

Three on Six:

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO PONDER BEFORE DESIGNING YOUR LEARNING PROGRAM

If you're an entrepreneur (or solopreneur) whose thinking of creating a new learning program (or entire suite of programs), it's important to have a clear idea about your project. This helps to ensure the time and money you invest will pay off and helps you guide the freelance help you'll likely need to hire. While there are many things to consider as a small business owner, your ability to articulate solid answers to these "three on six" questions will help you discover where you need support along the journey of creating your learning program.

There are three business questions. If any of these stump you, I suggest that before you invest in developing a course, you first need support from a marketing or business coach who specializes in supporting mission-driven, heart-centred entrepreneurs.

There are also six key questions that will form the foundation of your course project. If any of these stump you, you're directly in my wheelhouse as an instructional designer.

Take your time with the questions. Hold them for a while if you want, let the answers percolate (they often come for me in the shower or while walking in nature). This isn't a test - it's a creative process. Your imagination is a powerful muse!

May these questions, born from many conversations with entrepreneurs much like yourself, serve you well.

Tina

Three questions about your learning business.

Adding a learning program to your business means you are adding a new “line of business” or product suite to your work. Just like adding any other product to your offerings (and despite popular images of sitting by the beach while generating passive course income), managing learning programs takes ongoing time, effort and relationship investment. How much can vary but generally, at least at the start, it takes a fair bit to get the proverbial ball rolling.

Explore these questions about how offering learning fits into your overall business vision and structure.

one

Business Fit →

How do you envision your learning offerings fitting into your existing business services or products? You might imagine sharing the story of your business - how do learning offers fit into that larger story?

For instance, maybe you create a certain type of art and you have a vision of helping school teachers incorporate this type of art into their class. Or maybe you're a therapist and you have a vision of creating learning programs that are more accessible for those who can't afford therapy.

two

Audience Connection →

What is your experience and relationship with the target audience for your learning programs?

When you know your audience (not know of them, but rather have a relationship with them), you can design learning offerings that will meet them where they are and take them on a journey. Reflect on your interactions with your people, what you've learned from them and about them, and their biggest challenges and needs.

three

Development Resources →

What are all the resources you have to support you in developing learning offerings?

These could be skills, friends, family or other people who support you, a mailing list, creative energy, entrepreneurial experience, financial resources, etc. Claim what you have and know what you need.



TIP: If you're struggling in any one of these three areas, you might consider looking for guidance from a marketing or business coach before investing in course development support.

Six questions about your learning program.

Once you're clear on how learning fits within your business you're in a good position to consider some key aspects of the course you want help building. You might not have all the answers to these questions, however, knowing what you know and what you need help figuring out is an essential first step. If you dive into building a course without the answers to these six questions, you risk spending time and money creating something that doesn't deliver the results you want (or fails to even make a return).

1 How would you describe the primary audience for the particular course you want to create?

Not every course in your suite of learning programs will be for the exact same audience within your niche - some may be a primer for the curious, others may be for those with deeper experience. Use as many descriptors and details as you can to describe who this course is for.

2 What is the body of knowledge for your course?

Some course creators start with a 200 page tome (too much!). Some start with notes on the back of a napkin (that was a fun dinner!). What can you capture of the concepts, terms, practices, skills and activities that make up the body of knowledge for this particular course?

3 What do you bring to the course topic that is uniquely you?

Most people aren't creating learning on a topic that is unique in the world, mostly it's about their unique perspective, framework or approach to something. Go ahead, do a little bragging ... what's the secret sauce that will uniquely flavour your course? Think about your multifaceted identity, life or career experience, relationships, etc.

4 What do you think are the most pressing challenges your audience faces related to the course topic?

You probably know what you want to teach them, however, the best starting point for a course is to name the challenge your people are struggling with. Help them feel seen and heard.

5 How will your course help them to overcome or move beyond these challenges?

Again, great learning isn't about a download of information - it's about taking people on a journey. What is the highlight of your course's journey?

6 What type of learning experience will people have with your course?

It might help to think of the types of relationships give you energy, or to recall a learning experience you had that you loved. The financial return is important, and technology is too, however, I suggest you start with imagining how you want people to feel while taking your learning program. If you were inviting them to a dinner party, what type of party would it be?



TIP: If you're struggling with any (or all!) of these questions, you're not alone and you're on the right track. The answer to these questions will form the foundation of your course and they are ones that are squarely in my wheelhouse to help you with.