ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to grow an e-learning project: step by step guide

We explore the steps you can take to expand your business from a single course to a broader and more profitable offer.

If you are an online course creator and you have successfully launched, marketed and sold your course, now you just have to expand your business. Moving from one course to a platform offering several courses is not easy and requires a lot of planning.

If you have created a **successful eLearning course** you just have to expand your offer and expand your business. If you want to improve your online course offer and build an "education empire", you will need some strategies. From automated feedback loops, to outsourcing, to building partnerships and collaborations, there are many methods you can use to expand your business. In this article we explore the first steps you can take to grow from a single course to a larger, more profitable offering.

The role of the feedback loop

The first thing to do when your courses attract a constant number of students is to implement feedback loops. These tools are especially crucial when it comes to eLearning because they allow you to improve your course offerings.

What is a feedback loop?

This English term refers to a process of collecting as many comments from users as possible in order to improve and optimise a product or service.
Feedback loops are the best way to make sure that those selling a product are doing it right. In the case of online course creation, feedback loops are crucial to adapt and change course content to the needs of learners.

How to get feedback?

The best way to get feedback is to ask users to complete short **questionnaires**.
The first things to keep in mind if you want to get results you can put into practice are simplicity and speed. Ask students what can be improved and if they have any comments or suggestions to make. In doing so, remember that students are not going to spend more than two minutes filling in a questionnaire, so be concise and clear.

Another method of collecting feedback is through **meetings with students**. These can be group meetings or individual meetings with each student. It is important to bear in mind that several studies claim that one-to-one meetings are preferable to group meetings because they allow more information to be gathered than a group meeting and offer the possibility of obtaining more detailed information. In these one-to-one interviews, there is the possibility to go deeper into the issues by asking specific questions and going into detail about the problems raised.

Moreover, this approach allows teachers to get an idea of how it feels to be a student in their course and this is crucial for training providers.
This method of collecting feedback has two main limitations: it is time consuming and it is usually not possible to reach all course participants. Online questionnaires are quicker and can reach everybody.

A crucial aspect to get the most out of feedback loops is to know from whom to seek them. If you have created a successful course, you will probably have many students who have become attached and keep coming back, but also students who sometimes cancel the lesson or the payment plan.
Usually you focus on the loyal customers to keep them coming back, and you pay less attention to those who cancel the lesson and perhaps never come back. In collecting and analysing feedback, however, the feedback from the person who cancelled their payment plan is probably more useful. Indeed, if the goal is to expand your business it is crucial to understand why people who cancel a lesson or a payment plan have left.

For these reasons it is not sufficient to create only one type of questionnaire to be sent out at the end of each lesson. You have to create several questionnaire formats and each one has to have its own purpose. There are many strategies to adopt, each specific to the conditions of your business, but in general it can be said that it is good to create:

- questionnaires to be sent at the end of each lesson to all students
- a more in-depth monthly questionnaire in which you go into more detail about ideas/problems/comments raised in the feedback collected after each lesson
- targeted questionnaires for those who unsubscribe from your courses.

With this information you can start to get a general idea of your students' impressions and have a starting point on which to design any changes to your courses.

How do I automate feedback loops?

Fortunately, there are plenty of platforms online that offer these services. There are both paid services and free solutions. The most popular free solution is to automate emails to all the students in your classes. The only thing you need to do is to create a set of questionnaires and schedule the emails according to your strategy.

Implement feedback

The last thing to do once you have the feedback is analysis. Once you have collected the information from the students you need to study and identify recurring themes or problems. Problems can be simple, such as a simple typographical error, but also complex, such as a course not being effective. Whatever the problem it is crucial to act by correcting the content or structure of your course. This is the only way to optimise your courses.

Other methods to expand your business

If you want to turn your course into a platform offering several courses it is not enough to implement a feedback loop. With feedback you are able to improve your services, but to expand your business you need something else.

Automate repetitive processes

One of the most useful processes for those who want to expand their online course business is the automation of repetitive processes. In the same way as feedback loops, automating these processes saves time that can be spent on business development or simply on what you enjoy.
The activities to be automated depend on the business strategy, so it is difficult to suggest a list of processes to be automated. In general, some of the most convenient processes to automate for those working in the e-learning world are:

- Welcoming students
- Scheduling appointments
- Issuing certificates and awards
- Posting on social media
- Managing marketing emails
- Building a mailing list
- Administrative tasks
- Data backup
- Personalised advertising

Outsourcing activities

Another way to save valuable time for growing your business is to outsource certain activities. All those activities that do not need your direct input can be performed by other people. Outsourcing is paying a person or a company to perform tasks for you. It is different from automation because if a process is repetitive, it can be automated. However, some processes do not need direct supervision but are not repetitive, so it is not possible to automate them. In this case one relies on external companies or

consultants.
An external consultancy can be expensive, especially for those who are just starting to expand their business. Fortunately, the internet is a great help here as well, because you can find several freelancer platforms ready to help you at lower prices. Freelancers are individuals who are experts in a specific field and make their talents available on dedicated online platforms. The big advantage is the low prices of their services and the ability to create tailor-made strategies for your company (unlike some companies that offer the same service packages to all companies).

Create partnerships and collaborations

A key activity in expanding your online course business is **creating partnerships and collaborations to expand your audience**. Once your course is successful, start looking around for partnerships. Identify brands that have a similar audience to yours but are not competitors. Contact them and ask if you can participate in one of their videos or write an article about you and your business. This is a great way to attract new people to your site and strengthen your reputation in your market.

Affiliate programmes

Once you have a steady number of customers and your channel is showing signs of growth, companies will start to look at you with interest. Partnerships and collaborations with other brands will allow you to attract the attention of companies who want to promote their products on your channels. This is a quick and easy way to earn more money from your content and get free services for your courses. Keep in mind that if you can promote the products of big, well-known companies in your market, your reputation will soar.

Brand building

Partnerships and collaborations are particularly useful to **strengthen your brand authority**. Use partnerships to create new content such as expert interviews, podcasts, creating blogs with useful tips and encourage your users to share your content. All of these activities will build a reputation around your brand with the aim of it becoming a reference point within the market in which you operate. This way you will get more and more customers and it will be easier to keep the ones you have.

Once you've managed to expand your business, don't think you've done it! To maintain what you have built up so far you need to make sure that your offer always meets the needs of your customers. So don't stop sending out questionnaires to your customers to improve your offer.

Read also: " **Training organizations: how to increase sales of online courses**".

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