INDIE
BY CYPHER LEARNING

the bee's knees

ORGANIC HONEY
100% NATURAL

HOW TO BUILD A GREAT SITE FOR SELLING ONLINE COURSES

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Introduction

In the fast-paced world of online shopping, your site makes the difference between dismal and fantastic **conversion rates**. Just as in real life, you only get one chance to make a great first impression. For a small online business, this can be a serious challenge, as you need to put your best foot forward in order to **showcase your online courses** and stand out from the competition.

A **well-designed portal** is also the key to building your brand. Your site is your signature — it's a way of communicating who you are and what you do. However, entrepreneurs and small businesses in general lack the expertise and budgets that bigger companies have to optimize their websites for faster conversion rates.

That's where a **complete learning platform** comes into play. By choosing the right solution, you don't have to compromise: all the functionalities you need to **create, market, and sell** learning content are found in a single convenient location. Since not all learning platforms are made equal, you need to choose one that is **customizable** and **flexible** so you won't outgrow it as your business grows.

If you're thinking of building a site for selling your online courses, but aren't sure where to begin, you're in the right place. Read on to find out exactly what you can accomplish and what you need to **design your dream site** in no time.

How to build a great site for selling online courses

Let's imagine that we can go back in time, and instead of a site, you have to set up a storefront.

What would you display in order to **attract customers**?

What would you do to offer the **best experience** for visitors?

What do you want them to **know about your business**?

This is a great exercise to imagine what is essential (displaying a course catalog) and what needs to stand out (reviews of your courses). Most importantly, you can map out the steps that visitors need to take in order to purchase a course.

To make this easier, we've identified four main categories that every knowledge entrepreneur should be aware of when building a site for online courses. Each of these has a distinct purpose and helps you achieve a goal, such as **branding, visitor engagement, or closing a sale**.

Branding

What do you want your site to say about you and your brand? Do you prefer a sleek, minimalist design or making a statement with bolder colors? Do you want to add a video presentation for each course, or tell a story through images?

No matter which option you choose, it's clear that you need a platform that allows you to **customize** everything, from your **logo** to your **color scheme,** custom URL, and even custom HTML. You'll also want to create pages such as "My story", and even add a Blog page, with content that is meant to attract visitors and **promote your courses**.

Your site is a reflection of yourself and your business, which helps you stand out from the crowd, and create a brand that you'll be proud of. For this reason, you should **choose a platform** that gives you the most options.

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Visitor experience

We've all abandoned a site at some point for being too frustrating to navigate. Pop-ups, hard to read fonts, and complicated steps can deter your visitors from ever coming back.

That's why having a clear picture of how visitors arrive from A to B with minimal distractions can help **improve your conversion rates** and ultimately, your sales. The trick here is to **optimize** your **course overview pages** (landing pages) so that they'll be able to make a decision with minimum effort.

All in all, creating a hassle-free experience isn't very hard, but you do have to constantly think like your visitors and anticipate their actions.

Selling courses

Speaking of hassle-free, the number one complaint that prospective learners have is that the process of buying itself is complicated. For example, the information isn't updated on a site. Alternatively, maybe there's a lengthy **checkout process**, which some people abandon because they're wary of filling out a lot of information.

Moreover, people like to see **social proof** such as **customer reviews** and testimonials before they decide to buy. Others want a detailed course outline so they get a sense of what it'll be like to spend a few hours per week taking the course. These are all things to consider when creating the **ideal visitor experience** for your site.

A one-in-all site

As we've seen before, it makes sense to have **everything in one place**: your storefront and your actual store. In this way, you'll have a one hundred percent custom platform that offers a seamless experience.


It also means that you only get to maintain one site, pay a subscription fee for one site, and extend, if needed. Even if you start small, see the ways in which you can upgrade and change in the future. This is very important since you'll want a platform that gets **constant updates**, so you'll worry less about the framework itself, and concentrate on what is important: **creating and selling courses**.

Next stop: what you need to create an **attractive site** for selling courses.

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What you need to easily create an attractive site

A good learning platform provides a variety of functionalities that cater to the needs of entrepreneurs. Here's an overview of the most important features that will help you build a great site.
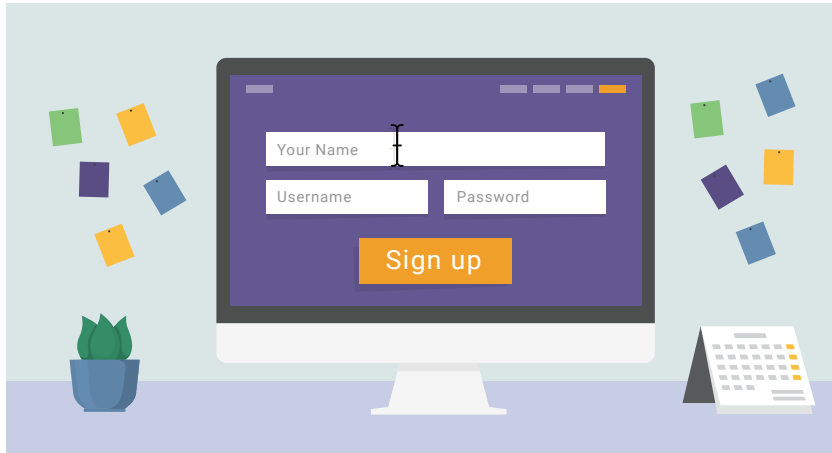
Fast implementation

Look for a solution that ensures a **smooth setup**. That means that you can **configure your site** in just a few steps, from signup to choosing a name for your site. The interface should be **intuitive** enough so that you can do everything yourself. If not, the Help section should offer suggestions and guidance.

All in all, it should take you:

- Five minutes to sign up
- An hour to customize your site
- Ten minutes to configure your course catalog

Customizable visitor portal

This is where things get interesting! The greatest perk of having a **one-in-all site** is easy customization. If you don't have a lot of experience, your best bet is to use a **visual editor**, which is basically like a canvas for you to create the best site possible.

Features that help you achieve this are:

- Custom URL
- Adding your logo
- Creating pages for your portal
- Custom menu
- Drag and drop items
- Custom panels
- Custom CSS
- Displaying CTAs (call-to-action) messages
- Social media buttons

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Custom themes

Custom themes are a favorite because it's just so easy to choose something you like from the already available options.

Alternatively, you can **create your own theme** based on existing ones. For example, you can easily **customize any theme** using a color picker and your favorite fonts. See the changes that you make in real time as the visual editor is the most intuitive way of designing your portal.

Here is what you need to start designing custom themes:

- Point and click visual editor
- Custom terminology
- Color scheme

Custom HTML

If the custom templates and portal editors don't do the exact thing you want them to, you can always add your own code to make it look just right. If you really want to have a **unique** and **personalized** portal, look for a **custom HTML** option.

This option can be applied to either visitor or learner portal, so you can decide if you want both types of users to see the personalized interface. Plus, you don't have to use it just for the main homepage, as custom HTML should work in various locations on your site, including custom pages and menus.

This means a bit more work, but the final result is really worth it!

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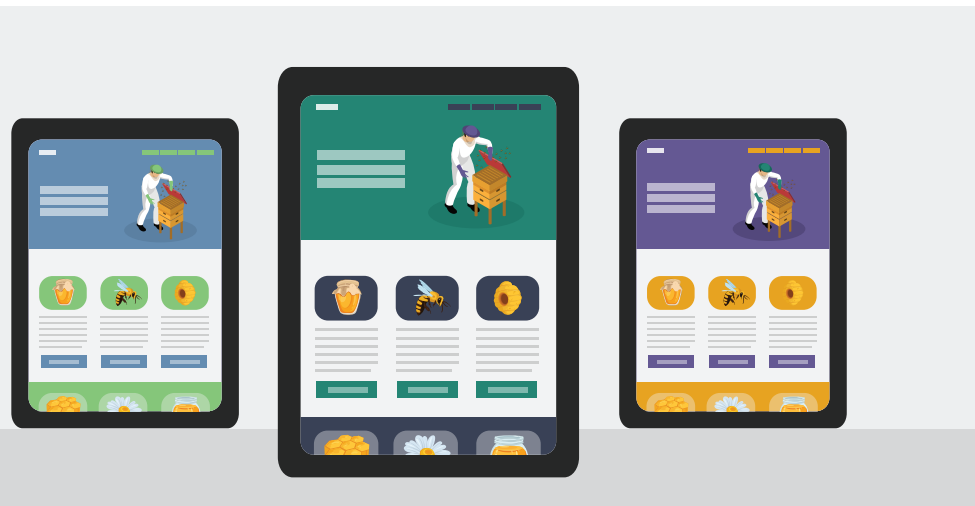
Catalog

The course catalog is the most important part of your site. That's why having just a few options for displaying your courses is a big no-no. In fact, you should be able to configure the catalog in any way you like, whether it's an alphabetical order or sorted into categories. Plus, your special offers, such as subscription plans and bundles should stand out from individual courses.

Here's what you need:

- Course descriptions
- Search function
- Custom categories
- Display user ratings
- Show pricing

$100
★★★★★
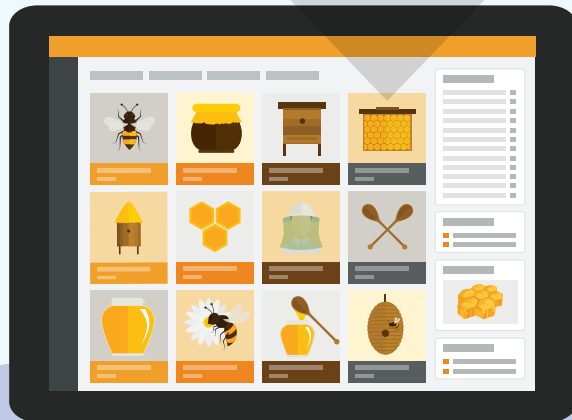
Course overview pages

Your course overview pages should be attractive, persuasive, and engaging. You've been wooing potential learners to stay on your site long enough to check out your courses so naturally, you want them to click "Buy" sooner than later.

To have a successful course overview page it takes a:

- Content outline
- Certificates
- Ratings and reviews
- Course description
- Attractive images
- Video presentation

E-commerce

Although the e-commerce part is more of a "behind the scenes" feature, since it's integrated with your catalog, it's worth mentioning here. You want to have an e-commerce feature that offers a **short checkout option**, since learners can quickly get frustrated with a lengthier purchasing process.

Among other handy things there are:

- Abandoned shopping cart feature
- Popular payment gateways integration
- PCI Compliance
- Integration with automation system

Bee Keeping Bundle
$25
★★★★★
Thomas, Steven
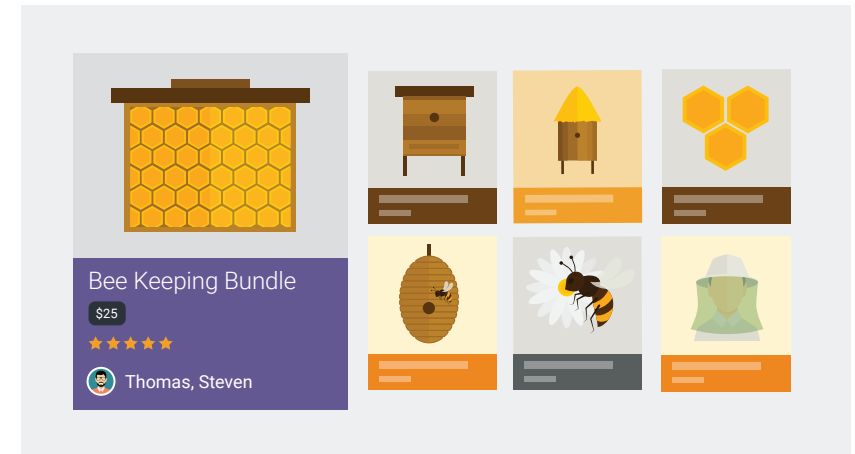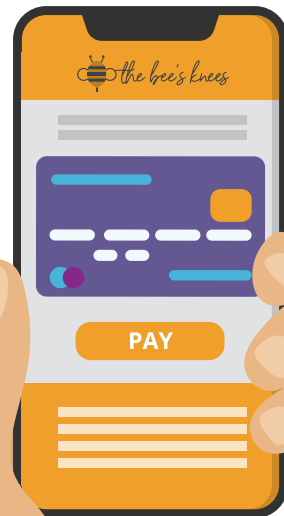
Sales offers

To be one step ahead is to create **attractive offers** that visitors simply can't resist. Through strategies such as **upselling** and **cross-selling**, you can **generate more revenue** in no time. It's also a great idea to offer discounts or sell items such as ebooks directly from your platform.

To do this you need:

- Support for subscription plans
- Bundles
- Bulk purchases
- Digital media

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Market your courses

Your platform isn't just about **building your brand** — it's a great way to **market your learning content**!

Most importantly, you can **track conversions** through Google Analytics so you can have an overall view of how your site is performing. Plus, you can still use your favorite tools such as MailChimp through integrations.

Make sure to look for **built-in marketing features** that you can learn to use in no time, such as:

- SEO
- Affiliate marketing
- Email marketing
- Social media integration
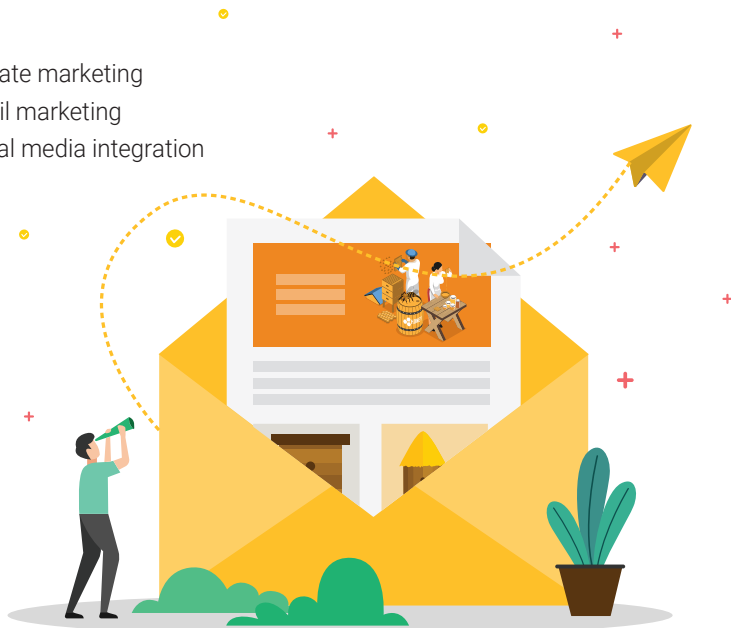
Key takeaways

Selling your knowledge online has never been easier. Everyone can build a great portal for online courses with the right tools!

In the end, here are a few things that you should remember if you're a knowledge entrepreneur or aspire to be one:

Put more thought into your main portal as it can make a difference between dismal and excellent sales

Be curious! Explore each feature when you're testing platforms so you can use them to your advantage

Don't have to compromise between a functional, well-designed portal and a platform that hosts your courses - the all-in-one site is what you should look for

Happy selling!

If you're looking for a tool to create a great online course and easily market it, check out **INDIE**, a learning platform designed for entrepreneurs just like you. INDIE is the perfect solution for entrepreneurs that are looking for an accessible way to market their knowledge by creating, delivering, and promoting online courses.

www.cypherlearning.com