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Why create a product?

Do you remember the first time you asked yourself, “What if I created a product and sold it?”

- Perhaps you were tired of all the 1:1 skype lessons you were teaching.
- Maybe you wanted to toy with the idea of the so-called passive income.
- Or you may have wanted to make more money without looking for another student.

I remember that thought first crossed my mind in 2011. At the time I had been teaching 5-7 lessons a day, and having a heavy social media, content and email marketing agenda (without much strategy though), so I was busy.

I discovered that I would use the same materials in class over and over again and wondered if I could somehow cut out the time I spent in class on similar explanations and channel the students to my tutorials/e-course/e-book instead.

To make a long story short, I did create an e-book and two e-courses, of which I may have sold no more than 30 items over 5 years, and most of my customers were my 1:1 students at the time.

Ironically, I had zero “outside” customers, and I had no idea where I would get them.

So my first problem after figuring out *what to sell* was *who to sell the product to*.

The email list

I had read somewhere by then that the larger is your email list, the more chances you had to sell your product.

My list at the time had over 500 people, and I would send them updates religiously every week, but I only got 2-4 skype students out of it over 4 years.

Not a high return on my investment, considering that over the 4 years I had spent close to \$800 on that particular email marketing service.

So after some time I decided that **email list wasn't working for me**, so I closed the account and went back to teaching 1:1 students trying to sell them my e-courses and e-books.

Fast forward 2 years.

Today $\frac{2}{3}$ of my business revenue is generated by my list. I don't personally know all the people who buy my e-books, trainings, e-courses and programs, but the majority of them are my subscribers.

So, I went back to email marketing to generate sales after all, and they “suddenly” began picking up.

Is this some magic bullet, luck or something else?

One thing that has changed since my last unfortunate product sales experience is *strategy*. I now know exactly what I am supposed to sell, who to sell to and how to *make repeat sales*.

From my conversations in the [Opted out group](#) I hear teachers wanting to create and sell a course, but without *strategy* any product quickly becomes a liability, not an asset.

Just like my “super cool” e-textbook that I put together years ago that I was only able to sell to my skype students at the time, and it hasn’t been selling since I stopped teaching 1:1.

So if you would like to create a product, sell it and have **repeat sells that grow exponentially**, there’re 10 things that you can do to make sure this *will happen*.

Eye-opener: Sales aren’t magic or luck. Just like with language learning we know it’s not about magic, but about strategy, sales are determined by the following factors that you need to examine **before** you choose you can set up a paypal button.

10 factors that determine your product sales.

This post covers only 3 factors, and the rest are available for my VIP clients only. To become a VIP customer and get access to all the 10 factors that determine sales, purchase the product featured at the bottom of the post.

- Define your niche.
- Define your ideal customer.
- Build your list strategically.
- Create content consistently.
- Become a social media PRO.
- Communicate with your subscribers.
- Get a coach or buy a course to help you advance quickly.
- Create your MVP/MVE (minimum viable product/experience).
- Work on your sales page copy.
- Create a launching event, launch.
- BONUS: Follow up.

Define your niche.

Many people look at a niche as a category, i.e. they want to include in it as many things as they can. However, a niche specifically targets **one area**, focuses on **one group of people** (not by language or any other demographic descriptors, but more by personality), and solves a **specific set of problems** (better yet: one problem).

Beware that “I teach pronunciation” isn’t a niche, it’s a category that you use to describe it to outsiders who don’t know much about language learning. To be successful at sales you need to communicate your niche in a simple way that will appeal to your *ideal customer*.

Define your ideal client.

So the second part of your niche finding is thinking *whose problems* you're trying to solve with your services and products. People may call it your "target audience," but I prefer using a singular and say that my product/service benefits *this ideal client*.

Here's where teachers go too wide again:

- Define their audience by the language they speak *only*.
- Define their audience by their origin *only*.
- Define their audience by *a set of* features (too wide).

Here's an example of a wide "target audience" (hence I recommend you begin using the phrase "ideal client," because you have to be more specific when you do that):

I teach Russian-speaking students how to become fluent in English.

This may bring you some students, but it won't sell a course or an e-book. I've tried it myself without much success, but you're welcome to spend the next year or so proving me wrong.

Build your list strategically

I have said somewhere that I used to have 500 people on my list that never bought anything. Because I had a wide niche and no ideal customer concept, my list had a “compelling” call to action, “**sign up for my newsletter.**”

The 500 subscribers weren't becoming clients.

Fast forward a few years, and I find myself teaching people how to build their lists strategically and monetize their content. **Case in point:** one of my clients has recently launched her MVP product to a list of 150 people and made 5 sales within a few days.

You may think it's easy, but consider that this client has only been building her list for 3 months, and this is her very first product.

Create content consistently.

When you have [zoomed in on your niche](#) and figured out who you are writing/podcasting/video blogging for, content creation is going to become much easier. Still, you need to create your calendar and stick to your schedule.

Another important point is your content isn't just there to share ideas pertaining to your niche. The best piece of content compels the readers **to take action.**

After my [last week's post](#), I received an email from somebody who knew they had been relying on luck for too long and needed a strategy. They were ready to take a specific action that I had “programmed” into my blog post: **be strategic.**

I call this “programming” designing a **core message**. That’s when people respond and say, “wow, that’s me. I need this. Please help me get there.”

It’s not a gimmick or a con artistry (I hope none of us are into it). **It’s the value that you bring that makes your content actionable and your readers - action-ready.**

Become a social media PRO.

The best advice I read on social media that now guides everything I do is, “90% of your content has to be somebody else’s, and only 10% - yours.” Guy Kawasaki wrote about it in his book [*The Art of Social Media*](#).

Do you ever stress about what to put on social media? I used to wonder how people could put 80% of their own content and felt badly I had so little time to *create* the cute banners or unique “quotes.”

Now I just follow other bloggers and share their excellent posts with my audience. It’s a win-win: my audience gets exceptional content, and I stop stressing over what to post next.

Communicate with your subscribers

Another unfortunate thing that happens even to the experienced teachers, even to those who “know what they’re doing” is they stop communicating with their audience.

They write one email and then “run out of ideas” or “feel like they don’t know what to write about,” or “haven’t written anything *worthwhile*.”

In essence, these are just excuses. But if you make them please realize that with each lost opportunity to communicate you lose your chance to *sell something in the future*.

Imagine if you just receive an email, out of the blue, with a product offer. Would you buy? Most likely you’d say, “Who is this person and why should I even trust them?”

Trust is developed by providing value, and this in turns gives you **the right** to launch and promote your product/services *in the future*.

Get a coach.

So we think we know everything or at least we know where to get our answers. I get it. I used to be an A-student at school and graduated with honors and a high GPA without even trying hard.

As teachers we do get a bit timid when it comes to asking somebody for help. Not that we dislike learning. **Perhaps we like it too much and don't want to trust anybody else to teach us?**

Anyhow, I've discovered that certain things can be learned faster if we have somebody to help us get to our goal faster. So get a coach. Find a course that will help you solve the problem. Most importantly, allocate the time for learning.

Having a map saves you a lot of time. Stop meandering aimlessly.

Create your MVP/MVE (minimum viable product/experience)

I remember my first and only experience crocheting. I started out exploring this hobby by crocheting a poncho. You may imagine how *that* ended. The worst thing that it looked so beautiful (and simple) in the magazine, and I felt like a big fat failure.

We may sometimes be overly ambitious and decide to create an epic course or a pillar program when we have no experience selling a \$5 book.

Start small. Small is more viable, takes less time to put together, will give your readers a wonderful experience of buying from you, and will teach you the basics of sales and marketing.

Work on your sales page copy

Most of the time sales increase when your copy is clear and to the point.

Obviously, to succeed at copywriting you need to know your niche and your ideal customer. People don't just buy because you told them so or because you created some awkward, off-the-wall urgency.

The challenge with copywriting is that it doesn't always depend on how well you write. Obviously, if you write regularly, certain things will be easier, **but a copy that prompts people to buy is more than the subject-verb agreement.**

If you want to hone your writing skills I recommend these two courses that have helped me write more easily.

- [Cathy Presland, *Becoming a Writer*](#). This is a well-structured, self-paced e-course that will help you nail down the basics of non-fiction writing. Excellent for beginning bloggers or teachers who can't get over their academic writing style.
- [Veronika Palovska, *Write with Clarity and Confidence*](#). This is a customized email coaching program for online teachers that want specifics. It's practical and to-the-point. You discuss what you want to work on (your blog posts, your "about me" page, your sales page, etc.), and Veronika will create a syllabus and will guide you through your writing process.

Create a launching event. Launch.

Many teachers think that by creating a few posts on the day of the launch or writing a few emails they are going to get the maximum sales they want.

Your launch is like your big celebration that everyone has to anticipate and then take part in. Make it big, no matter how small your product is. Ask for help. Promote through social media, not only through your channels but through others' as well.

It's also important to *launch*. There's a tendency to put it off, polish it up, make it better, become "more experienced," etc. But while you're making yourself "ready" there're other people there who're launching something you're still wishing to launch.

Bonus: Follow up.

About 50% of my sales happen *after the launch*. In fact, many happen on the day that I close the cart.

Following up then becomes essential if you want to sell your product. There're so many times when I receive an offer and think, "This is great. I need to buy that." Then I forget or wait for my next reminder.

These days I send 3-4 emails following up on my initial offer in the launch, and many buy on the last day.

Life gets in the way, and we need reminders. Hence sales aren't just about posting a product listing and holding on to the rabbit foot.

There's a lot of work that goes before and after your product launch, so be sure to get your ducks in a row.

Again, here're 10 factors to consider if you want to boost your sales:

- Define your niche.
- Define your ideal customer.
- Build your list strategically.
- Create content consistently.
- Become a social media PRO.
- Communicate with your subscribers.
- Get a coach to help you with your most painful areas.
- Create your MVP/MVE (minimum viable product/experience).
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Thanks for reading until the very end. Would you like to create a product but are still unsure about your niche/ideal client? Book [a short brainstorming session](#) with me so I can help you navigate through this.

- Elena

