

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

When I started my first serious online business, I decided that I was going to offer technical services. I wanted to help people build websites, manage their shopping carts, and create membership sites. I was using a software called Digital Access Pass, and of course WordPress too, and I knew a thing or two about managing both of those.

So that's where I thought I should start. The husband asked me how was I going to market this tiny little business I wanted to start, and I told him that I would start with a blog and email marketing.

And one day he walked into my office and he found me recording a video for my blog about how to use Digital Access Pass to manage your affiliate program.

And he was kind of shocked. He was maybe a little bit horrified that I was doing that. He asked me how I expected people to pay me to work for them. If I was telling them right there on the blog in public how to do the work I was offering, they wouldn't need me if I told them all of my secrets, right?

Now, I know that a lot of small business owners have this very same concern. They're worried that if they share too much information for free on their blog, in a podcast, on a YouTube channel, or on Medium or Substack or LinkedIn, that they're going to dilute their sales, that their audience is going to get everything that they need just from that free content, and they're never going to be willing to pay for a coach or for a course, or for freelance services.

This is episode 77 of the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, and today we're going to dig into this idea of free content and how you can decide what information to give away for free versus what you sell.

# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO START, GROW, AND SCALE YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS

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And if you have a friend who could use this content, please share it with them as well. I would appreciate that so much.

Now today's episode is in answer to a question that I hear a lot, and it recently came up again on a [six figure systems Q & A call](#). So that made me think you might be concerned about sharing too much free content as well.

Let's start with some of the advice that I've heard about how much information to give away versus how much or what type of content you can sell. And then I'll tell you where I stand and I'll share some examples with you as well. The first advice I ever heard about what to give away versus what to sell was based on percents.

I've heard that you should give away 20% and sell 80% or give away 10% and sell 90%, and I've heard it the other way too, that you should sell 20% and give away 80%. And listen, you guys know me and you know how much I love math and spreadsheets and clear cut rules and checklists and all the things. But this just never made sense to me.

How do you calculate a percentage of content? Like, am I supposed to count words or pages or something else? I, I, I just don't know how this would work. I mean, it sounds good. It sounds good on paper, and I guess maybe the idea is just to kind of eyeball it and keep this ratio in mind when you're creating content.

But honestly, this just never sat well with me. It didn't work for me. Another bit of advice that I've heard is that you should give them step one and sell them all the rest of the processes. I think this can work in certain situations, but not as an overall content marketing strategy. For example, maybe you have a multi-module course and it's got a lot of lessons in it, and it follows a step by step format.

Maybe lesson one is the first step and lesson two is the next step, and so on and so on. In this case, if you have a higher ticket course, it can make a lot of sense to give away that first lesson. Maybe it gives your audience a sneak peek at what's inside. It helps them build some momentum, helps them get going on it, and for some of them it will help them to be ready for the next steps, which then you sell them when you sell them the rest of the course.

So in that scenario, I do like that division of free content versus paid content. I think it works in this situation. It doesn't translate so well into content marketing. You can't really write a blog or host a podcast or create a YouTube channel around just that one single step in the process. People need more information.

Now another commonly repeated advice that I've heard, and I have said this as well to many, many people, and that is to give away the what and maybe the why, and then sell them the how. This is most commonly used in reference to webinars. In fact, I'm pretty sure that's where I first heard it. The idea is that your webinar should tell people what they need to do.

Then your pitch at the end is to a course or other program. That provides the how. So for example, you can give your webinar attendees maybe the five steps to take to start an email list and then sell them a detailed course that walks them through each step. It works for blogging and podcasting and video creation and social media too.

If you're creating any piece of content. The idea is that you just don't go too deeply into the how to do something, just give people what the result is that they're looking for. In other words, if you're writing a blog post about, say, puppy training, you might give people the three most important commands that your puppy needs to learn and why they're important.

But you wouldn't want to go into any real detail about how to teach, sit, and come and leave it, or if you did, You'd give them just the surface level attention and not really include any troubleshooting ideas or how to actually get your dog to come to you in the first place so you can teach them to repeat that habit or anything at all that's really genuinely useful.

You give them the what and you give them the why, and then offer them the how in your course or your book or your private training sessions. Now that seems like good advice, and like I said, I've talked to clients about this. I've told people that they should do this, but. The more I think about it, the more I don't like this advice.

It just doesn't hold water for me anymore. I think it's doing a disservice to your audience, and I think it is not serving you either. So here's my take on the what to give away versus what to sell idea. I just don't spend any time at all thinking about it. Let me repeat that. I do not spend any effort or any energy thinking about the difference between the content that I give away for free here on the podcast here, or on my blog or in guest posts or on webinars.

I don't spend any time thinking about whether or not I'm giving away too much for free. First of all, because I know that you can learn anything online for free. I've said this for years. Nothing I teach is proprietary. I haven't invented any new and innovative ways of running a membership site or managing an email marketing campaign.

And honestly, if you watch enough YouTube and read enough blog posts, you can learn absolutely everything you need to get started online. That's exactly how I got started. I. I didn't have the money to pay for courses, so I read a lot and I paid attention and I learned on my own. And anyone can do that.

The internet is overflowing with information, and this is true not just in the start a business niche, which is what I'm in, but it is true in every niche. You can learn anything you need to learn online for free. In any subject, I stand by that. And yet people still pay for courses and they pay for coaching and they pay for digital products.

And there are three primary reasons for that. First of all, people will pay for convenience and that's what happened with my blog post way back when I was just getting started and my husband didn't want me to publish that content. I published those blog posts that showed people. Exactly how to use digital access pass.

And some people found them because it turns out very few people were talking about that particular platform, but quite a few people were using it, so that was good for my business anyway, lots of people found those videos and a few of those people reached out to me to hire me to help them manage their websites.

Why did they do that when I had all the information they needed right there on my site for free. Well, it's because it was more convenient to pay me than it was to do it themselves. They valued their time and they knew that paying me would be much more efficient and much more effective than them trying to learn it and do it themselves all the time.

In fact, I got two clients from those blog posts, and I published maybe three of them. I wasn't super consistent about content publishing way back when, but I got two clients who were with me for years after that, who came to me through those. Free videos that I was publishing on my website that showed them exactly what they needed to do.

And the reason they hired me is because those videos, the content I was publishing, demonstrated my expertise. They knew they could trust me. They knew that I knew what I was talking about. They knew that I would take good care of their sites because I had demonstrated my expertise. I had another client contact me one time, and I've told this story before it's, but it's one of my favorites and I think it's a really good lesson for service providers, but also for course creators as well.

I had a client contact me one time and she wanted me to do something very, very simple inside her membership site, and she emailed me and she said, can you do this thing? I can't even remember what it was now. She emailed me and said, can you do this thing? And I emailed her right back and I said, oh, you can do that yourself.

It just takes a minute. Just go into the website, log into the website, click this button, click that button, click export. All done, you've got what you need. And she emailed me right back and she said, I know I can do it myself. I don't want to. I want

you to do it. So people will pay for convenience. But what if you're not a service provider?

What if you are a course creator? How does convenience come into play in those situations? Well, another form of convenience is simply taking all of those random bits of information that anyone can find online and putting them in some kind of order that people can actually use. I mean, Think about when you're just learning something, whether it's how to start a business or how to sew a quilt, or how to keep a journal.

You can Google it and you probably will. That's how a lot of people start. That's how I started, and you're going to find an ocean of information that all comes at you in no particular order. You have no idea what information is good, what order to do things in, what information is useless, what information is old.

You don't know any of that. You have about .7 million things that you need to do, and you won't have much of a clue on how to do any of them and what you should do first. Or if one thing is more important than something else, and worse, you're going to get conflicting information. Person A will say this, and person B will say, no, that's wrong.

You should do this instead. And person C will say something completely different. Now you could continue to wade through all of that free content and piece it together all yourself. Like I said, that's what I did back in the day. That's what a lot of people do. Millions and millions of people do that every single day in thousands of different markets and industries.

But you could also buy a course or a book or hire a coach, and then you get to rely on someone else to put those things in order and to weed out all the unnecessary steps and to keep you from getting lost down that rabbit trail. That's convenience and people are willing to pay for it even if you put everything you know out there for free.

People will also pay for proximity to you. This is especially true if you're a coach or if you have maybe a membership site. I had one client a few years ago who told me that she had purchased a cooking course that was digital. This was during the pandemic when everything was online, even things that wouldn't normally be like a cooking class.

But she had bought this class not because she needed to learn how to cook, she knew how to cook, and she wasn't particularly interested in that specific cuisine.

But she bought it because she really liked the instructor and thought that she might learn a few things just by being in proximity to that person.

Now, it can be hard to believe that people will pay just to spend time with you, especially if you're new and maybe you have a healthy bit of imposter syndrome happening. We all do, but you might be surprised at how many people will sign up for your course just because you have live calls and they want to hang out and learn from you, or just because you offer email support and they want to be able to reach out to you if they run into a problem.

Or maybe you have a community and they want to be in the presence of other people who are all going after the same goal, who all want to achieve the same thing. That community aspect is really appealing to people. And that brings us to the third reason why people will buy, even if you publish loads of free content, and that's so that they can have a tailored solution.

For example, inside [six figure systems](#), members have access to all of my courses, but they also have the option to get tailored help through our community forum and through our Q & A calls, they get both the convenience of having the information organized and curated for them, and they also get help specific to those.

To their own situation and that makes it more valuable to them. If that would be valuable to you too, then [I want to invite you to join us](#) for a seven day trial for just \$7. You'll get full access to all of the courses, all of the toolkits, and you'll be invited to the forum to share what you're working on and to ask questions, and you'll be able to attend our upcoming q and a calls in live workshops.

Plus catch all of the replays. All you have to do is visit [TinyCourseEmpire.com/join](https://TinyCourseEmpire.com/join) to get started.

Now you might be thinking this is all well and good in the make money online niche, but it's not true in my niche. Let me tell you. I have seen these same scenarios where people will pay for convenience and proximity and tailored solutions.

I have seen this play out day after day. In a variety of wildly successful businesses.

Brooke Castillo, for example, at the Life Coach School, runs a multi-million dollar life coaching business built on one single tool. It's her thought download worksheet. If

you haven't downloaded that, if you haven't ever seen that, I would encourage you to go over and download that from her website.

I'll put the link in the show notes, but her customers, even though they get this information for free from her, Her customers are eager to join her membership, which is not inexpensive. But they join for proximity to her and they join for the tailored solutions, even though they can get the tool itself for free on her website.

Michael Hyatt used to sell a course called Free to Focus, and I think it was around \$200 or so to purchase it, but you can get the same exact content in book form from your library for free. People paid for the course. Instead for both proximity and convenience. The online version includes worksheets and checklists that aren't in the book.

Zig Ziglar was a salesman who turned motivational speaker later in his life. You may have heard of him and probably his most famous quote is, you can get everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want. And that's what giving away free content is really all about.

It's about helping other people to get what they want. Some of them will get everything they need and want from the information that you and others are sharing publicly, and that's good. Kudos to them for taking the initiative and for doing the work that it takes to make use of that flood of content.

But some of them will read or watch or listen, and they'll think, you know what? This person really knows what they're talking about. They can help me and I trust them. And those are the people who will pay you for the convenience you offer for the tailored solution that you can provide, or simply to spend more time in your sphere of influence.

With that in mind, I really want to encourage you to stop overthinking this. Don't get hung up on the calculations. Stop focusing on the what versus the how or whether or not you gave away more steps than you were supposed to Focus instead on putting out good content that you are proud to publish and share, and your audience, both paid and free, will find you and take advantage of it.

That's it for me today. Have a terrific rest of your day, and I will talk to you all again next week.



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