



Episode 9: Selling Courses Online and My Experience With Udemy

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Hey everybody what's up? Welcome to podcast number 9, where I'm going to be talking about selling online courses and my experience with Udemy. Let me spell it, because a lot of people think I'm saying "you to me" when I tell them about it, but it's [udemy.com](https://www.udemy.com). So, it's like "u" and "academy" run together. Udemy.

As many of you know, I launched my first paid course last year. I started in the summer. I launched a free course for creating animated videos, and it got really good reviews, did really well, and of course, a lot of people signed up because it's free. So, I thought, "I'm going to stick with this platform, and I'm going to also launch my Photoshop course as well, and then maybe some others." You can see all of my courses at 2createawebsite.com/courses.

The first paid course I launched was my Photoshop course, and I wanted to do some testing. I really wanted to see if I was going to be able to get any sales for that course without announcing it to my audience, so I had it out there on the marketplace for about 2 weeks or so before I launched it to my list.

I gave away some free coupons, because you obviously don't want to launch a course and have, you know, zero students enrolled. You want to have some social proof, and I got a couple of reviews. They were pretty good.

And to my surprise and to my delight, about a week or two after having the course out there, I got a couple of sales from Udemy directly, and one of the sales was from a paid ad that they ran, which was very encouraging, and it should be very encouraging to those of you who are listening and maybe you don't have a large audience or an email or an active following. You can actually make some money without that.

Now, having said that, I think one thing that's very important is the subject matter. Obviously there are certain subjects that are going to sell better than others, right? For example, any type of course on any current software or technology or making money online, those types of courses are always going to do well.

But there are also some successful courses out there on public speaking. I've seen some successful courses in the health arena. So you don't necessarily have to go in the tech or computer or make money or online business arena, BUT those topics tend to be more in-demand, and I said earlier that they tend to do better. I should have said that they tend to do better if the course gets good reviews. I don't want to make it sound like it's an instant money maker if you just put a course out there. I know that goes without saying, but you know, you have to make yourself clear sometimes. And obviously, if you already have an audience, you can be successful with almost any topic.

So on the 30th of the month I sent out an email to my list launching my Photoshop Course and my Affiliate Marketing Course. And I gave a big discount to everybody on my list. So from the 30th of that month through the 30th of the next month, I made about \$3,000... close to \$3,000. It was a limited time promo so it only ran for a few days.

So let's talk about email marketing for a second. You guys know I'm always talking about the importance of having and nurturing a list. I didn't do that in the beginning, and when you launch things like this, this is when you see the importance of email marketing. The industry average for open rates for Internet Marketing is about 23-25%. My open rate is right in that ballpark. Now that doesn't sound very good and a big part of that for me I know is that for years I did not send to my list at all.

So I did a split test and I sent the same email out to the people who've been on my list since I've been sending more regularly and the people I'd never sent to. The open rate for the people I never send to regularly was 4%. The open rate for the people I send to regularly was in the 50s or 60s I can't remember. It was somewhere between 50 and 60 percent. Big big difference. So my overall email open rate is usually somewhere in the 20 percentile because of so many inactive subscribers. And because I'm on a Grandfathered account with AWeber and I have a super super low price, I can't prune my list like a lot of you guys can and get rid of those dead, inactive subscribers.

Now some people will say that email marketing is dead because of social media and all the email filters like the Gmail promotion filter. Yes, of course things like that impact email marketing but I don't think it's dead. I think you have to learn how to engage your list. And it's been an ongoing challenge for me as an Internet Marketer. But no, I don't think email marketing is dead and I disagree with people who say that.

So if you listen to nothing else in this podcast, listen to this. Collect emails but engage your list from early on. Even if that means using something like the AWeber blog broadcast feature where you're sending just your new blog posts out to your list. Because when I started doing that, that really really helped my open rates. So at least now I'm at the industry average, now I just want to improve that.

So after that first month, once I started getting some good reviews from the people that took the course, then I started getting more

sales from the Udemy marketplace.

Now I have to say this because every time I announce earnings people always want to compare or they want me to estimate what they can earn. Obviously it's going to vary on the course that you teach and whether or not you have an existing audience. Obviously if you have an existing audience, that's going to help you earn faster. But if you're relying on Udemy, then things may be a little bit slower in the beginning. But it just depends. So I don't want you to guys to compare or try to use what I've done as an estimate because it's really impossible to estimate how well somebody is going to do.

Now, let me talk a little bit about the Udemy earnings and how the commissions work. If you refer somebody to your course through a coupon, then you get 97% of the sale. If Udemy refers the sale, meaning if somebody finds your course on the marketplace, then you get 50%. If an affiliate refers your sale, then you get 25%, and if a sale is referred through Udemy's ad program, then you get 25%.

It took me a little time to wrap my head around all this, because it's easy to think, "Wait a minute, I'm not going to give away 50% or 75% of my earnings. That's crazy!" But if you think about it, for those last three scenarios, you are not referring the sale. That sale is coming from an external source, so these are people buying your course that may have never purchased your course ever, so that's money you would not have had. Remember: you get 97% of the sale, if you refer it yourself.

And let me talk a little bit about pricing. Udemy recommends that you charge anywhere between \$25 to \$50 per hour for your course, but that's not set in stone. I mean, you obviously want to look at your competition, and if your course is not really worth that price, then obviously you wouldn't charge that price, because then you'll end up getting bad reviews, which will really shoot you in the foot if you get too many of those. So, you want to be fair.

I don't agree with the strategy that some people use where they bump up the price to like \$500 and then give away coupons for like

\$20. I mean, I understand it's marketing. That's fine to do if your course really is worth \$500, but I just don't like that. I mean, my courses at the high end are still, in my opinion, worth that price for the target market or the people that I'm targeting, so I just try to be fair when it comes to that, because some people do actually buy at the retail price.

Now, there are some obvious disadvantages to using a site like Udemy. For example, when you're selling a product on somebody else's platform, you don't really own that customer; they own it. I mean, yes, you can promote your other courses to students in your paid courses (not your free ones), but you can't send emails about anything else. It has to be about your other Udemy courses. So, that's one big disadvantage. I can understand why some people may be turned off by that.

The advantage, though, is that it's very easy. If you've never done a paid course before, they kind of walk you through the process. Your customers can watch your videos on their iPads, their iPhones. You can create coupons very easily. And, as I said earlier, you have the advantage of getting sales from the marketplace, and these are people that may have never found your course in the first place, and this is especially true if you don't have an existing audience. Like I said in the beginning of the podcast, I got sales for my Photoshop course before I even launched. I don't remember how many it was. I would say, maybe 3 or 4. It wasn't a lot, but yeah, I did get some sales before I launched it to my list.

And as your course gets better ratings, you'll get more organic sales through the marketplace. And then how much obviously is going to depend on how in demand that topic is. I don't want to say exactly what you can expect because that is going to vary from course to course.

And I could be wrong, but it also seems like Udemy does give the new courses a little boost in the beginning when they first launch them, which is helpful, because not everybody has a big audience, so it sort of gives everyone a fair shot.

So yeah, there are a lot of pros and cons of being on Udemy, but there is a way to get the best of both worlds. What I notice some people do, and shout-out to Rob Cubbon of RobCubbon.com. He was my Udemy mentor as I was going through this process. He's done really well on the platform, and what he did is he started out on Udemy for the first year or two, and now he's selling courses from his own site.

So, it's important for me to mention that Udemy does not own rights to your course. You retain all rights, so you can sell it anywhere you want. You can start out on Udemy and then also sell your courses on your own site later, if you want, as well.

Once you build up some good reviews on your courses, over time, your courses will start earning a little bit more regularly from the Udemy marketplace, and so then you'll have this passive income coming in from Udemy. And then, once you've built that up, you can also build up another stream of revenue on your own site. But the good thing about starting on Udemy is that you can build up some passive income, provided your courses are getting good ratings, of course, and then when you develop some traction on Udemy, that can be like a set-it-and-forget-it model, because it will then start to sell itself because you get good reviews, and Udemy will promote your course more.

Yes, if your course is selling well, they will run AdWords ads on your courses. In fact, here's a funny story. I was on my website back in December, I think it was, and I looked over in the right-hand column where my AdSense ads are, and I saw an ad for my affiliate marketing course.

Now remember when they refer a sale from an ad, you only get 25%. So you can opt out of those extra promotions if you want to but my thought on that is, why? Because it took me a while to get to that point. I understand what people are saying. "It doesn't make sense to discount my courses that much", but keep in mind, you're getting new students. These are new students that you can then promote your other courses to, and Rob Cubbon really had to help me think that through, because it took me a while to get

there.

Remember: these are people that would have never found your course to begin with. Remember that.

What I love about Udemy is I tend to have a lot of knowledge on a lot of different things, and some of the things may not be relevant to my website visitors (or as relevant), so I would be interested in trying some other topics, maybe not related to website building, just to see how they do because they have such a big audience. If your course is done very well, then you can do well without having a list. I do believe that. I think it's just about teaching the right subjects, because obviously some subjects are going to do better than others.

So yeah, I definitely recommend checking into Udemy and seeing if it's something that you feel is a fit for you. Just keep those downsides in mind, as I already mentioned. But for me, it's really what my appetite to do more course creation, and I'm at a point where I feel like this is the area I definitely need to focus on.

Whether or not I stay on Udemy or eventually bring my courses onto my own site as well, I'm definitely going to be doing online courses, and I'm so disappointed in myself for taking so long to get to this point, because this is something you guys have been encouraging me to do for a long time. I just couldn't get it together. I mean, I was kind of stumbling over, "Well, should I host it on my Wordpress site? Should I do this? Should I do that?"

And let me talk a little bit about why I didn't go with Wordpress. I've been having some major technical issues with spambots in Wordpress, and I have tried different firewalls and plug-ins. I'm not a big fan of using too many plug-ins, but I've been trying a lot of different things, and that's a disadvantage of having a blog on make money online. Even though I'm on a dedicated server, you guys, I have been getting killed with bot traffic, so I've got these multiple log-ins for Wordpress and captcha codes all over the place, and so it really does not make for a good user experience for logging in. Obviously Wordpress is not the only way to host a course, but I've

just been going back and forth and working with my host on these issues, so I've been stalling, so I said, "Lisa, just get something out there."

That's why I decided to start with Udemy, and I have no regrets for doing it. As I said, it's just made me want to do more and more, and it's really made me want to learn more and go back into learning mode. Because when I first started with 2createawebsite, I was doing a lot of CSS and HTML and I was learning, and it's not that I ever really stopped learning. I mean, obviously I was learning different things, like internet marketing and SEO and AdSense, but I miss some of those things. I miss some of the technical parts of learning, and this year I really want to get back to learning.

If you don't see me or hear from me for a little while, it's because I'm going back to school, so to speak. I'm not literally going back to school, but ... Then again, I may go back to school and take maybe a day class once a week or something, because I am decent at Photoshop. I mean, I can teach a beginner's course. Obviously I have one out there, and I appreciate those of you all who left great reviews, but I want to do an intermediate course and an advanced course, and I really want to perfect my skills.

You guys, I have to say, working with Pinterest over the last year and then now starting to make money with Spreadshirt, it has really gotten me interested in this whole image design, t-shirt design ... And I look at it like this: if I've been able to do as well as I have been able to do with infographics and these t-shirts with my minimal knowledge, imagine if I just buckled down and really took the time to learn design. And I'm talking about core principles and the psychology of colors and what makes people click, and I'm talking about the basics, because I'm one of those self-taught people. I don't have a lot of formal training in the stuff that I teach, and I'd really like to get some of that, to be brutally honest.

I don't really want to be a web designer or anything like that, but I'm really interested in image design, infographics, t-shirt design, those kinds of things. I love it. I really spend a lot more time on it than I probably should have last year, but it's fun to me, and I really

want to perfect that skill, so I'm going to be taking some time this year to really learn more. And then, obviously, the ultimate goal would be to then teach what I learn.

I've got this beginner's Photoshop course out there now. The next step would then be to do an intermediate course or an advanced course. Because someone even left a review and said, "Hey, I'm looking forward to your advanced course," and I thought to myself, "Yeah, okay, when I get more advanced."

I have a tendency to have a lot of small pockets of knowledge on a lot of different subjects, and I really just want to focus and learn a lot about one thing, instead of having these bits and pieces of knowledge everywhere. That's just a personal goal for me.

I would love to do an infographic course for people, but I don't feel like I'm at a place yet that I can teach it. I want to learn more, because let me tell you guys: Napturally Curly last year had a record traffic year of 1.2 million views. Yes, from 800,000 in 2013. A lot of that was due to Pinterest and those infographics that I was creating.

You guys listened to the podcast that I did on Spreadshirt, podcast number 7 2createawebsite.com/podcast7. A lot of the shirts that you see on my site right now, I am learning to do myself. I took a picture of a friend of mine and turned it into some artwork for a shirt, and so I'm getting better, but I want to perfect that so I can then teach it.

So yeah, you guys, this is going to be a year for learning for me and really perfecting my skills on certain areas, like graphics and Photoshop and just taking things to the next level, so I can then teach it, because I really do enjoy doing the course, and everyone's feedback has been really great, so that's encouraging.

The other site I wanted to talk about is Skillfeed. Skillfeed is a little different than Udemy. It's a membership site, so people sign up for \$19 a month, and they have access to every single video that's been uploaded. Well, as a course creator or a video creator, you can

upload your videos or your courses, and you get paid by views, so I uploaded my courses to Skillfeed as well, but I haven't made that much money, like \$150 in the last three months, so it hasn't really been anything worth talking about, to be honest, but that's still \$150 I didn't have three months ago.

I've learned that there are certain types of videos that do better. Generally the shorter videos tend to do better on Skillfeed, as opposed to the full courses that you would do for Udemy, so I may experiment a little bit more with that as well this year.

But as I said, you guys, I'm going to go into full learning and course mode for 2015. It doesn't mean I'm going to just stop blogging and doing YouTube videos, but you may see a lot less of me, at least in the early part of the year, because I'm really trying to focus and get back to learning.

Video creation is really fun for me, and I'm always saying, "Find what you love, and find a way to make money from it," and that's exactly what I want to do. Making videos and teaching are my two favorite things, so why not focus on that and do more of that? Because it just seems to make sense for me.

So yes, guys, I would highly recommend checking out Udemy. It's got advantages. It's got disadvantages. I feel like I went over a handful of them here. If you have any questions, feel free to leave me a question at 2createawebsite.com/podcast9, and once I've been selling courses for at least six months to a year, I do plan to do a more thorough blog post or podcast on Udemy. I'm still pretty new to the platform and still learning a lot, so I didn't want to dedicate too much of this podcast to specific strategies and stuff yet, because I want to save it. And who knows, I may end up doing a course on that as well, but I'm just not ready to give a whole dissertation on Udemy, what to do, what not to do yet, because I'm still learning. That's why I'm sort of giving generics right now and not real specifics, because I want to make my mistakes and all that stuff now, so I can teach you guys what to do and what not to do.

Plus, I don't know how many of you have realized this, but usually

between Thanksgiving and New Years, I really tone it down. I don't really do much at all, because that's family time for me. That's the time of the year where I really just take a break and only do minimal stuff, like check email, check the forums and those kinds of things, so I don't really feel like I've been doing a lot with Udemy yet, other than announcing it to a portion of my list.

I want to do a lot more experimenting, but I hope, for those of you who have been struggling with ways to make money from your site, or if you've maybe even discovered that you don't like blogging, but you really want to make some money online, maybe you can look into Udemy to see if there are some opportunities there?

One way to check and see what's really popular on Udemy is to do some keyword searches for whatever you're interested in and see how many courses are on that particular subject, and if you see a lot of courses on those subjects, then you know that there are people looking for that information.

Now, you can look at that two ways. You can say, "Well, doesn't that mean that it's super saturated?" Well, yes, it could be saturated if everybody is doing courses on the same thing, but what you can do is you can take a subject and do a niche course for that subject. In other words, instead of doing a course on Photoshop, you would do a course on how to alter people in Photoshop. Just focus on that one thing.

Here's another example. Instead of doing a course on just Kindle or how to create a book for Kindle, just do a course on Kindle marketing or ways to get more earnings for your book. So, you would take a popular topic that people are searching for and then narrow that down to a specific niche. Hopefully that makes sense.

And don't just use how many students are students enrolled in any given course to determine what's popular because student enrollment is very easy to inflate. A lot of people give away coupons to their existing students or they leave their courses out there for months and months so they're free for a long time. And that can inflate the enrollment. So you can't just go by that to

gauge what is popular. So look at the collection of courses on any given topic and make sure that the reviews are recent. If you see a course with 30,000 students enrolled and two reviews and the last review was two years ago, that course is probably not that popular. And it doesn't necessarily mean that that topic is hot. That's why you have to look at the collection of courses on that topic.

And this is for people that don't have an existing following. Obviously if you have a following you can do a course on anything. But if you're looking to capitalize on the Udemy marketplace without much of a following, you really need to figure out what is selling.

So, my moral of the podcast is Udemy can definitely work, but I do think it's important, especially if you don't have a large audience, is to find a topic that people are actually interested in learning about. There's a guy on there that has a course on iOS 8 and he's killing it, because that's something that's relevant and popular, and it's technology. Those types of courses are always going to do well, if you can teach them well.

But the good news is Udemy sent out an email right after I joined, and they were talking about how topics other than technology are now starting to get much more popular on these online course sites, because so many people are going online to learn now, instead of going to universities or community colleges. So, I think that's a really good thing for those of you who may be looking to make some extra money or you're thinking about launching a course, and you don't necessarily have a lot of people on your list to promote it to, so give it a try. The thing is, you have nothing to lose but time, so you might as well just give it a go and see how it works.

Thanks everybody for listening. I'm looking forward to 2015, looking forward to learning and then hopefully teaching what I learn. If you want to check out my courses, you can go to 2createawebsite.com/courses, and you can see all of them there. Some are free, some are paid.

And also, a big thank you to those of you who have purchased any of

my courses. I really do appreciate you. I have decided that, going forward, I'll make sure when I give out coupons to new courses, I will always make sure the people enrolled in my existing courses get the best coupons, and then my email list second, and so forth.

I'm learning and I'm experimenting, so thanks for listening, everybody, and I'll chat with you later.