content partnerships, referral marketing, sponsorship, product placement, nonprofit partnerships, and so on. However, the author highlights using five types of JVs or promotional partners. The *sneezers*, those who know you and are willing to spread the good word about your products to others; the *favor-motivated*, those willing to promote your online course if you promote them back; the *content-motivated*, individuals or organizations interested in your content and can provide platforms for you to share your expertise and attract customers for your online course; the *money-motivated*, those primarily motivated by financial gain when promoting your online course, and the *credibility seekers*, individuals or organizations interested in promoting you and your online course based on your credibility and expertise.

The author recommends that beginners start with content-motivated promotional partners and sneezers, as they are the easiest to find and activate. Moreover, in the final section, he reviews the biggest mistakes people make when creating online courses and recommends

this advice: do not wait until you have the best course; edit and improve your course after each teaching session; do not fall into a negative mindset and do not compare yourself with your competitors. He then emphasizes that it's your target market that matters (6).

Conclusion

This book presents guidance for online course creators by offering a structured framework for planning, creating, and marketing online courses. It also includes insights from market research that can help course creators address their target audience's specific needs and challenges. It proposes selling the course to a beta group before creating a recorded version to streamline the process. However, some areas could be improved, such as more in-depth coverage of marketing strategies, practical timelines as well as more details about how to create a business model. Furthermore, including more case studies and interactive elements could enhance the book's value. Despite these shortcomings, we chose this book to review as Iman Aghaei's book provides readers with very rich and interesting findings, all arranged in a structured layout that can help people create and sell online courses relatively quickly.

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Authors' Contribution

Both authors, L.H. and Z.K., critically reviewed and summarized the book and contributed equally to writing the manuscript. Both authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

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