An Honest Review Of Ramit Sethi's Course: Earn 1k

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If you're like me you've probably tried a few online courses in your day. One very popular one is Ramit's Earn 1k, which Vicky and I took together earlier in 2013. The course comes with a hefty price tag (about $1k), but it has a full money back guarantee for I believe 8 weeks, meaning you can essentially take the entire course, decide if it is worth it, and then, ask for your money back if you're still disappointed.

I really applaud Ramit for having such a solid, no hassle, money back guarantee, and I am very thankful for it since I ended up exercising it.

As I recall, when I was thinking of joining the course I searched the internet but couldn't find more than 1 or 2 reviews, so I decided to write one here. Since Ramit and I already had an extensive email conversation, I figured it was best/easiest to simply show it directly and add a few notes at the end.

After asking for my refund for the course and writing about it on my travel blog (and how I thought it was crappy), Ramit sent me an email.

Email Convo With Ramit Sethi From IWillTeachYouToBeRich.com

Hi,

I saw your note on your blog about Earn1K being "crappy."

I wanted to reach out and see why you think that. What are your goals and what is Earn1K not helping you with?

I am happy to refund you, and I would not want to waste your time on a course that's not right for you. There are tons and tons of successful students, but it's not for everyone.

I am VERY open to feedback and would love to hear from you.
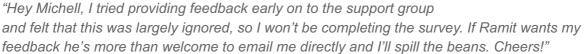
Thanks,

-Ramit

Hey Ramit

Thanks a bunch for reaching out – it's great to hear from you! Yes, I did write that note. It's interesting that you "saw a note on my blog" as I didn't link to the course. I doubt you're a long time reader of our journey so what made you decide to check it out? BTW, you'll notice I did link to your guest post about the best $20 you'll ever spend – so I'm not a complete hater.

I'm surprised you're not aware that I already asked for and received my refund (which by the way was pretty seamless – kudos). Afterwards, I was sent a survey to which I replied:

"Hey Michell, I tried providing feedback early on to the support group and felt that this was largely ignored, so I won't be completing the survey. If Ramit wants my feedback he's more than welcome to email me directly and I'll spill the beans. Cheers!"

That's what I figured this was about – but seeing as you didn't know I got the refund and didn't reference this message, maybe that's not it.

Just thinking out loud here.

Anyways, as promised, I'll definitely spill the beans; I wouldn't write I thought something was "crappy" unless I felt I could justify my opinion completely.

Firstly though, a bit of background about myself so you know where I'm coming from.

I'm currently traveling around the world and freelancing on the side to support my travels, which mainly involves blog advertising on my own blogs and for other bloggers as well. You saw the income report, so you probably know. I have both the time and the money to make this course a success, and I believe I had pretty reasonable goals:

- *Make $500 within 2 months*
- *No more than 15 hours a week (total)*
- *Unrelated to the blogging/sponsored posts*
- *Something I actually like to do (no freelance writing)*
- *Low start up investment (no website)*
- *First couple clients pitched directly (so that I could be scalable)*
- *Decent starting hourly rate ($30/hr or higher)*

Here is where I don't think the course delivered and why I don't believe it aided me in achieving my goals.

Lack of personal attention/community

The biggest thing right off the bat was that there was no personal attention from either the "teacher assistants" or from other classmates. Why not set up masterminding groups or implementing a forum? Why not have regular check-ins once every two weeks with an appointed advisor? How do I know I'm on track? The course shouldn't just be about finding that $1k freelancing idea but also about building successful entrepreneurial habits. In entrepreneurship (which this course is partly about), a communal exchange of ideas is paramount. In fact, in one of the modules you specifically call out your "brain trust" group and how integral they were in your success.

In Earn1k, however, there is no community.

Naturally, I jumped on this right away and alerted Johnna about these opportunities, in particular:

1.   Put in a forum, that's pretty simple and will help rid people of that "going it alone" feeling.

2.   Put a group of 20 or so students under one instructor who can check in on them, hold them accountable, review their ideas and work, provide feedback etc. Possible ideas for instructors could be previous Earn1k graduates, or just other people such as yourself.

3.   Set up small, group activities with people of the same schedule. You can attempt to do this more forcibly by collecting basic information from people (time zones, working hours, etc) and then placing them in a group, which could be as simple as an email list or more detailed like a skype meeting that takes place once every two weeks.

I'm actually attaching that exchange so you can read for yourself (if you haven't already) and will address that later.

Overall, I feel like you're setting people up to fail if you don't guide them outside of the classes. People need someone/something to keep them in check, hold them accountable, and make sure they don't run off on any strange idea tangents – that's just human nature. That's why college courses rarely have the final be 100% of the grade, and in those that do, the students generally perform worse.

What really surprises me, however, is that I know you know this. I didn't think that when I emailed you and said "set up a forum" that you had neither thought of that idea yourself nor had never been told so. Someone MUST have written this in their feedback from earn1k 1.0. Yet, you're still deciding not to do it (and other things).

What's the logic there?

The material is too general

If perhaps I was really blown away by the material I might have felt confident that it was worth it to go it alone, but I wasn't. My overall complaint was that the material in the lesson videos was too general. Earn1k makes the claim that you "can't find this stuff elsewhere" but I'd argue that you can. In fact, I've seen it myself plenty of times on numerous other blogs or ebooks, which is why I often finished the lessons thinking "I already knew this, so now what?"

For example, the entire lesson dedicated to not getting sidetracked with silly things like Facebook and Twitter accounts – I realize that to some people that might be a pitfall but to anyone halfway experienced it was simply recycled material that we knew before. Not to say that it shouldn't be mentioned at all, but an entire lesson (like a $50-$100 value) – overkill. More and more I was beginning to feel that this course was targeted at "square 1" type people, for lack of a better word, and that was detracting from its value for me.

I also think it's a very strong claim to say that you do not need an idea to join this course, and I don't think it lives up to it. Consider the list of freelancing ideas that were given in lesson 2. In my opinion, that was a really weak list, many of which weren't even ideas as much as they were categories. For example, "Database administration" – is that an idea, or just a category? You always talk about niching it down but none of these ideas are niched down in the least. You have to practice what you preach and have faith that your audience is intelligent enough to know that if you recommend 18-35 year old Boston lawyers that they can replace that with other demographics etc. Really outline the process of the idea generation by teaching people to think about all the angles; what would the finished product look like?

I'm attaching a much more detailed PDF showing possible freelancing ideas. This might be information overload but I'd rather something more like this than the one page list of freelancing "ideas" that were handed out in lesson 2.

To tie this back into my first point, I realize this course is targeted at potentially thousands of students and hundreds of freelance ideas, so it has to be sufficiently general in scope, but this is all the more reason why personal advising is necessary.

Here's an idea to make the course more tactical while still clinging to the generalist approach you seem to be going for. Come up with your own freelancing idea at the start of the course (maybe come up with 5 and let your students vote), and implement it, highlighting your approach and tying that back to your lessons. Put it on display for everyone to see (what's your idea, how you came up with it, where you went to find customers, what your message was, what progress are you making, etc) oh, and do that not leveraging any of your contacts. It could be an ongoing case study. This is something I've seen Pat Flynn do in his niche site duel. It's true though, it would be a lot of work – but not any more work than you're asking of your students, right?

Poor customer service

Customer service is a relatively small part of the course but I'll admit, I thought my "complaint" was very poorly handled – and if I don't respect the way someone does business, why would I want to learn business from them? I've attached the email exchange if you haven't read it already. Suffice to say, trying to upsell me when I was already discouraged with the course was a poor move – even my credit card companies know better. I didn't feel that my concerns were addressed – in fact, I know they weren't, because when I write an email and say "hey, you guys should be doing XYZ" there are only two possible responses:

1.   Thanks – those are good suggestions, here is when we are going to implement them.

2.   Thanks – we've considered those but we don't think they will work for the following reasons.

What I got was neither and to me, it shows that people weren't interested in improving the course or had considered these implementations but for some secretive reason didn't want to divulge why they chose not to do them.

On a side note, giving me a ticket number and following up with "Your request (#29200) has been deemed solved" passes the boundaries of professionalism and just looks very impersonal.

In summary, I gave this course a three week shot, and I could tell it just wasn't meeting my expectations; not even close to be honest, so I asked for my refund. I realize that many students have been successful where I have not, but let's be honest – there's a huge selection bias at play here. The people who sign up for this course are motivated, willing to invest in themselves, oh, and have at least a spare $1k to put into this. That right there tells me that some people are just going to succeed by nature of their own merits, not because of any knowledge imparted from the course. As far as I can see, the most value the course offered was getting you off your butt and committing you to doing something – for some, that may suffice, but for me, I can do that myself and NOT spend $1k – I want something I can't find anywhere else and I didn't find it in Earn1k.

So Ramit, what do you think of these ideas? Are you planning on implementing any of them, and if not, why?

This is great feedback, and I appreciate it.

I reviewed the support dialogue, and I agree it wasn't the best back-and-forth. I will be changing our procedures in support to improve this.

Your ideas are great (especially some of the community ideas), but I won't be implementing the forum idea. Here's why: I've already tested that, and in the past, students were more likely to talk/make friends with other students than to do the work. Once I removed the forum, student success rates skyrocketed.

I DID hear more students ask for community support, like you did, so I added an Earn1K sub-group in my Brain Trust group. That's what my support rep was referring to, though we could have been clearer.

Overall, I'm sorry Earn1K didn't work for you. In my experience, a list of ideas isn't helpful at all — a process to find your own ideas is. So, in Earn1K, I teach in the early modules how to generate these ideas, turn them from skills into services, then (most importantly), validate them. Then, in the later modules, we get to the tactics of pricing, marketing, referral strategies, scripts, etc. In testing with thousands of students, we found this model to work very well and it wasn't too general at all.

Again, I really appreciate your feedback, and I'll be thinking about better ways to integrate community into E1K.

Thanks, and thanks for trying Earn1K.

Conclusion: Is Earn1k Right For You?

If you made it this far you should have a pretty good idea of what my thoughts were on Ramit's course, but perhaps I should just say a few more things because I don't want it to seem like this is just a bash Ramit post, because it's not.

Firstly, I've really enjoyed Ramit's content on IWillTeachYouToBeRich.com, and still subscribe to his newsletter, because I think, all and all, he posts some solid stuff. I also really appreciated that he reached out to me about the course, personally, and believe him when he says that they test thousands of different data points to design what they believe is an excellent course. I also believe the many testimonials that he features on his sign up page, and that some people have been successful.

That said, my honest opinion is that the course is not worth the price tag, and that there is more quality information out there, for free (and paid), on the web – if you're willing to do a bit of searching for it. Perhaps, after the first three weeks, things picked up a bit, but considering that three weeks cost me around $300, I just wasn't impressed.

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