

*PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.*

I built my online career as a techie VA. I've never been afraid to dabble with CSS code or HTML or even PHP or JavaScript when it's called for. I've never met a shopping cart or an email platform or a website builder that I couldn't figure out. I spend all day at my desk in front of my laptop. So with all of that said, it might surprise you to learn that the tool that actually runs my business and my life is not digital. It's 100 % analog. This is episode 138 of the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, and today I want to talk to you about how I run my business and my life with nothing more than a stack of 3 by 5 index cards.

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Hey, it's Cindy and thank you for spending a few minutes of your day with me. You'll find the show notes and the recommended resources below the video on YouTube or if you are listening in your podcast app, they will be at [TinyCourseEmpire.com/138](https://TinyCourseEmpire.com/138).

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So with that out of the way, let's dig into how these index cards really work to run my business and my life. Today I'm going to share kind of my workflow and the different things that I use these index cards for and how I use them and why I use them. So let's talk about that. The first thing that I want to say is that I use index cards for pretty much everything so over here on my desk, if you are watching this on YouTube, I will show you my setup.

Over here on my desk, I have this little plastic thing. So it's a white plastic box and I have several stacks of different sizes of index cards in here and all my pens and my stickers and paper clips and all kinds of other stuff kind of stuck in this box within easy reach when I'm sitting here at my desk. So what that means is that whenever a thought pops into my head or I hear something that I want to remember, or I think of a task that I need to do, or I think of a phone call that I need to make, or I think of a piece of content that I want to write, I can grab an index card out of my box and jot it down.

And then I can just drop this index card with that reminder to myself back in my box. And I go through those later. So that's really the beginning of everything it is my some, I guess some people call it a second brain, right these index cards are my second brain. It is where I put anything that I want to make sure that I don't forget. Whether it's something I need to remember to do, someone I need to remember to call, something I want to remember to tell you about, something I want to remember to tell 6 figure systems members about, something I want to remember to include in a course, or even just something interesting I heard that I want to think about later.

It all starts life on an index card and the reason that I use index cards is because they're just really easy to grab. I can take 3 seconds and jot down a note to myself without becoming distracted from whatever other project I might be working on or the the coaching client that I'm talking to i can jot these things down. It doesn't make any noise you know what you can't hear my keyboard clacking, it doesn't take me away from what I'm doing. I literally just jot three or five or seven words down to myself and set it aside so it's really quick.

I'm not invested in these index cards i tear them up and throw them away or I save them for later or, you know, it doesn't really matter i don't care if I spill coffee on them. None of that whereas I also have a keep a notebook i keep a journal and that journal is, I act like it's a bit precious let's say it's it's an expensive journal they're like 25 bucks or 28 bucks apiece so I spend a little bit of money on them and I want to make sure that the words that I write in them are, I don't know, less messy, more clear i'm more careful with my journal, let's just say then I am with my stack of index cards because I can throw those away and not care what happened to it.

I'm not attached to them in any way so that's why I use index cards for these kinds of quick capture notes. Then at the end of the week, or maybe every two weeks, maybe twice a week, depends on how many cards I have collected in that time, I have this big stack of cards that I have written on you can see they're all here. And then I will go through those cards and decide what happens to them from there. So I use index cards for things like project planning, I use them for course planning i use them for. I use them for content planning i use them for random quotes that I want to remember i use them for journaling prompts.

Like I said, anything that I want to be sure to remember or think about later or do in some way or add to some project gets added to an index card so once I collect a bunch of these, and you can see them here if you're watching on video, but there's a stack of probably 20 index cards here that are have notes on them so once I have this collection, I get to the end of the week usually I do this like on Sunday. I can go through my index cards and say, OK, now what needs to happen with all of these cards what exactly are these? So for example, here's a card with notes on it about some electronics that I need to upgrade.

I want to buy a new computer i want to buy a new Apple Watch. I need a new set of Airpods. I wrote myself a note here. Do I need to keep this? Probably not. I'm probably just going to throw this one away it was just a random note, something that came to mind as I was working one day and thought, I need to write this down, so I'm probably going to throw that card away. No big deal. Here's a card that I wrote while I was talking to a potential coaching client. Some notes about what she does, what she's looking to get from her business, what's going on in her business right now, and how she felt I could help her so I was taking these notes as I was speaking to her and there is a note at the top that says that I need to follow up with her on a date that she and I agreed to so this follow up request is going to go into my calendar and then I will save that card so that when I talk to her again I am reminded of what we talked about.

Then I have this note that says where am I choosing to play? How am I choosing to win? The capabilities we need to have in place, the systems that will achieve the goal? I have no idea. I wrote this a few days ago i have no idea what I was talking about, so I'm probably going to throw this one away i'm sure it was important at the time, but like I said, I am not attached to these cards. If I had written this in my notebook in my journal, I would feel like I had to do something with this because it was more permanently placed, right? But this is a note card i don't care i'm going to throw that away then this card is the headline on it is idea garden and it is a metaphor that I was working on.

I have a webinar coming up in January about idea gardening and I was kind of brainstorming, noodling on this metaphor about gardens and ideas and how we plant the seeds, the thoughts, the ideas, and we harvest the crop from our idea garden so watch for that metaphor to show up in that webinar that's coming up. So this is going to get added to my Idea Garden webinar stack, project stack. So all kinds of things like that are in this stack of note cards that I have collected over the past couple of weeks. And I will go through those and organize those into different areas of my life. So some of the areas that I use note cards for, we already talked about quick capture that's what that was.

Then all of that stuff gets resorted into different areas for example, I even you guys, this is very meta, but I even mapped out this episode of the Tiny Course Empire podcast on index cards so you see me looking down if you're watching the video

and you see me looking at looking at my desk, That's why I have my notes right here. So the first area that I might sort my notes into our project plans so anything that requires more than two or three steps is a project.

And those projects become a stack of note cards. So you will see here I have a stack of note cards titled inevitable success. This is when I was planning out my inevitable success coaching and there are cards in here that I have notes about what I want to say on the sales page and some resources that I want to create. And what's next for Inevitable Success graduates where do they go from there? I even have a little diagram that I drew of my favorite resource, which is evidence journaling and how that works to help to create Inevitable Success.

So all of my notes are in here about that project and anything in my index card inbox, which was that first stack that I showed you. Anything in that inbox that is related to inevitable success coaching would get sorted into this project planning stack.

Another thing that I use index cards for is personal reminders and I have a whole stack of index cards that are all things that I want to remember and there's a title card on here that says, read me and this is a stack of maybe 25 cards. And there are just things in here like quotes that I want to remember or journaling prompts that I want to think about. There's a card here that says it's easy to be 100 % committed. And this is a reminder to me that when we take away all of our other options, when we don't have to make the decision again and again and again, whether or not we are going to show up and write an email for the day when, we are one hundred % committed to that, it's much easier to follow through we don't have any other options and I wrote that down i think I heard that maybe from a weight loss coach.

And it is there as a reminder to me that if I commit 100 % to something, then I don't have to make the decision again and again and again. If I commit to eating healthy breakfasts every day, then I don't ever have to question, should I buy a doughnut because I'm 100 percent, 100 % committed to eating healthy so that's what that note is all about. Then I have a note here this is one of my favorites that says the good news is it's all my fault.

And I like this note and I heard this again from probably a mindset coach, but I like that note because it reminds me that everything that happens in my life and in my business is up to me now. Ok, there are a few exceptions there are illnesses. There are other things that we have no control over. But for the most part, everything that happens in my life and everything I have in my life and everything I have in my business is entirely up to me.

And that reminder that it is 100 % my fault means that if something goes wrong, if I'm not happy with the results that I'm getting, I have the power to fix it. So that note reminds me of that every day so if I'm having a bad day or I'm feeling down or I'm feeling like things are just not going my way, that reminder that everything is 100 % my fault kind of motivates me to take a different action.

So I have all of these notes in here. I have some quotes in here from Let's see Cody Sanchez is a favorite. She says you aren't where you aren't where you want to be because you haven't done what is necessary to get there so that is a favorite quote of mine from her. And I am also reminded that of this question, which is a good journaling prompt that I want to be reminded of sometimes.

What one thing, if it were true, would dramatically improve the quality of my life? And I could ask this about business, I could ask it about life, I could ask it about relationships. But by thinking about that one thing, it gives me the power to make the change so this whole stack of index cards here is kind of just it's almost like a morning affirmation, almost like a like a get U and and face the day with positivity and determination and set some intentions that really matter.

Oi, try to review this stack, maybe not every day, but at least a few times a week. And I got this idea actually from YouTube if you if you do a search on YouTube for index card vision boards, you will find a lot of people who use index cards in that way so that was a really good use of index cards that I've added to my repertoire recently.

Another way that I use index cards is as course or book outlines so for example, I am working on a course right now called compounding Content and I have this whole stack of index cards and you guys have seen these before if you have been on my

you've been on my sub stack if you're in my email, list I've showed pictures of these. These are really starting to come together you can see I have more organization in them now they're kind of separated by I've got like little sub stacks of of, of index cards separated with, with paper clips here so I've, I've got the, the lessons kind of mapped out and I'm still, you know, kind of working through this but every day when I sit down to work on this course, I sit down and I spread all of these cards out on my desk where I can see everything and I can start then filling in the blanks.

And some of those blanks come from this index card inbox that I've got sitting here. Because as I go through this stack, I will inevitably come across some ideas that are a good fit in the compounding content course. And then I will just shuffle those cards into this stack and they will be there when I'm ready to work on that resource next. So for outlining books, outlining courses, even outlining longer pieces of content, or even podcast episodes, index cards come in really handy for me for that. Another way I use them is to outline really big projects so for example, I might start with just a big brainstorming session.

So if I'm going to, maybe I want to rearrange the membership site, maybe I want to reorganize the membership site and I'm not saying I'm going to do this, but years ago when I did do this, that project started with a big stack of index cards and a big brainstorming session where I just wrote down everything that I thought I needed to do, 1 idea per card. And then just like creating a course, I can shuffle them around on my desk and see which ones kind of fit together and which ones really don't fit at all. And I can see where the gaps are and where maybe I'm overthinking it so it just gives me a really good visual overview of a big project.

And I can easily just clip all of those index cards together and store them away in my box here that I've got sitting on my desk so that the next time I'm ready to work on that project or ready to think about that project, I have all of the information there. Another way that I like to use index cards may be my favorite way is what I like to call idea gardening. And this is for those things that just catch my attention in some way. Maybe I'm reading a book and a statistic catches my attention, or a myth.

Just today, just as I'm recording this, just today, I found out that the idea of ego depletion is a myth. The idea that when we get towards the end of the day and we

think that we're, we're kind of too burned out, too tired, too exhausted to think anymore i can't possibly write that article i can't possibly. I can't possibly, you know, think about anything important right now i'm just going to sit and veg out in front of the TV.

We have been taught that as the day goes on, our brains get too worn out, too tired to function properly anymore. And that's actually a myth. I just found that out today. It is not true. We have the same amount of decision making capability, the same amount of willpower at the end of the day as we have at the beginning of the day. So I jotted that down on a note card and I'll probably share it somewhere in some piece of content later. But that goes into my idea garden and I can, when I'm looking for something, when I'm looking for something to create content around, when I'm looking for ideas to share, I can kind of flip through those cards and decide, you know, oh, that that seems like something fun I want to talk about today or oh, that fits in with my idea of, you know, this course that I want to create or it fits in with this podcast episode that I want to record.

So that's how an idea garden works it's my random thoughts and ideas, random observations that come up during the day that I might want to share or use somewhere later. Jot them down on a card, drop it in my index card box, and at some point later I will stumble across it and maybe use it or maybe not. So those are the big six ways that I am using index cards to run my business and my life. I use them for quick capture everything, every thought, every idea, every task, every quote, every interesting thing that crosses my desk or crosses my mind gets jotted down on an index card so I don't have to try to remember it and I can think about it later when I have time.

Then those quick capture cards get sorted into other piles or other stacks or other boxes. They get sorted into project plans if I am thinking about redesigning a sales page or building a new website, that's a project plan that has a bunch of cards in it that all came from that quick capture. Or maybe my cards get sorted into my personal reminder stack, think things that I want to personally think about or journal on or remember later.

Or they get organized into other big projects that I am working on. Or they get organized into my idea garden, which is kind of, I guess you could call it a



miscellaneous stack where anything goes any any random thought, any random idea fits in there and that may or may not turn into something more at a later date. I also had some questions that other people asked kind of more specific to index cards and how I use and organize them. Someone wanted to know, do I save the cards when my project is done or when my course is complete or when my book that I haven't written yet is completely written? There will be a book at some point.

Do I save those cards? I'm not really i'm not really a saving kind of person i don't save things once I have used them, I tend to throw them away unless I think that I'm going to find A use for them again in the future. So for example, a stack of index cards, the one for the compounding content course these these will become a slide deck so once the slide decks exist, I don't feel like I need the cards anymore, unless I'm going to then use those ideas in other content somewhere. I might just shuffle them back into my idea garden and let them marinate there until they're needed again.

How do I keep them organized is another question that I get quite often. I keep a box. So this box on my desk, this is just a a cheap little plastic basket that I picked up at Walmart for like 4\$ I keep that on my desk and I do have some divider cards in here, but mostly I just keep things organized with these cute little colorful binder clips or paper clips. Keep stacks of cards just, you know, kind of stuck together with those and I can flip through them and find what I need typically.

But I do have some some divider cards in here as well for bigger projects like compounding content. Those get their own box so this is just a little index card box that I bought on Amazon and everything related to compounding content is in here. The reason I keep that stuff in its own box is because I tend to accumulate hundreds of cards related to a course of this size, so I want to make sure that I have a way to keep them all together and all organized easily. What size cards do I use? You might have noticed I have both 3 by 5 cards and also 4 by 6 cards and I tend to use the three by 5 cards when I'm outlining a course or working on a longer content project.

The reason I like the smaller cards for that is because I can more easily spread them out on my desk i have kind of limited space here, so I like the smaller cards because they fit on my desk better. But if I am working on something else, then I do like the

bigger 4 by 6 cards because I can get more content on them. So for example, if I'm taking coaching notes or I am taking notes on a course that I'm taking or taking notes from a book that I'm reading, those tend to be on the 4 by 6 cards just because I can get more information on those cards.

And I don't typically spread them all out all over my desk all at one time so I can see everything all at once like I do with the course cards when I'm working on a new course. So that's how I run my business you guys, it's really, really simple that's how I keep everything organized it's how I come up with new content ideas it's how I keep my coaching notes organized it's how I plan big projects. It's how I plan out my courses. Everything is on three by five note cards and I have tried or three by 5 or 4 by 6 depends. I have tried all kinds of electronic ideas for this.

I've done this with Trello boards i have done this with note taking apps like Obsidian or Bear or Evernote. I have done this with Google Docs i have tried to do this in so many different ways that are digital, but I will tell you what for me, my brain and the way I work, being able to flip through a stack of index cards, there's just something about that that triggers better creativity in my head.

There's something about being able to scroll through my box of index cards and look at the things that I wrote down a week ago or a month ago or last year. Even when it's things like where am I choosing to play and I have no idea i have no idea what I was listening to or watching or reading when I wrote this down. Not a clue. But you never know when that thing that you wrote down kind of randomly is going to spark another idea. And for me, I find that I will flip back through my index cards quite frequently i will scroll through them.

If I put something in an electronic format, I am just as likely to never look at it again. So that's why I choose to do this analog style. It works for me and if it works for you, I say go for it. Maybe something that I have shared here with you today will trigger an idea for you and you can run with it and use index cards or a notebook or whatever works for you to grow your own business or manage your own life in a better way.

That's it for me today. Thank you for spending some time with me as we look through my random index card method of managing my life and my business. I hope you took something away from it if you have any questions or would like to see more of this kind of content, leave me a note below leave me a comment, let me know, I'd appreciate it. Thanks again for sharing a part of your day with me and I will catch you all again next week. Have a great day.

**TAKE THE NEXT STEP**

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systems that lead to  
**BIG RESULTS**  
even if you're brand new  
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