

Virtual University 100

100 STEPS TO ESTABLISHING, MARKETING, AND MANAGING A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY

Starting a virtual university? Here's your checklist.

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1. Before You Start: Planning, Preparation and Testing

- Set first year goals: Students, Instructors, Classes, Revenue.
- Arrange for a teleconferencing bridge for TeleClasses.
- Pick a name for your virtual u and get a matching domain name.
- Create your virtual u website or adapt your current website to list/offer them.
- Ask around to find out what types of classes people in your network are interested in.
- Arrange for a credit card merchant account.
- Set up email addresses, phone and fax numbers for registration.
- Set up autoresponders for class brochures and general information.
- Obtain a business license and bank account in the virtual u's name.
- Set a budget of between \$1,000-\$25,000 to start.

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2. TeleClass Design Elements

- Pick a class title that includes the focus, the promise and the benefit.
- Identify the learning objectives for each class and class session.
- Identify the distinctions, models or diagrams to share in each session.
- Identify the 3-5 key points you want to make for each class session
- Identify the discussion questions for each class session.
- Outline and timeline each class' content and flow.
- Determine what workbooks, checklists, materials, etc. you want your students to have.
- Identify the extra support that you can offer for students in your class.
- Identify the special benefits to the student
- Write a snappy but personable class description for your website or newsletter.

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3. Curriculum Format, Design, Content

- Identify the subjects in which you want to offer classes.
- Create the titles for at least 10 classes to offer.
- Find a way to package, bundle or link these classes to make it a program.
- Write the instructor's profile, credentials and philosophy on your website and include a photo.

- Find, hire qualified TeleClass Leaders.
- Select the best time and day for your classes.
- Set optimal size of classes.
- Set up a student-only area at your site for each class.
- Set tuition at which people will easily buy -- without having to be sold or enrolled.
- Lead a developmental session of your class ideas to build it out and test it.

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4. TeleClass Leading Skills

- Know how to grab the students' attention in the first 4 minutes of the TeleClass.
- Learn how to manage the energy, flow and discussions of 25-150 individuals.
- Know how to generate involvement and discussion among participants.
- Discover and develop your strongest -- yet warm -- speaking/leading voice.
- Know what to do if the expected happens on a class.
- Learn how to properly acknowledge and endorse what participants say.
- Learn how to better language and rephrase what participants say.
- Learn how weave the comments of participants during the call.
- Learn how to emotionally impact the participants.
- Fix your communication or style problems/flaws.

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5. TeleClass Registration, Administration

- Write and have ready welcome letters for all classes.
- Maintain a class list with full contact information.
- Email students a reminder twice before the first session date.
- Provide a secure way for students to pay online at your website.
- Maintain a calendar of classes, times, bridges and instructors.
- Develop an automated, online student registration system like TeleClass.com.
- Design, request, collect and track evaluations for every class and instructor.
- Have someone take notes and email to students right after class (and post to site).
- Have the 'next' class ready for students to transition/upgrade into.
- Have someone who can offer tech/web support by phone or email.

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6. TeleClass Marketing

- Start a daily or weekly newsletter or tip broadcast to 'spread the word.'
- Ask others to share your classes/virtual u with their e-network.
- Get your virtual u and classes listed on the major search engines.
- Get media attention.
- Offer free classes as a way to build a database and goodwill.
- List your TeleClasses on the various TeleClass listing services.
- Write/distribute a report/top-ten list related to your class topics/virtual u focus.
- Offer an affiliate/associate program like Amazon.com or TeleClass.com.
- Offer an online self-test to get people's attention.
- Offer early-bird discounts or special bundles. These work.

Section Score

7. Related Products/Services

- Offer archived RealAudio versions of your TeleClasses for free or a fee.
- Offer a certification of some kind.
- Offer an online examination.
- Offer real-time RealAudio broadcasts of your TeleClasses for free or fee.
- Write/offer a printed or e-book related to your virtual u/class subjects.
- Offer audiotape version of your classes/programs.
- License your classes/intellectual property/program to others, companies.
- Offer a Train-the-Trainer option.
- Offer live trainings or presentations based on your TeleClass.
- Offer an annual membership with discounts or special bundles.

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8. Creating Community

- Ask students to be on your R&D team for the virtual u or individual classes.
- Give prizes, awards and extras for good ideas, performance, referrals or support.
- Invite students to volunteer for projects or research.
- Create a culture that attracts the kind of people you want to be customers.
- Give a lot of stuff away for free to create goodwill.
- Offer seemingly-unrelated classes that would appeal to your market.
- Offer special call-in days, web-based resources/links, and fun stuff to your database.
- Become the host of a network even larger than your virtual university.

- Ask your students to tell you what you should be adding/offering.
- Send out a personal, weekly newsletter/update to your 'members' with inside news.

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9. 9. Advanced Features, Bells and Whistles

- Have your courses translated into other languages.
- Offer an synchronized TeleClass + Web page 'whiteboard' or visuals.
- Package your TeleClass to be completely web-delivered/computer-based.
- Offer an online examination to test student's knowledge/comprehension.
- Offer RealVideo classes (archived or live).
- Offer courses by daily email -- a lesson/step each day in sequential fashion.
- Offer an online system for students offer reviews, evaluations, testimonials of each class/instructor, a la Amazon.com
- Create a web page and/or site for EACH class, along with meta tags so search engines can find your school/class.
- Provide a directory/listings pages for each of your students.
- Offer discounts for services and products related to your class, program or school.

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10. Key Success Strategies

- Create a program, not just a bunch of TeleClasses.
- Link up with a strategic partner/affiliate who can benefit from the TeleClass format.
- Keep experimenting until you find classes that people most want to take. Expand your initial focus if needed.
- Give a ton of stuff away as a way to get started and build momentum and your network.
- If you're not a great TeleClass Leader, become one quickly or hire someone who is.
- Keep plugging away for local or national media attention.
- Get in the business of creating intellectual property, not just leading TeleClasses.
- Offer classes that help people make more money, get ahead/succeed, look better, feel better or learn a new skill.
- Patience. It takes time (2-3 years) to build your network and for people to respond to your class offerings.
- Target market segments/industry groups given the high referral rate.

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