



## Writing e-Courses: Is Yours Really Working?

The lure of choice to get visitors to websites these days is to offer e-courses. After reading and analyzing 253 e-courses over a six-month period for my tele-program: "e-Courses: Writing Them so they Attract," I came away with what can make or break the success of an e-Course as well as templates that didn't work and those that did.

The results are in: 95% of the e-courses were a lot of hype with no substance. They ranged from four to nine emails, with seven being the average.

The first two emails told me what they were going to share with me and got me excited about what was still to come. The third was usually a free ebook, written by someone else who had already given it out free on the Internet. More often than not telling the reader how much the ebook is "supposedly" worth. About 80% were already available free on the Internet sometimes a year or more earlier. Sixteen percent of these had the same content with a title change to make it seem new. A whopping 28% of them had material as old as ten years and they didn't even change their copyright date. Talk about recycling -- give me a break.

When I was reading them, I felt like the old ladies on the burger advertisement ten years ago staring at the hamburger bun asking, "Where's the beef?" The worse part was I could envision the mistrust it was creating in the marketplace for future e-courses that "had the beef."

My patience fizzled around the third or fourth e-mail. I suspect most of their readers did as well. For analysis and learning, I pushed ahead to emails four, five, six and seven. Seventy-one percent of all the emails had a poor value/advertising mix. The average had a 60/40 formula (60% advertising or marketing and 40% value).

Many ask the reader to buy the "full" ecourse on that topic. Since the first ecourse didn't offer anything I found myself wondering if zero multiplied by zero would add up to more than zero? It only took me one hand too!

If you want people to buy more of something you need to offer, "double beef patties with special sauce, lettuce, tomato on a sesame bun" and a choice of fries.

Here's how to beef-up your e-courses with a side of fries:

Write them in a conversational style that lets the reader get to know you. Readers want to understand what they are reading. Write them at an 8th grade level, just like any newspaper. Omit the hypnotic phrases and subtle commands the sales copy gurus recommend.

Include new and innovative ideas -- thinking that is "outside the box." It isn't necessary to give away the store, but you do want to let readers know that you know your stuff.



If your material is six months or older, take time out and review it. Add new thoughts and rejuvenate it. Show how you have evolved. If you don't, there will be a disconnect between the ecourse and other material you have written currently or if they call you. The material will be the old you and the other will be the new you.

Create visualizations of your concepts so that the reader will understand how to use them in business. If you write the visual out and there are directions on how to do something, first test those directions out.

Include resources that are specific and inclusive -- not just limited to your affiliations. The reader is not daffish; they can see when something you recommend is also listed in the resource area as an affiliate link. One or two affiliates' links, offered after building trust, are fine, but let the reader know the truth. If the link is helpful, your clients will not mind it if you are splitting the fee. You just gave them the beef with a side of fries.

e-Courses are designed to build relationships, to give value, and not to make a quick sale.

Ask for feedback from the reader in the third or fourth e-mail and again at the end. Always allow them the option to submit anonymously. Make their feedback as comfortable and easy to submit to you. More importantly, listen to it when it comes. One feedback is worth ten future subscribers.

Offer inspirational dialogue to keep your reader moving along and feeling empowered about spending the time reading the ecourse.

At the end of each e-mail, explain what's coming up and how it will move them toward what they are trying to accomplish.

e-Courses are designed to build a relationship, build value, and not make a quick sale. Until someone takes out their credit card and buys something from you, the words are just like air.

Statistics say that the two main reasons people come to the Internet is to communicate quickly and to research information. If you give those seekers solid, valuable information, they will come back. The telephone and the reception desk are not the only places where "moments of truth" occur. Your ecourse is your moment to make a first and lasting impression. Don't dangle a carrot on a stick -- give them the "beef."

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