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Building an Online Course From Start to Finish

Pat Flynn:	All right. You're thinking of creating an online course. I have 10 steps that will help you do that. Let's make magic happen.
Speaker 2:	Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast, where it's all about working hard now, so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host. He secretly wants to write fiction novels for a living when he's retired. Pat Flynn.
Pat Flynn:	Hey, what's up everybody? Thank you so much for joining me today in this session of the SPI podcast. My name is Pat Flynn, and I'm here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. You can definitely do that if you get involved with online courses. I had my first taste of online courses last year in 2017, building three online courses that were premium courses that people paid for, a fourth one that was free for lead generation purposes, and they've been working like gangbusters. In 2017, I amassed a total of one million dollars in revenue just from online courses alone, and I'm here to help you through these 10 steps that I'm going to share with you how to do that too.

Now before we get into this, we need to talk a little bit about why online courses are great, but then also who they aren't for, why you shouldn't do them, because they really aren't for all people and all businesses. I think the most important thing is to first realize, what are the problems and the pains and the needs of your audience, and then asking yourself, "Does it make sense for me to build an online course, and to sell that in order to help them through those problems?" We'll talk about the psychology related to selling online courses too, something that I dealt with.

I hesitated so long to build online courses, because I was too afraid to sell to my audience. Here's the big realization: you can sell and serve at the same time. The other part of this is, is I realized that by creating courses for people who just wanted to go deeper with me, I wasn't taking anything away from my audience who is more keen to my free and lower level material. That was huge for me, because it made me realize that I am able to now serve even more people, especially those who are willing to invest in themselves

to help them achieve a certain goal. That's kind of a little bit of the psychology that helped me get over the idea, and really the fear, of selling these online courses to other people. Then, once I got over that, I was so relieved, and it allowed me to create better courses to better help and serve my audience. It made the sales pages better, it made the emails that I sent out better. That confidence just came all the way through, and that's super important to have when you're creating stuff.

Now, obviously, in the beginning here, you might not know exactly what to do, but when you get involved with having conversations with your audience, understanding exactly what they're going through, keeping a very, very open ear and eye out for what they need help with, that's where you start to understand, "Okay, well what can I potentially create a course about?" That's what step 1 is here in this 10 step process I'm going to walk you through today in this episode. If you don't have a notepad yet, or maybe you don't have access to one, and you can go relisten to this later, but if you need to get a notepad, now's the time, because I'm going to start mentioning and sharing these 10 steps with you.

The first one, like I said, is just to figure out what your online business course is going to be about, and here's the trick. It's really something that's so important in order to make your course work and be successful. That is, you need to know and define what the transformation is that your customers are going to go through when they go through this course. That transformation is really important. They were somewhere before they got access to the course, and now they are somewhere new. Now, they have access to this content, yes, but what does that help them achieve? That's so important to know, because that becomes your selling point. It becomes a clear idea in the picture and in the mind of the customer, "Wow, if I get this, then I get that." It becomes very clear for you, as the person selling this thing, "Hey, if you get this, these are the things that you can now have as a result. Here are the steps that are required, yes, but this is what it looks like on the other end."

You need to really paint that picture, obviously in your sales pages,

in your messaging, and those kinds of things, but literally, in the creation of your course and the discovery of the topic that you're going to be selling information about, or creating a course about, or helping people with, you need to know what that transformation is. Sometimes, it's a lot more clear than others. Let's take, for example, my affiliate marketing course, 123 Affiliate Marketing, which I'll be using as an example here, because that was the most recent one that I created, so it's very fresh in my mind. We recently did a beta launch, we had 85 students get access to it for $499, and I've been working with those students after they got access to the course after the turn of the new year. I've been collecting feedback, I'll go over those steps in the launch and validation process with you here as we go through these steps here.

To go back, here's the transformation that people get when they get 123 Affiliate Marketing. That is, they see a direct impact in their earnings and income as a result of specific products that they now promote, and the ways that they promote those products based on what they learned in this course. To really sum that all down, especially if you've never done any marketing at all, or don't sell any products, you will earn your first dollars by affiliate marketing, which is generating an income and a commission by selling and recommending other people's products, not products of your own. But if you do the work, you follow directions, you're going to earn your first dollars through affiliate marketing. If it does not do that, the course will have failed. It's a very clear, yes, it either did this thing, or no, it did not.

Same thing with my podcasting course, right? You sign up, you get a podcast, you have it up on iTunes, and you launch it, and you have eyes and earballs on that podcast. That's the promise of that course. It has helped hundreds of students do that. That has also, obviously, very much helped with my confidence, seeing the results of these students, especially since for years I've had free content to literally walk people through step-by-step, and I still have free content, to walk people through step=by-step how to actually go through and build a podcast of their own. However, when I created this course, it was the people who wanted to work deeper, who

needed a little bit more handholding, who invested in themselves, that created those results for themselves. Some of them astounding results, which is just awesome. They wouldn't have happened if I wasn't there for them. There are people who need you and your course, and structured in the way that I'm going to teach you, they need that in order to get those results too. Just some confidence boosters for you as we go into this.

To go back to what I was talking about, clear transformations. That's the key to a successful course. It doesn't matter how great the information is in the course, if it doesn't provide that transformation, then what is the point and why would people buy it? I mean, I think of Ramit Sethi's courses, right? Like Earn your First Thousand Dollars, or Land your Dream Job. Those are very clear things that happen when you get access to those courses, and that's the promise. Of course, it's Ramit's job as the course creator to make sure that those things happen for those students if they go and actually put in the work. So, make sure that when you select the topic for your course, you have a clear transformation. Those of you who already have online courses, you may want to ask yourself, what is the transformation here? If you're having a hard time answering that, well then, there's a problem, because guess what? Your customers are having a hard time understanding that too. So that's step one, what is the transformation? Define what that is, because that's going to help everything else that happens after this. That's step one.

Step two is, you're going to brainstorm the content of that course, the steps required to go from where they're at to that transformation. This is very similar to how I structure blog posts and podcast episodes actually. This is what I did to structure this podcast episode. I structure this episode in a way where I started with the end in mind. I wanted to make sure that you have all the steps that you need to make sure that you understand what it's like to go from somebody who hasn't yet started an online course to somebody who knows exactly the route to get there, and has some details to make it happen. Same thing with blog posts. Let's start with a transformation. Okay, now what stories do I need to

tell? What case studies do I need to share? What facts do I need to share, et cetera, in order for them to get that transformation after reading that blog post? Definitely should be the same thing with your course.

You start with the transformation, that's why it's step one, and you work backwards in step two to understand and begin to brainstorm what content needs to be included to help people do that. The way that I would recommend brainstorming is using my favorite tool in the world. Some of you might know already, I'm going to give you a second just to guess. Post-it notes. Post-it notes are my favorite thing in the world for brainstorming. Why? Because they are small, and you can basically only include one idea or element per post-it note, and when you're brainstorming, your job when you're brainstorming is literally half the things that are happening and going on in your brain come out, put on paper, so that you can finally do things with them. Because guess what? If you can't see it, you can't deal with it.

Our brains do a great job of coming up with new ideas, but a terrible job at A) dealing with them, but also B) putting organization and hierarchy to them. So let's take these ideas and things in our brain to put them out in the world, so we can see them, and I recommend post-it notes so that you can, in step three, organize them. Now, let's go back to step two really quick. Step three is organization of those ideas, because as you are in step two, you're not organizing at all. It's literally, you're like throwing up on each of these post-it notes in a very highly skilled way, with one idea per, this is very high skilled throwing up we're doing here, high skilled throwing up where you have one idea per post-it note, and boom, you just knock them out. Anything you can think of.

Then cool things happen when you are in that kind of creative mindset versus, "Oh, I'm going to create and edit and outline as I go." You're letting your creative brain just get into the flow there. What I would do, and this is something I do when I do brainstorming. I do what's called the triple 10 exercise. The triple 10 exercise is you spend 10 minutes brainstorming as much as you can, until typically

after 10 minutes you're kind of exhausted a little bit. Sometimes you might be like, "I don't know if I have anything else." That's why you do it for 10 minutes, and then you rest for 10 minutes. You literally go away from that environment. You walk away, you go on a walk, you do something else. You set a timer so that after that rest period, you come back to where you were, and then you jam and you keep going for another 10 minutes.

I've found that that final 10 minutes in that total 30 minutes is often where the best ideas come out because, what happens during that break? Yes, you are resting, but your brain is also kind of just absorbing everything it had just done and making sense of it all. Even though you're not in that room actively brainstorming, it's actually doing stuff still. When you come back from that break, it's like your brain is just processed it in a way that you couldn't have if you didn't take that break.

It's similar to studying. It's really important to take breaks. It's really important to study and then let yourself just sit on that content and not absorb it, or not try to study and put anymore, and cram any more things into your brain. You need that brain processing time. That's why sleep is really, really important, especially when you are studying, at least for retention purposes. But for brainstorming, same thing. Step two, brainstorm, use post-it notes, and just literally, no order to them, just anything in your brain that comes out, put it out there onto your table or onto your wall, and just let it happen. The triple 10 exercise will help you.

Now, in step three, you see the sea of post-it notes, and your role now is to take those post-it notes and put them into some kind of order. Now, a few things are going to happen. You're going to have a few post-it notes that you're like, "Why did I even write that? That's weird." Guess what? Just remove that post-it note. Take it out. It does not belong. You're also, as you're doing this exercise and beginning to organize, and the way you organize it is, you create clusters. You create hierarchies. Okay, here's a cluster of stuff related to this content. In affiliate marketing, here's like, "Okay, well here's all the passive affiliate marketing strategies that you can use,

stuff that you set up once, and it kind of works for you. Wow, here's all the active income affiliate marketing strategies that require you to do a little bit more work, and it's more like an event type of feel to that marketing, so we'll cluster those over here. Then, here's all the mindset stuff that needs to happen. The kind of pre-selling as an affiliate stuff that needs to happen. We'll clump these over here."

Now I have three clusters, and guess what? That's why it's called 123 Affiliate Marketing, because during the brainstorming process, I found that there were three clear steps here. Step one is getting everything set up and understanding how to do it, finding your first affiliate product. Step number two is creating passive strategies, putting things into place now, so that they'll work for you in the long term, that's step number two. Step number three is, okay, let's take this focused product of yours that you're going to be promoting as an affiliate, and let's go to town with it. Let's be active in how we promote it to our audience, and with our JV partners, and let's knock it out of the park. That's why it's called 123 Affiliate Marketing. It wouldn't have been called that, and I wouldn't even know that, if I didn't go through this process of organization.

Also through the organization process like this, you're going to find where there might be some holes. You might find that these clusters essentially become modules, and each of these post-it notes will become your lessons. That's the magic of this. If you're creating a book, very same thing happens. You have your chapters now, and then the sub-sections of those chapters when you do this exercise. It can be the exact same thing. With your online course, you're going to also see that, wow, there's some things missing here. Here, with passive affiliate marketing strategies, I found that there's a few more that are coming to mind now, what do I do? Well, add more post-it notes to it. It's that simple.

I hope you can see kind of what's happening here. We started with higher-level, where the pains and problems, let's figure out a transformation to go from where they were to where they are now, to help them solve that problem. That's the transformation. Then let's reverse engineer that. Let's figure out exactly all that needs to

happen in order for that achievement, that transformation, and let's just brainstorm. Then we're going to put order to it. Now you can see how this is literally forming itself as we go through this process. The hardest thing to do is to literally take a piece of paper and say, "Okay, this is what my course is going to be about. What should step one be? What should step two be?" You may have some ideas in your head, but unless you do this brainstorming process, you're either going to miss a lot of things, you're going to go out of order, so on and so forth.

Speaking of order, this is another benefit of going through this process. You're able to see, okay, what needs to come first? In the eyes and in the shoes of my customer, would it make sense to put this one first? Well, let's move that post-it note over here, and let's now put these lessons into order. We've got these clusters now. Great. Let's go one level deeper and create order to the lessons for each of these modules. Let's now give each of these modules a name. Let's now give each of these lessons a name. Now you have what's in step four, is your outline. You're creating your outline and brainstorming in step three, and you have your outline complete in step four.

What do you do with that outline? You go and you share it. You share it with others. Perhaps you have superfans, people in your audience who you want to give an inside look to who would benefit and feel great with you trusting them with this, but also help you out because they're honored that you'd share it with them early. Obviously, you know that you're going to get some amazing feedback from them. Perhaps you have a team of people in your audience that you can go to for this. Might be worth setting up one of those kinds of teams like you do for a book launch team. Why not a product launch street team to help you launch? This is the kind of thing you can share with them. "Hey guys, here's the tentative outline for this course that's going to help you blank," the blank being obviously the transformation. "Look over it, let me know what you think. Does it make sense? What would you include that's not included here? What would you remove that you think is kind of too much?"

That's a hard thing to do. This is what in the book writing space is called killing your darlings, or murdering your darlings. You have to do the same thing with your lessons, because you're going to have to, and you should, take out the lessons that aren't necessary in order for that transformation to happen. You'll find that often times you are unable to do that, but the people who you are sharing this outline with are. Literally, that's a question you ask them, "Hey, what lessons in here do you think are not necessary for you to achieve the same goal?" That allows you to just make sure you only have what you need in this course.

That'll save you with production time, that'll save the person going through the course with how much time they're spending into it. They're going to feel like it's much more streamlined. There's no fluff, and you're going to collect some great feedback from your peeps. Perhaps it's your audience, maybe it's people in your mastermind group, or other colleagues, or other friends who might be going through the same thing. Just share it with them. Don't be afraid to do that. You want people to poke holes into this now, instead of later after you've spent all this time creating the course itself.

Now, before we get into step five, let's take a quick stretching break. Actually, let's stop calling it stretching break, because I don't want you to relax right now. I want you to get fired up about this. What I want you to do, if you're somewhere convenient right now, before you pause I want to give you instructions. Pause this, and show me that you're listening to this right now. If you're on Twitter or Instagram, you can share an Instagram Story. Hook me up and tag me @PatFlynn with a picture of you kind of fist pumping that you are enjoying this content. If you are enjoying this content. If you're not, don't worry. Just keep listening and I'll get through this really quick. But I love to just see who the audience is fired up about creating online courses.

It was something that was truly life-changing for me last year. I'm excited to see a lot of you begin to put in the effort to put a course together this year. If that's you, instead of a stretch, let's do a fist

pump. Let's take a picture of yourself, or even just your fist doing that, and tag me on that picture with @PatFlynn on Instagram, Twitter, or Instagram Stories, and I'd love to see you just fired up about this, because I'm fired up about it too. I'm fired up for you. All right. Shoot me a fist bump, or a Flynn bump, or whatever you want to call it @PatFlynn on Twitter or Instagram, and let's continue going on. Hopefully you're getting value out of this.

All right. Step number five. You have this outline, you've collected a little bit of feedback. Perhaps there's some changes you're already making, so you should do that obviously, with the outline. What you've done at this point is just validated the concept and the outline. The outline is essentially your prototype. This is like, if you're creating a physical product, you have a prototype that people can play with and look at and use. Well, this is your prototype. The outline is the prototype for your potential customers. Now, with that in mind, you're going to go through with step number five, and that is you're going to pre-sell this bad boy. Yes, you're going to pre-sell it to a limited number of people in your audience, if you have one already. If not, it's going to be a little bit harder, but you can still do things like run ads to webinars to be able to pre-sell this thing. That webinar registration is another form of validation. Are people even interested in this topic at all?

I talk about validation quite heavily as you know in my book Will It Fly?, so it'll walk you through a lot of these processes, but I'm just going higher level here for you, so you know the steps. If you have an audience already, you can let them know, "Hey guys. I'm coming out with this course. I haven't made it yet, but I want to share a little bit of information for you, that's going to be helpful for you, and then tell you also what this course is going to be about." Then when you do that, when you pre-sell it, you're being honest with them, "I haven't made this yet, but I'm going to give access to 20 people who are going to work with me as I build this course, so I can help make sure it is exactly how it needs to be for you. You're going to be one of the first to get access to it. I'm also going to give you some extra time with me to help you through this content. So if we get 20 people, I'm going to create it. If not, don't worry, I'm going to

refund your money, and that will be just enough for me to know to redo this, or go in a different direction."

This is what validation is about. This solidifies that you are going in the right direction, and it allows your audience and your potential customers to vote with their dollars that yes, you need to do this. Actually, more importantly, that yes, this is something that they want. Now, obviously I talk a lot more, like I said, about validation in my book Will It Fly? You can go check that out at willitflybook.com. Wall Street bestseller, just saying. It was though. As a self-published book, by the way. You should definitely check it out, it's awesome. Thank you for all of you who have supported me with that book. I'm super stoked to see it still do well, and now in multiple languages around the world. Guys, you've got to learn how to validate your product so you're not wasting your time and money. That's exactly what that book is about. So willitflybook.com. That's my little plug. That's it. I'm done.

Now, we're still in step five here. We're still pre-selling this thing. What do you need to pre=sell? Well, a number of people I've spoken to and have interviewed and featured on the podcast and in the book, they literally pre-sold by just saying, "Hey, if this is something you want, shoot this much money over to my PayPal, and I'll make sure that we put you in a Facebook group to continue communicating after this with the other students." Again, "If I don't get X number of people to buy it, I'll just refund your money. Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere." That's one way to do it. You don't even need a landing page or anything like that. You just need a PayPal account, and just literally ask. Hopefully, you're potentially communicating with these people via email, or even better yet, through a direct message if that's the case. It's the quickest and easiest way to do it without any friction at all.

Now, with 123 Affiliate Marketing, because I have a team and a lot of resources in place, we created a landing page with a video that explained the transformation, what people are going to get, the fact that it was a beta launch, and that it was going to be pre-sold, that there was nothing to get access to yet. We had a button on

there that connected to a shopping cart through Teachable. This course was hosted on Teachable, so we just created that. Now with Teachable, what was interesting is they got access to the course, and they literally saw just one lesson in there. That lesson was a welcome video thanking them for being in the course, but also, "Hey, here's what's happening next." The last thing you want to do when you pre-sell anything, or sell anything really, is to have a person buy something, and then just not know what happens next.

That's happened to me many times before, from buying plug-ins for Final Cut Pro, and then just wondering where my download link is, to buying access to online courses, and then never hearing from that person until the next day. It's frustrating, right? Especially if you're pre-selling. You just want to make sure people know, your customers know, that you just didn't take their money and left. No matter what, always make sure that you have a great onboarding process. With Teachable, just made it simple, because they got automatic access to the course. They go into that welcome lesson. That's the only lesson available. All the other ones that are being created are in draft mode. Those are just based off of the outline. I'll walk through that creation process in step six here in just a minute.

In that welcome video, I just said, "Hey, thank you again for purchasing. Here's what happens. Here's when you're going to get access to all the material when it comes out. Here's a link to join the Facebook group so I can give you updates along the way and you can communicate with some of the other students. Thank you again, and again, as a reminder, the course material goes live after New Years, on Tuesday, January 2nd." That's what happened. The course content was created after I validated the product. I sold it on Cyber Monday, which was the end of November. I used December, after knowing that yes, this is something people wanted, to create the course material, and then it was released to them on January 2nd. It's as easy as that. Bomb diggity. Who says bomb diggity? I don't even know why I said that. Don't leave, please.

Now, step six is you want to make sure that if you promise a Facebook group of some sort to communicate with these people

as you are building the course to let them know about things, that's always great for customer confidence. Make sure you do that. That's step six, very simple. Keep them up-to-date. Stay in communication with them, and be honest with them, most importantly.

Now, step number seven is product creation. You've validated the course, hopefully. Now some people skip the validation part and they build the course, and then they sell it to you. If you choose to go that route, this step is okay, now we're going to build the course. Here's how you do it. You use those post-it notes. Hopefully they're still up there somewhere. Those are going to be your guides for what lesson am I working on right now, and let's make this thing happen. Really, it becomes ... I mean, this is the hardest part of it. No, it's not the hardest part of it, but it is a difficult part, because it takes the most work. The production part of it.

Production wise, in terms of video, video is obviously the best way to produce these courses, because this is the highest value. You can also create audio versions of them, and also transcripts if you want to go that far too, but you don't even need to go that far, especially in the beta. In the beta, because people know it's the first time it's launched, you're able to do certain things, like other things that I'm about to tell you, that you wouldn't normally do, or you probably shouldn't do when you go full on with a high-end premium course launch.

One thing for example is the actual production of the videos themselves. Yes, they're highly produced. We did them in the studio, I have a video studio, but initially they weren't done like that. They were done in my home office, just using a basic DSLR camera. You can even use a video camera from your phone. They're good enough nowadays. As long as the audio is great too, that's kind of important. Perhaps using a portable recorder such as a Zoom H4n or a Zoom H6n to record audio separately could benefit you. You could also run a wired mike to your phone using a Rode smartLav or something like that. We'll obviously leave all the links to all this equipment. You can make decisions from the show notes page on the show notes page itself.

To move on, what I'm talking about here in terms of, okay, things you can do in the beta versus not in the beta, one thing we did is we didn't include a lot of elements in the videos other than just me talking and what was shown on the computer, through ScreenFlow or Contagious Studios, the screen grabs. Other things that you could include are layovers, text that pops up when you say certain things, lists in the text that pops up. Also, B-roll, camera stuff that shows things that you're talking about when you're having a voiceover over those things. Those are things that you don't need to have in the beta launch, and you probably shouldn't have them, because what if things needed to be changed? There's so much extra time and effort to put that flavor onto those videos, you might as well wait to make sure that those videos are done, and has the information that they need before you actually go that far and produce those things.

As long as the videos and the lessons do what they need to do to help a person, again, reach that transformation, well then, you're okay. But adding that additional flavor really rounds out and shows the value and the professionalism in that course in your future and more public launch. But for the beta, you don't need that, so we didn't do that. Actually, we're adding those things in pretty much as we speak. As I record this video right now, I have an editor going in and adding those elements to those videos where they are required.

The best tip I can offer you related to the production of these lessons is to take, again, one lesson at a time, one post-it note at a time, and plan out how many you're going to do in what time period. Perhaps you might spend a few days. Actually 123 Affiliate Marketing was recorded over the course of two days that were literally blocked out. I had to talk to April, my wife, obviously, and say, "Hey, you know I'm going to be super busy recording these courses, so I won't be able to pick up the kids this day, or you're going to have to help take care of dinner this day, because I'm going to be in the studio with Caleb. We're just going to bang out two days worth of videos to crush that course."

That's exactly what we did, and it was nice to do it that way, to batch process it, because it was like, "Okay, I'm going to wake up and this is what this day is about. Let's complete this half of the course, and then the next day, let's complete this half of the course." Of course, when you start out, it's slow, it's hard, it's like, "Oh my gosh, I have to do all of this, and I haven't even done more than two videos yet." Then of course, it picks up over time. You start to gain momentum, right? An object at rest tends to stay at rest, but once you start to get the motion, you tend to stay in motion, and to kind of accelerate too, sometimes.

My recommendation to you would be to A) start, B) really plan ahead in terms of how many videos you're doing and when. Even if it's like one video per day, and that's the only time you have, well, then do that. But really honor that time you're blocking out to create those course videos and those lessons. Now, within those lessons, you're obviously going to include, perhaps, some worksheets for things, where you want people to do things. One thing I like to do in all of my courses is have at the end of those videos a list of action items, "Okay, you watched this video. Now here's what you've got to do. Do these things before you move on to the next one." Finally, you can have some notes and other text related to those lessons, if the content for example just makes sense to have text in there.

That's step seven, content creation for your course. All along this time, you want to make sure you keep your students who have pre-paid updated. You can even give them tidbits and little hints and things here and there. I actually did give them a little bit of homework which was related to something that they would be doing in step one, and that was nice. A lot of them said, "Hey. Thanks for helping me get a head start on this." When they go into that lesson, they were already ahead, and they felt ahead. You can offer a little bit of homework between the time that you pre-sell and the time that you release the course if you wanted to. Then finally, no, we got two more ... No, sorry, that was step seven. We got three steps. I can do math. Okay. Three steps left.

Step eight is the collection of that feedback from your students.

That involves a number of different communication tools, like email, obviously, and also potentially surveys if you wanted to do that. We've run surveys before with our course students to get some feedback, but honestly, the best feedback has come from one-on-one conversations, and also group conversations, like in group office hours using tools like Zoom or things like that, to be able to collect feedback from people, both positive and constructive. Constructive criticism is positive, but you know what I mean. Both sides of the coin. Things that are great, that I should continue doing, things that aren't so great that I should fix or re-do, and things that potentially ... I've had a lot of great feedback from some of my other courses, I've gotten better with this over time, but in some of my other courses there was too much information. I got a lot of great feedback from my students saying, "You know what? This didn't feel like it was needed. I didn't need this to help me get there." So I'm able to understand okay, well what isn't necessary, from my exact course students.

Guess what? They are your target audience. They are the people who are just like the customers who haven't paid to get in there yet. Listen to them more than anybody. They are the ones who need you to make this great, but your audience out there who wants this course, you're going to get that greatness coming from the voices of your current students. Collect that feedback. Honestly, some of the best feedback I've gotten is from direct messages on Facebook. Just through those groups, just direct messaging somebody saying, "Hey, I just want to make sure. I saw that comment you made on Facebook earlier. I just want to make sure you're good. What else do you think I could do to better make sense of this for you?" Or you can just go into individual conversations here and there as you are king of just being involved in that community.

All right. Step number nine, and this might seem obvious. Okay, you've collected that feedback. Step nine, let's refine the course. Let's now re-do the videos that need to be redone. Let's remove the things that need to be removed. Let's add worksheets where there were no worksheets before, where it would help a person out. Let's add the text and the animations and the B-roll into the videos now.

Let's refine the course and make it great so that when we go public with it, it's going to rock. The nice thing about this is, at this point, you will have, hopefully, some amazing testimonials that you can collect too, so that's part of this process of just finishing and tying things off before you go public with it.

That's essentially what step nine is, right? Refining, but also that includes, okay, let's refine the sales page. You've gone through one iteration of sales already. You likely have helped some people achieve those transformations. Hopefully you have, and you should collect that feedback, but also those testimonials. The best way to collect testimonials, in my experience over the course of the past year, is to literally just go out and say, "Hey, if you enjoyed this, and you've gotten some great results from it, please, I would love it so much if you'd just took a few moments to leave me a testimonial." I've asked people in a group setting, like on the Facebook groups, and that's worked pretty well. But honestly, asking individually has helped more than anything.

If you've helped a person achieve something, they're going to be more than happy to spend some time to leave you a great testimonial. They're going to talk you up like you're the best thing since sliced bread if you've truly helped them. That's going to help you sell your course to more people, by helping those people who are coming in who are on the fence realize from a previous student that this is for them. The more testimonials you can get, the better. The more diverse those groups of people who are leaving testimonials, the better, because they're going to be able to help relate to more people, and yeah, that's step nine. It's a fun one. Asking for ... People aren't going to give you testimonials out of the blue. Some may, but most people will only give you testimonials if you ask, and it is 100% okay to do that.

All right, and finally your tenth and final step here. Don't worry, I'm going to recap all of these for you here at the end, after I run over step 10 here, and it's a small step, but it's a big step for mankind. I don't know where ... It sounded like I was saying the moon landing stuff, but no. It's a tiny phrase that you should take with you

moving forward, but it's a big, big deal, and that is to be confident. Through these steps here, you're creating a lot. You're doing a lot of research. You're going and collecting feedback. You've done a lot of work to make sure that this thing that you've created, this online course that you know now, and has been proven, to be helpful, is something that can help people like those people who are in that course already. Like the people who are on your email list. Like the people who are searching for stuff on google right now related to the stuff that you teach.

This, you know now, is a great solution for that particular problem. To help them through that specific transformation. It is your responsibility now, I want you to be approaching this in that way. If you had a cure for a disease, wouldn't you want to make sure that you get it in front of as many people who have that disease as possible? Well, you've just created a cure for a disease out there. But it's an online course to solve a specific problem. You should approach it in the same way in terms of the confidence that you have that this can help, and the drive to want to make sure that people find it. That alone is what has helped me make sure to get it in front of more people, to be confident in doing that, and be confident in the messaging behind it too. And guess what? Some people, they're not going to be ready for it.

For some people, hopefully, it's going to be easy for them to know that this is not for them, and that's again another purpose and benefit of actually just sharing up front who this is for, and what this transformation is all about. Some people are going to be like, "Well, that's not for me. Okay. Bye," and that's great. There's no playing around anymore. You wouldn't have wasted their time. You won't upset them when you tell them right away what they're going to hopefully get, if they don't want that. It's when you mess around with the messaging, and try to please everybody, and try to make everybody get into it where nobody will understand if it's for them. They either just don't buy because they're confused, or they buy, and they're like, "This is not what I signed up for." You make it clear for them, and you go through this process.

You have it in hand, now you know, you need to put it out there, so be confident. Make sales, and then serve. Remember, you can sell and serve at the same time. That's a Pat Flynn original quote, by the way. You can sell and serve at the same time. @PatFlynn if you want to tag me on that.

Let's recap these 10 steps for you, and then I got a really cool call to action for you at the end that's going to help you with this online course thing even more. Because obviously, these are 10 steps that are great, and they will walk you through the process, but there's a lot more to course creation, obviously. What has helped me with course creation is a course that I took that I want to tell you about. I'm actually co-hosting a webinar with this person, the person who I learned how to build online courses from. We're doing this again. We do this every single year. I'm excited to announce this a little bit early now, so you can have time to sign up for it.

Let's recap these steps really quick. Step number one, just understand what your online course is going to be about, and really that key word there is the transformation. What is that transformation your audience is going to be going through? Define what that is. Number two, brainstorm content, ideas, and steps. Reverse engineer from that transformation. You can use post-it notes to do this, and just literally puke onto those post-it notes, again in a very highly skilled way, with one idea per post-it note, just so all your ideas are out there, and you can finally see it. Remember, once you finally see it, you can deal with it. You can even use the triple 10 method to do 10 minutes of brainstorming, 10 minutes of rest, and 10 minutes of final brainstorming.

Step number three is you are now going to organize those post-it notes with those ideas into different modules, which become different lessons and groups. You're creating hierarchy, you're creating order. This becomes what is now your outline. Remember, in step four, that's where you have your finalized, quote finalized, outline, before it gets changed based on feedback obviously. But step four is you have your outline and you're going to share it. You're going to share it with your mastermind group members if

you have them, your colleagues, other people in the space that you trust, your superfans, people in your audience who you just want to get feedback from, those kinds of things. That's step four.

In step five, now that you've validated it, and perhaps have made a few other changes based on that feedback, crossed some things off, added other things on. Now guess what? You have your prototype, and now you're going to pre-sell it. After pre-selling it, in step six you're going to make sure that if you do get some pre-sales, you're going to build that community so that people on Facebook, you have that Facebook group, that they can get access to you, so you can communicate with them.

Here's also the other thing that I didn't mention, but I'd love to mention it now. This relates to step five and pre-selling. If you don't get any sales, but you still have people that you've shared it with, here's the cool thing that you can do. It's not like traditional sales where you build a thing and you're selling it and then nobody buys it, and you're like, "What happened? I thought people loved it," and then you have no one to talk to. Through this kind of validation, and the processes that I teach in Will It Fly?, you're able to, at every step of the moment, go back and help yourself by understanding what exactly happened here.

If you pre-sell, and you don't make any sales, you could still go back to those people who were interested and say, "Hey, well you said you were interested in this, but you didn't buy it. Tell me some reasons why." Yes, a lot of them are going to say, "Oh, because I didn't want to spend the money." But beyond that, what else? Continue to go down that deeper hole so that you can understand exactly what the answers are. Because honestly, when people say it's just the money, no, that's not the problem. They just didn't understand the value that you had to provide them. Whenever you hear somebody say, "Oh, I just … It's the money," it's because they didn't understand the value that you could potentially offer on the other end of that purchase. That's why people say money. Not because they don't have money, it's because they don't want to spend that money on something that they don't think they're going

to get back. Got it? Got it? Good.

Okay, so step six is you create that community. Step seven is now okay, you build this thing. You have students and they're now who are waiting for it. You build it, you launch it. Step eight is then you collect feedback, and then step nine, you refine it. You collect those testimonials and all those kinds of things too. Then step number 10, like I said earlier, be confident.

Now at this point, I'm confident that you have a road map that you can now see in front of you in terms of how to get from where you're at now to finally having an online course available for your audience, which is really cool. But I also know that you are smart, and know that this isn't just everything that's involved. There's so much involved, and a lot of details too, which is why there are online courses about this, why there are people who specialize in this. One of those people who specializes in helping people build their online courses from the ground up is David Siteman Garland, who is the guy who really inspired me, and helped me get my online courses up and running. I want to thank David just personally here on the podcast for all the help he's given me.

This is something actually that I'm excited to announce. We are doing a webinar, actually a co-hosted webinar, two of them, in mid-March, on March 15th and March 16th. We're doing co-hosted webinars where we're going to teach you even more information about setting up your online course, and a lot of details, a lot of the finer details related to that. Then David's going to talk about his course that I took, Create Awesome Online Courses. It's a lot of fun, these webinars. We do this every single year. It grows and grows and grows every single time. SPI, Smart Passive Income, students who have gone through this webinar have come out with some amazing, amazing results, like hundreds of thousands of dollars have been earned as a result of this kind of stuff that David and I talk about.

If you want to register for those, quite simply all you have to do is go to SmartPassiveIncome.com/onlinecourses. Very simple to

remember. Again, SmartPassiveIncome.com/onlinecourses. Those webinars happen in mid-March, but I just wanted to share them with you now, so you can registered and get your seat, and make sure that you get access to that. Again, SmartPassiveIncome.com/onlinecourses. That'll register you for those two webinars, or one of those two webinars. You can even attend both if you want. We're going to give you a lot of great information that you can take away and use for free. In addition to that, we're also going to allow for a Q&A, so you can ask David and/or I questions, and get them answered related to your progression through your online course too. Sign up for that now, SmartPassiveIncome.com/onlinecourses.

I'm super stoked for you and your future with online courses, and I'm excited to see what happens for all of us, because I'm doing some new experiments in online courses too. I have one or two more that are coming up this year, but right now I'm working on the funnelization, meaning okay, well let's work on the marketing side of the courses I already have, see how we might be able to get even more people into them. That's the big push here in January and February, but come mid-year more courses are going to be built, and a lot of the stuff is going to be put into action once again.

I hope you enjoyed this episode, the 10 steps to help you get started with online courses. Thank you so much again. That webinar registration link one more time is SmartPassiveIncome.com/onlinecourses. Even in the future, if you're listening to this after March 15, and after March 16 of 2018, you can still go to that link. You're going to get the latest and greatest information on how you can get more info on how to build your online course there, so SmartPassiveIncome.com/onlinecourses.

Then finally, I just want to thank you so much for taking the time to hang out with me today. The next episode's going to be great. I mean, gosh, there's so much great content coming. Actually, let me check my calendar right now to see what's coming in the next episode. Oh man, I can't even ... I forgot about that. I'm not even going to tell you what it is, because there's just so much great stuff coming this year. Please make sure to subscribe to the podcast

because this great stuff is coming your way.

If you've listened to the podcast before, if you're a subscriber already, you probably can hear a little bit of a difference here in 2018. I've stepped up my game here in terms of usefulness to you, in terms of deliverability, in terms of entertainment, in terms of just making sure you get the stuff you need to succeed. Not that that wasn't the case before, but I'm trying really hard this year to make sure that those of you who know that you are just right on the edge of success, to get over that edge and make it happen. This is why I'm here. Again, my name is Pat Flynn. I'm here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. Cheers. Thanks so much. Please subscribe, and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye.

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