Something I remind people about all the time is to keep it simple.

Back in step four of this online business roadmap series, we talked about creating your very first digital product, and I recommended you keep it super simple. That's the exact same advice I give to my coaching clients, and it's what I would tell my former self if I could go back in time and create that first digital product all over again.

Simple sells. Your customers want a quick solution to a single problem. They don't want to watch hours of video or read hundreds of pages of instructions. Make it easy for them, and they'll thank you with their loyalty and repeat purchases.

But that doesn't mean you should never improve on your offers. It doesn't mean every product should be a simple PDF download.

This is episode 99 of the Tiny Course Empire podcast, and today we're going to talk about five ways you can create more value in your information products, and how you can help your customers achieve their goals more easily, too.

Hey, it's Cindy, and thank you for spending a few minutes of your day with me.

You'll find the show notes and recommended resources for this episode at TinyCourseEmpire.com/99.

While you're there, be sure to hit the subscribe button. New episodes drop every Thursday morning. Next week, we're celebrating 100 episodes. I can't wait to tell you all about what I've learned, what's next, and how this milestone perfectly illustrates the most important advice I will ever give you about starting an online business.

But that's next week. This week is all about serving your customers better by making improvements to what you're putting out into the world, and how you can do that without becoming overwhelmed.

First, I want to talk briefly about why you'd even want to do that. I mean, if you can create and sell a $10 or $20 PDF, why not just keep doing that? And you definitely CAN continue to do that. I personally know of small business owners for whom this is their entire business model, and I know of others who use these truly tiny products as the basis of membership sites, and who are earning significant recurring income from them.

But you can also take this opportunity to up your game, as they say, and there are some compelling reasons you might want to do that.

First, because some things are just more difficult to explain using text alone. I'm thinking about some of the courses I've purchased that demonstrate how to use software, as an example. One piece of software I use is called DevonTHINK. It's an app similar to Evernote, in that it allows you to store and retrieve any kind of file-- plain text, PDFs, video, audio, images, anything you've got you can throw into a DevonTHINK database.

It's also a really complex piece of software with lots of automation built in, and powerful search features. Several books and courses have been written about how to use it. I've purchased a few of them, and by far the ones I got the most out of were the video courses.

The books I bought were filled with examples and screenshots, but actually seeing someone do the thing on video made all the difference for me. Where I had a hard time figuring out how to use DevonTHINK after reading a few books, it really made sense to me after watching a video course.

So that's one reason you might want to upgrade your product offers to include video. Many things you're teaching just really need that format to be effective.

Another reason to include additional components is to make it easier for your customers to implement what they're learning.

I teach online marketing and business building, with a strong emphasis on systems and processes. I could easily teach everything I know in written form. I could include screenshots where necessary, and checklists of course. I love a good checklist.

But in many of my courses I choose instead to include Trello board templates for my students to use. Instead of asking them to set up their own systems following the directions I provide, I give them the entire setup. All they have to do is plug it into their Trello account.

This removes a lot of the friction, especially for those who don't necessarily think in systems, like I do.

So that's reason number two to upgrade your products and programs--to make it easier for your customers to implement.

The last reason has to do with perceived value. Here's how Investopedia defines perceived value:

Perceived value is a customer's own perception of a product or service's merit or desirability to them, especially in comparison to a competitor's product.

In other words, it's what your customer thinks your product is worth, and that perceived value is heavily influenced by the format of the product.

I took a course once by Michael Hyatt called Free to Focus. It's about being more productive as a business owner. You can buy it right now on his website for $497. Or you can buy the book on Kindle for $15. It's the exact same material. The only difference is the course offers video and audio, and downloadable workbooks. But the fundamental message is exactly the same.

That's how perceived value works. If you want to charge more for your products, increasing the perceived value is a good way to get there.

So let's talk about some things you can do to improve your products so that you can reach more people, help more of them implement what they learn, and charge higher prices, too.

Change or enhance the format

The first thing you can do is change up or enhance the format. For example, if your products are typically written, you can include video or audio components.

This doesn't have to mean that you do a full-on slide deck presentation or that you record 17 videos with you on camera. That can feel like a big hurdle to jump if you're new to video or if you've never created a course before.

Instead, here are two other ideas to try, and they're both a good fit for a small digital product:

- You can record a short demo video that shows how to use your product. This works really well if you've created a template of some kind. For example, I have a spreadsheet that helps calculate digital product pricing, and there's a 20 minute or so video where I talk through all the settings and how they work. It's super simple, I'm not on camera at all, but it adds a lot of extra value to that spreadsheet.
- You can record an audio explanation. You don't have to be on video at all for a lot of niches. If you don't need to demonstrate something visually, you can talk through it in audio. The learning curve is a lot less for audio only, as are the hardware requirements.

Here's why this works so well to increase the value of your offer. There's a belief that people learn differently. That those who enjoy video may not learn as well from audio or text. I think that's largely been debunked now, but regardless, people definitely have a preference.

Personally, I'll take text in most cases, because I can skim it quickly to find what I need. Except, of course, when I want video, because then things make more sense to me. And then there are the times I want audio so I can listen on the go.

I think you see where I'm going here. Different formats are useful to different people at different times, and by including a variety of options in your products, you can not only attract a wider audience, but you can increase that perceived value as well.

Include templates, worksheets, and other done-for-you components

If you already have a course or an ebook, another way to increase the value and to serve your customers better is by including templates, worksheets, or other done-for-you components.

I mentioned that I do this with some of my courses by adding Trello Board templates, but there are other options as well.

You can add fillable PDF worksheets that your customers can fill out on their computer, saving the the time and trouble of printing them. You can include checklists or planners to make implementation easier. Depending on what you're teaching in your course or ebook, you might want to include graphic templates or other reusable elements.

Teach it live

Something that offers a lot of extra value to your students is called proximity. The more direct the access they have to you, the greater the perceived value. Teaching a live course is a really fun way to add proximity.

Now I will admit that teaching a live course can be stressful. You're managing the tech, trying to sound professional, maybe you're on camera on a Zoom call... it can feel like a lot to manage all at one time. It takes a little practice, but I know it's something you can master if you work at it.

One thing I love about teaching live is that it takes a lot less prep. When I teach live, I typically work from an outline rather than a script, so I save myself all those hours of writing. I also frequently work from just a mindmap instead of creating a slide deck. That saves me a couple of extra hours, too.

Then there's video and audio editing - I don't do that with recordings of live presentations. All I do is trim the front and back and upload it. Super easy.

My customers and members love live presentations because they get to ask me questions in real time and get feedback not just from me but from other attendees, too.

If you want to add a ton of value to your next product without a lot of extra work, I recommend trying out a live presentation. You might just find you like to teach that way.

Include hands-on help

Of course, not everyone loves to show up live. I have a friend who used to teach every course live, but then made a complete switch to pre-recorded content so she could keep her calendar clear.

I get that, and if that's you, then another way to create the value of proximity is to offer personalized feedback.

For example, you could also offer project reviews by video. I did this with a live challenge I led last year. It was about creating a course, and those who finished and sent me their sales page got a video review from me. This feedback helped them refine their sales copy to make more sales, plus it encouraged them to actually finish the course, AND it was a huge added value that boosted my sales.

You could also do something as simple as including a comments section in your course platform, and invite customers to ask questions there.

I do this inside my courses, and it's proven to be really useful for my students. It gives them the chance to get real-time feedback without having to commit to attending a live training. Plus other students who come along later benefit from those answers, too. As they say, if one person is wondering, there are always more with the same question but who won't speak up.

Create a customer community

Along those same lines, it can be really beneficial to create a customer community. You can do this easily on a platform like Facebook, or you can add a forum or Circle community to your own website if that's what you prefer. That's going to take some extra work on your part if you decide to go that way though, so maybe just start with a Facebook group for now. Here's why:

The chance to mix with other students, and to communicate with you, the seller, is a huge benefit for many of your potential customers, and it's such an easy thing for you to create--especially if you use a platform like Facebook.

You know I'm not a huge social media user, but in this case, I think it's a top choice. You can set up a private group in minutes, and send the link to join in your welcome email. You will have to monitor requests to make sure you're only letting customers in, but other than that, it will take you very little time to manage a group like this, and it can potentially offer big benefits to your students.

Those are five ways I can think of to improve your product offers, help your customers implement what they learn, and also increase the perceived value of what you sell. Now that you have a solid business foundation and you've created a simple digital product or two, you can use these ideas to improve on what you've already built.

Now I'd love to hear from you. Click over to TinyCourseEmpire.com/99 and leave me a comment. Tell me how you're going to improve the results your customers get, make it easier for them to implement what they learn, and increase your perceived value as well.

And could you do me a favor? If you have a friend or colleague who could use business-building advice, would you share the link with them? It's a great way to grow our audience, and I'd appreciate your support. All the episodes can be found at TinyCourseEmpire.com.

That's it for me this week. I'll be back next week with episode 100, and I can't wait!

Have a terrific rest of your day, and I'll talk to you next week.