



The **7 Biggest Challenges** to Selling Online Courses in the Age of AI (and How to Overcome Them!)

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, businesses are on a perpetual quest for innovative ways to boost profitability. One of the most revolutionary and disruptive technologies of the twenty-first century is artificial intelligence (AI).

AI, coupled with ChatGPT technologies, has reshaped the landscape of business growth. No longer a well-guarded secret sauce, AI has become a crucial ingredient for achieving efficiency, productivity, and creativity—the embodiment of working smarter, not harder.

By leveraging these powerful tools, businesses unlock a realm of potential for accelerating their profitability and growth. While this may sound ambitious, my mentor, the late Jim Rohn, instilled in me that in life and business, two certainties prevail—opportunities and obstacles. How we respond to and navigate these defines our success.

Leveraging AI to increase profitability commences with pinpointing the specific business needs AI can address. This entails a meticulous process of requirement gathering, delving into the unique challenges and opportunities within your business where AI can exert its beneficial influence. With a clearly defined goal, the path to AI augmentation becomes evident, drastically shortening the journey from idea to solution.

The journey of leveraging AI is a strategic process encompassing the establishment of business requirements, the selection of suitable AI technology, deployment, continuous monitoring, assessing its success, and nurturing its growth.

In this monograph, we delve into the realm of AI—what it is, the challenges it presents to professionals and education-oriented service providers, and where the true leverage lies in its application. With the right strategies, businesses can harness AI and ChatGPT to maximize their efficiency, profitability, and growth potential.

Let's be clear: AI is grounded in machine learning, driven by data and algorithms, and it lacks sentience. Nevertheless, the capabilities it brings to our world are astounding, surprising, and, in many ways, downright astonishing. The rapid rise of ChatGPT, in particular, is nothing short of astonishing. It was released to the general public less than a year ago (Nov 2022), yet its utilization and proficiency have grown exponentially. If you've been using version 3.5, brace yourself for the mind-blowing enhancements of 4.0.

So, while we maintain our enthusiasm, let's also exercise discernment. Together, we will explore what AI technology enables, its benefits, risks, and challenges, and how small businesses can leverage this innovative and ever-evolving digital opportunity to gain a competitive edge.

From Chatbots to the introduction of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools, the digital landscape has witnessed transformative developments in the past year, especially for small

and medium-sized businesses. Whether you're already immersed in this technology or contemplating its adoption to scale your business, this book will illuminate the myriad ways AI can amplify your business growth.

In this book, an expansion of my podcast mini-series exploring themes at the intersection of content marketing and AI, we embark on a journey into the realm of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its profound impact on small consulting firms, business owners, and solo entrepreneurs.

As the business landscape undergoes rapid transformation, AI takes centre stage, offering an array of opportunities to harness data, streamline operations, and make informed, data-driven decisions. Be it a small consulting firm aiming to optimize client engagements or a solo entrepreneur seeking productivity enhancements, AI stands as a valuable ally in the pursuit of growth and success.

AI transcends buzzwords—it's a strategic necessity for businesses of every size. It empowers organizations to tap into their vast data reservoirs, extracting invaluable insights that fuel innovation and competitive advantage. From automating mundane tasks to providing predictive analytics, AI has the potential to revolutionize the way business is conducted. In this book, we peel back the layers of AI applications, from customer service chatbots to data-driven marketing strategies.

Join us on this exploration of how small businesses are leveraging AI to maintain their edge in a perpetually evolving business landscape.

As we navigate the intricate world of AI, remember that this book serves as your gateway to understanding the possibilities it presents for small businesses. The domains of consulting, coaching, and entrepreneurship teeter on the brink of a technological revolution.

By embracing AI-driven strategies, you're not merely future-proofing your business—you're positioning it for sustained growth and prosperity.

With that, let the journey begin!

Let's kick off by looking at the market environment.

CHALLENGE #1

#1 - Competition from AI-powered learning platforms

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One of the biggest challenges in selling courses in the age of AI is competition from AI-powered learning platforms. These platforms offer instant content, answers and feedback, and adaptive curriculum delivery. They use machine learning algorithms to analyse data on student performance and provide targeted recommendations for further study.

As a result, it can feel as if these platforms offer a highly effective learning experience that is difficult for traditional educators to replicate. But this approach does not work well for formal, accredited programmes that require a set syllabus and specific learning outcomes or accreditation descriptors to be assessed.

It also doesn't work at all well for more transformational programmes of study that go beyond knowledge and skills and develop higher level learning outcomes. And beware, there are already a bunch of "coaching" oriented apps are getting smarter and smarter.

To overcome these challenges, educators and businesses alike need to focus on the unique value they can offer that AI-powered platforms cannot.

For example, you can highlight your subject matter expertise, your ability to provide customised feedback and deeper levels of support, and your commitment to student success. You can also differentiate yourself by offering courses that are not available on AI-powered platforms, such as specialist or niche courses.

Another way to overcome this obstacle is to use AI to support your course design and delivery. Educators can leverage the power of AI to:

- Embed co-creation into the curriculum so that students are part of the learning not just recipients of knowledge.
- Help analyse data on student performance, identify areas where students are struggling, and provide targeted feedback and support.
- Optimise course content delivery and make it more adaptive to individual learning styles.

Part of this solution is that of establishing a unique value proposition that differentiates your courses and programmes from the countless other AI-generated options available to students. With so many online courses available, it can be difficult to stand out in a crowded market.

To overcome this challenge, focus on developing courses that meet a specific need or niche in the marketplace, rather than just broad topics of interest to the general public. This could be a specialised skill, a specific industry or profession, or a unique teaching approach.

Of course, ironically you can actually leverage AI to help you do this. You can ask it to analyse market trends and student data to identify areas of demand and opportunities for differentiation.

#2 - Keeping up with the latest AI trends & technologies

Another challenge to selling courses in the age of AI is keeping up with the latest AI trends and technologies. AI is a rapidly evolving field, and new technologies and techniques are constantly being developed. Educators and online platforms need to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies to ensure that their courses remain relevant and effective.

To overcome this challenge, educators and online platforms can invest in ongoing professional development and training for their staff. They can attend conferences, workshops, and webinars to learn about the latest AI trends and technologies. They can also network with other educators and industry experts to stay up-to-date on emerging best practices.

Another way to overcome this obstacle is to partner with AI experts and consultants. Educators and online platforms can work with AI experts to develop and implement AI-powered course content and delivery systems. They can also leverage AI consultants to help them stay up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies and provide guidance on how to integrate AI into their courses.

Now let's turn to some of the technical and legal challenges.

#3 - Ensuring data privacy & security

The main challenge here is ensuring data privacy and security. AI-powered learning platforms rely on collecting and analysing data on student performance to provide personalised feedback and support. However, this data can be sensitive and must be protected to ensure student privacy and prevent data breaches.

You need to meet this challenge head on and prioritise data privacy and security for your clients and learners. You can do this by implementing robust data security measures, such as encryption and access controls. You can also develop clear policies and procedures for handling and storing student data and ensure that all staff involved in onboarding and delivery including assessment, are trained on these policies and procedures.

Another way to overcome this obstacle is to partner with reputable AI-powered learning platforms that prioritise data privacy and security. Small businesses can work with these platforms to ensure that client or student data is protected and that all data privacy regulations are met.

You can actually leverage AI to monitor and detect any potential security threats or breaches, and to ensure that student data is being collected and analysed in a responsible and ethical manner.

#4 - Developing AI-powered content & delivery systems

Another challenge to subject experts as course builders is the development of AI-powered content and delivery systems. You'll need to ensure that any AI-powered content and delivery systems are effective, efficient, and user-friendly.

AI can help deliver personalised content and feedback, but implementing these systems requires specialised expertise and resources.

Again, to get around this, you may want to consider partnering with AI experts, consultants or technology companies to develop and maintain these systems, and provide guidance on how to integrate AI into your courses to optimise delivery and pacing.

Related to this, another challenge is providing high-quality, engaging content. The quality and engagement of online course content is critical to the success of any online course. AI-powered learning platforms can offer personalised content delivery, but if the content itself is not engaging, students may lose interest and drop out of the course.

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To overcome this challenge, educators and online course providers need to focus on developing high-quality, engaging content that is designed to meet the needs and interests of their target audience. This could include incorporating multimedia elements such as videos, animations, interactive quizzes and simulations, to make the content more engaging and interactive.

This is important also because it creates a much higher quality learning experience and fosters progression and completion. A student (aka course customer) is not going to give you a great review or testimonial if they never completed the course.

You can in fact leverage AI to analyse learner engagement data and to make adjustments to the content and delivery based on student feedback.

Next, I want to share some thoughts around managing and adapting to changing client and student expectations, especially with regards to the learning experience.

And then we'll move on to the challenges AI-powered online learning poses to marketing and selling your courses and programmes.

#5 - Adapting to changing client or student expectations

A fifth challenge to selling courses in the age of AI is adapting to changing expectations. As AI continues to reshape the landscape of education, expectations are also evolving.

Clients and students alike are increasingly expecting more personalised, flexible, and interactive experiences. They want courses that support action learning, that generate instant feedback tailored to their individual needs and interests. And they expect courses to be delivered on-demand and at their own pace.

To meet these expectations, your courses will need to prioritise student-centred design and adaptability. You can leverage AI to analyse student data and provide targeted feedback and recommendations. You can also use AI to optimise course content delivery and make it more aligned with individual learning styles.

You can leverage AI to offer flexible follow-on learning options, such as on-demand courses and microlearning modules. You could also consider incorporating interactive elements such as quizzes, simulations and virtual reality to enhance the learning experience.

One of the main differentiators is how we handle personalisation. While AI can be used to deliver what feels like customised content, many online courses fall short, because they still follow a one-size-fits-all approach. This can result in a lack of engagement among students, as they may not feel that the content is relevant to their specific needs and goals.

To overcome this obstacle, educators and entrepreneurs should invest in hybrid learning experiences that blend different modalities: online self-study, coaching, live tutor sessions and email/chat. This can be augmented through a variety of AI strategies, including:

Adaptive Learning:

Adaptive learning uses AI algorithms to customise the learning experience based on the individual needs and preferences of each student. By analysing student data, such as their learning style, pace, and performance, the algorithm can generate personalised content and recommendations.

Personalised Coaching:

Online courses can also incorporate personalised coaching, where students receive one-on-one guidance from a mentor or coach. This can help students stay motivated and engaged, while also providing them with individualised feedback and support.

Tailored Content:

Another strategy for personalising online courses is to tailor the content to the specific needs and goals of the target audience. For example, a course on digital marketing could be customised for different industries, such as healthcare or finance, to make the content more relevant and applicable to the target audience.

Now let's turn to the human challenges that AI poses to marketing and selling your courses and programmes, and what you can do about them.

#6 - Effectively Marketing and Promoting Courses

As mentioned, one of the overarching big challenges to selling courses in the age of AI is oversaturation. With the rise of e-learning platforms and the accessibility of course creation tools, anyone can create and sell a course. This has led to an overwhelming number of courses on almost any subject, making it challenging for new course creators to find a gap in the market.

To overcome this obstacle, as a course creator, you'll need to focus on creating unique and valuable content that is focused on transformation not information. It's not enough to create a course sharing your knowledge on a popular subject. Your course or programme needs to offer a unique perspective or approach or a desirable outcome that sets it apart from other courses on the same topic. Because now with AI-powered ChatGPT, writing course material is easy and fast.

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The key differentiator is not simply sharing knowledge, it's helping people think better or do things better.

One way to achieve this is by conducting thorough research on the subject and identifying gaps in existing courses. For instance, a course on digital marketing may focus on a specific aspect of the subject, such as social media advertising or content marketing, that is not adequately covered in existing courses. Alternatively, you could target a specific audience, such as small business owners or freelance marketers, and create a course that caters to their specific needs and challenges.

In addition to creating unique and valuable content, as a course developer, you also need to market your courses effectively. That means learning how to create compelling course descriptions, using eye-catching graphics and videos, and leveraging social media and other marketing channels to reach potential students.

By focusing on producing unique content and marketing it effectively, you'll have a distinct advantage over mediocre sales copy, which can help you stand out in the age of AI.

Finally, promoting and selling online courses can be a significant challenge in a crowded and competitive marketplace. With so many options available to customers, it can be difficult to capture their attention and show them why your course is different.

To overcome this challenge, educators and online platforms need to invest in effective marketing and campaigns that are designed to engage, educate and enrol their ideal audience. This could include targeted posts, articles, videos or advertising on social media platforms, influencer partnerships, and writing strong email copy.

You can of course leverage AI to analyse market trends and to optimise your marketing strategies and copy based on what people want.

#7 - Overcoming scepticism & resistance to AI

The final challenge to selling courses in the age of AI is overcoming people's scepticism and resistance to AI. Others may still be resistant to using virtual classrooms or online learning platforms and prefer face-to-face interactions with instructors. Some clients may be untrusting of AI-powered learning platforms specifically, and prefer more traditional forms of education.

There's a clear and present need to build trust and credibility with potential clients and student participants. With so many online courses available, it can be difficult for people to differentiate between high-quality courses and programmes and those that are low-quality or

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even scams. This lack of trust can make it challenging for educators and businesses to attract new customers into their programmes and courses, and grow their business.

To overcome this challenge, you'll need to focus on building a trusting relationship with your audience and demonstrating the benefits of what you teach and how you teach it, especially if you're integrating AI-powered learning.

You might want to spend time creating explainers guides or videos of how AI is being used in your course and how it enhances their learning experience. You can also provide opportunities for learners to interact with instructors as well as their peers, both online and offline, to foster a sense of community and support.

Selling courses in the age of AI presents new challenges and opportunities for educators, businesses and online platforms alike. By focusing on your unique value proposition, staying up-to-date with the latest AI trends and technologies, you will be able to create effective and engaging learning experiences that meet the needs and expectations of their students.

Educators and entrepreneurs who wish to sell courses should focus on building a strong brand and reputation through a blend of approaches:

High-Quality Content:

The quality of the course content is critical to building trust with potential students. Courses should be well-researched, engaging, and informative. This can be achieved by investing in high-quality production values, such as professional video and audio equipment, and hiring subject matter experts to develop the content.

Social Proof:

Social proof, such as customer reviews and testimonials, can also help build trust and credibility with potential students. Encourage satisfied students to leave positive reviews and share their experiences on social media or other platforms.

Credentials:

Another way to build trust and credibility is by showcasing the credentials of the instructors and educators. This can include academic degrees, professional certifications, and relevant work experience.



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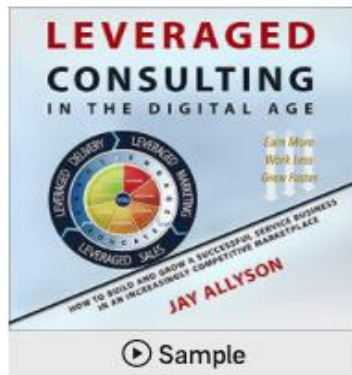
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