# Why I Don't Do Info Products Or Business Coaching (And How Not To Get Burned)

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**32** Flares

About a week ago I received an email from a reader.

She was looking for some business advice on a regular basis, and wanted to know if I was available to be her mentor.

My first response was essentially "thanks – I'm flattered".

My second response was to politely decline (although I did give her my Skype and told her she could contact me if she wanted to, and that I would help if/when I could, free of charge).

The reason is that **I don't do info products (specifically courses) and I don't do business coaching.**

Now let me begin by clarifying that in no way are people beating down the doors to get me as a mentor. In fact, this was the first email of its kind I've received, and she wasn't even offering to pay.

However, I think for some people this would have initiated a light bulb to go off in their head.

Is this something I can commercialize? Are their more people interested in this? Could this be the start of a business?

And although I don't have a large audience, I think the answer here is yes – I could.

I could probably do some marketing and pick up a few clients. Maybe I would work with them, maybe they would succeed, and I would springboard off those testimonials and referrals to grow a budding business coaching career.

In fact, this was partly my strategy for launching this blog – I wanted to be a business coach for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

The plan was that I would launch this blog, build credibility, and within 6 months launch my first info product (and make millions, retire in the Bahamas, and wear only white clothes – of course).

But here we are at that 6 month mark, and I've completely changed my tune – here's why.

*Note: This became a bit of a rant, but also is helpful if you are considering joining a course or getting coaching – as I will address some questions you should be asking the creator.*

## Low Barriers To Entry

My main problem with business coaching and info products is the low barrier to entry.

Virtually anyone can offer them, and many do.

And in my opinion, many shouldn't.

So much stuff out there is just a scam – I'm tired of seeing it. Tired of seeing it advertised on display ads and in my FB newsfeed. Tired of seeing it in forums. Tired of the hype and sensationalist marketing and frankly all the bullshit in internet marketing.

It just isn't something I want to be associated with.

If you want to know how I sort through what's a scam, and what isn't – here's my criteria for whether or not this info product or coaching should even be considered.

1. Has this person made a 6 figure income doing exactly what it is they are preaching?
2. Did they start in a similar position to the one I would be starting in?

If the answer to either of these questions is "No", I say almost always move on.

If they haven't made a 6 figure income can we really say they've made a killing doing whatever it is they do? The majority of people can expect, at best, to mimic one tenth of the creator's results. Thus, you're starting to get into territory where you have to question whether or not this is worth months of effort on the customer's part to pursue the course.

One thing I see quite often is that a person has ONE success, and that snowballs into a course, coaching, etc. I really think two should be the minimum. Not to say that the first was a fluke – but I hardly think it puts you in the category of an expert.

Now, if they are making a 6 figure income from their online efforts, make sure it is from the course material and not the course (or coaching) itself.

I've seen plenty of ads from people who I suspect started business coaching from nothing, having not even started a successful business themselves, and built that into a 6 figure business.

To my second point, if they didn't start where I'm starting, for example, maybe they have a large email list, or a large audience, or some connections, or lots of capital, then what makes me think I am going to be able to replicate anything that they're sharing?

Having a list of 5k people to launch a product to makes a huge difference – be sure you know the facts before you expect to mimic someone's results.

Am I being too harsh? Are their exceptions to this?

Yes, of course.

Some reasonable exceptions might be:

- This isn't meant to be a 6 figure income. For example, you seriously just want to learn how to build a website or start a business that makes $500-$1k a month, or not a business at all.
- Similarly, if what they are teaching is niche enough that someone could legitimately know all there is to know about it, despite the fact that it isn't SUPER profitable. Take a PBN course for example. I can say with certainty that PBNs are a finite enough topic, that one course could actually cover everything you need to know and deliver it effectively.

The point is to ask questions. Ask the course creators and the coaches these questions. I think it's your right to know, and if they don't want to answer then for me that's grounds to move on.

## Information and Advice Are Flawed Business Models

I'm not saying you can't make a lot of money with info products and coaching, that would be idiotic.

But at the same time, if you can't see the writing on the wall, that information is trending free, then you must be blind.

I really love the explanation that EF gave in the beginning of their 100th podcast on building million dollar

businesses where they explained why they provide information for free.

Charging for information is a dying model – every year there is more and more available. Every year people are understanding where and how to find the information they need. The quality AND quantity of information available is getting better, and it's getting organized better so that we can find it faster.

In fact the incentive for most people is to offer information for free, as a means to get you to sign up for their mailing list/read their blog/pay attention to them. I'm often amazed by some of the stuff people throw out for free, which other people are charging for. It's hard to imagine the premium version is that much better.

Thus, as a result of the low barriers to entry, you don't have a very protectable asset. If someone wants to do your course or book for cheaper – it's not like the code is hidden. The text is there in plain sight for anyone who wants to buy it.

Lastly, as an asset, it is not sellable (not that it can't be sold to customers, but that the revenue generated from it cannot be sold like you can sell property or a software product), and it depreciates year over year as free versions and pirated copies pop up.

So yes – info products and coaching absolutely can be profitable, but you may find it is not the best investment of your time. We only have so much time available for projects after all.

## The Types Of People It Attracts

Last year I ran a course on making money with your travel blog. I had made 6 figures on my travel blogs, so I felt I was qualified to run this course. With my small audience and limited marketing, 17 people signed up. A few people ended up doing really well, whereas the majority of people didn't take action or apply the material.

Although some people benefited from the course, and I made adequate revenue from it, I decided not to offer it again. It just didn't meet my standards for success. I found that there were a lot of people who signed up for the course who were not really right for it – and it's a difficult thing to weed those people out from the get go. I ended up refunding 2 people who asked for it, and even one person who didn't.

It made me think about the types of people who take courses.

1. People who were not taking action, signed up for the course, and continued to not take action – **fail**
2. People who were not taking action, signed up for the course, and started taking action. – **success, sort of**
3. People who were taking action, but not getting results, signed up for the course, and continued to take action and got results – **success**

In my experience from running a course (and from what I've witnessed from talking to others who have taken and run courses), the majority of people fall into the first bucket. They weren't taking action to begin with, so they signed up for the course to give them a boost, but they continued to do nothing afterwards. Most of them don't even ask for a refund, because they feel they are to blame.

In this scenario, I don't *blame* the course for not doing it's job, but as a course creator, it doesn't make me feel great to simply take these peoples' money and rationalize that it isn't my problem they didn't take action. Of course to give it all back, would make for a pretty unprofitable course, given the size of the bucket.

The next largest bucket is group 2. These people might actually be successful, but what was the most important aspect of the course? Was it that the course material was excellent – or was it that they finally lit the fire under their ass and got to work?

Now if the ends justify the means, and they usually do, this is a success, but again, as a course creator, I'm not overly thrilled with my value stemming from getting someone to take action (even though they probably had the tools and the information available for free had they wanted to pursue it upfront). It just feels a bit like a placebo

effect – like this person paid to take action, and I was their pill.

The last group are the people that I feel are the success stories. They were taking action, but lacking in some information, and the course came in and did it's job. A limited group, probably less than 10% for most courses.

It's a tough battle for courses, even the one's that are heralded as the best in the business.

Consider that the Foundation only had 41 successes out of 336 students last year.

This is a several thousand dollar course, and yet it doesn't do the job (or the students didn't follow through) for nearly 90% of the people.

And that's not even considering the relatively low standards for success.

"41 students graduated with at least one paying customer in a business."

That could mean, just about anything.

I haven't taken this course, so I can't comment on the material – but if I was going to sign up for it I would be asking the following questions.

- How much money was generated by students relative to how much money was paid to sign up for this course? What about when you remove the outliers among the 41 successes?
- Of the success stories – how many of those people were software engineers (like Carl, who I believe worked for Tesla as a software engineer).
- How many people asked for refunds and how many were given out?

You're entitled to these responses, and if you don't get them, walk away.

## Be Diligent

Are their great info products and coaching out there? Absolutely. I'm not even saying I will NEVER offer one, I'm just saying it doesn't fit with my strategy now to offer them.

I think they can be beneficial for both student and teacher, but it has to be the right course and the right audience at the right time.

As a student, I strongly urge you to make sure you find the credible sources and ask them the right, hard hitting questions. I once spent $5k on an investing course that ended up losing me more money afterwards. It sucks to get burned.

As a creator, I strongly urge you to consider whether there are better ways to spend your time i.e find a problem and solve it with a tool or a service, not with information. If you do pursue a course, I would definitely advise you to add a community/advising aspect to it with counseling, mastermind groups, and forums, etc as part of the course. I think most of the time that's what people need – not necessarily organized information, but accountability.

Lastly, if you read this and thought to yourself that I'm talking about you or something you're offering – I'm not. This isn't a response to anyone in particular and I have absolutely no one in mind while writing this article.

OK I did mention The Foundation, but it's not really meant to be a specific jab at them either, it was just an example I had come across.