ONLINE BUSINESS SUCCESS

FOR THOUGHT LEADERS

Create Visibility for Positive Impact

TOM TEAGUE, PhD

(Free Excerpt for Online Customers)

Business/Internet

**Do you want to use your website to increase your visibility,
attract more leads and customers, generate more sales,
and create more positive results for your customers?**

Online Business Success for Thought Leaders offers exciting possibilities for coaches, consultants, authors, speakers, and professional service providers who are on a mission to make a positive impact on others by sharing their wisdom and experience. Using online technology, you can meet and serve thousands to millions of people with your message while creating a fulfilling, sustainable business.

How do you create a successful strategy that saves you time and money?

Use these systematic foundational steps to achieve online business success:

1. Clarifying Business Strategy
2. Selecting Systems
3. Creating Online Assets
4. Sprinting to Success

Creating an online business is a complex puzzle. You can spend years and tens of thousands of dollars learning how to do this, or you can take a shortcut and apply what you learn in this book from online business coach, Tom Teague, PhD.

Tom combines his expertise from building engineering collaboration software systems in industry with online and offline marketing and sales skills learned from the best of today's online entrepreneurs. He offers some real-world perspectives, examples, and mistakes to avoid that help you get to a successful result faster.

Tom has successfully used this practical, proven, four-step system to teach and coach six- and seven-fi gure thought leader entrepreneurs. You can use what you learn in this book to create the online business of your dreams in a matter of a few months, not years!

Tom Teague, PhD, is an online business coach. He spent more than thirty years in a traditional corporate career leading software development teams to support collaborating engineering communities within large organizations like Exxon and NASA. Today, Tom combines this practical, experienced perspective for building software systems with modern online marketing and sales skills to show thought leaders a systematic way to create and deliver value for their communities using their online business systems.

Praise for *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders*

"Finally! A system that has the exact steps to follow to create success! Bravo, Tom Teague! With Tom's book, you build your system tactically, one piece at a time. Each piece satisfies a specific short-term business goal. And each goal is a step toward achieving a clear, long-term strategy. More importantly, Tom gives you clear, step-by-step instructions for things like leveraging your time through automation for each online asset you create, enabling you to scale up to serve more clients. This book is a great investment and will save you tons of time, effort, and headaches."

— **Diane Halfman, Consultant, Trainer, Speaker, and Host of the *Live Your SPAlife* podcast.**

"Pivoting to a successful online business is not as simple as most experts have led me to believe. I have been successfully coaching business leaders and teams for more than thirty years, but I was unprepared for understanding the critical elements of this transition. The tactical online marketing training I took prior to working with Tom did not paint the whole picture and left me puzzled in the weeds of execution. Tom has synthesized the important strategies and the tactics into a comprehensive and realistic plan. *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders* untangles and clarifies, providing an accurate roadmap for online business success. Thanks, Tom!"

— **Dave Loney, The Leaders' Coach, Author of *Emotional Fitness for Men***

"Tom had the right background for what I needed. We had parallel IT paths, and we had learned from many of the same gurus through what he calls 'Internet Marketing Grad School.' I could use him as both sparring partner and Chief Tech Officer (CTO) or what Digital Marketers and others call 'fractional executive.' CTOs aren't cheap, but shiny objects are much more expensive. As Tom correctly says, lots of people out there can help you with the tactics. Tom wanted this to be a 'roadmap,' but it has so many layers it's more like a travel companion and handbook for building a business infrastructure without spending a fortune. This is expert advice, and Tom shares his fascinating personal experiences, dead-end streets, and learnings. He's a generous person, a great listener and coach. Most importantly, his stuff actually works. Take my word for it."

— **Paul O. Olson, Dr. Psych, MBA, Owner/Chairman of Nordic Heads, and Executive Director of Green Mentors™**

"If it weren't for Tom Teague's skillful expertise in intricate website building, I would not have the business I have today. He took a complex platform and simplified it for me so I could manage it independently. His training provided me the support I needed while building out online programs and virtual events. Thanks to Tom I have become empowered in streamlining my business to reach more people!"

— **Christine Gail, Best-Selling Author of *Unleash Your Rising*, Book Publishing Coach**

"*Online Business Success for Thought Leaders* is the book I wish I had when I was first starting as a coach! It is filled with practical advice and real-world examples to help

coaches start with a sound foundation. I often see so many experts selling coaches on 'tactics' while completely forgetting the need for a complete system aligned with their values and skills. I've seen hundreds of very talented people eventually give up in complete frustration after years of delay and tens of thousands of dollars wasted on these isolated strategies. Tom is one of the survivors of what he calls 'Internet Marketing School.' This book's wisdom can make sure *you* are one of the success stories!"

— **Robert Murray, Co-Founder of the Group Coaching Breakthrough Mastermind and High Performance Coach**

"Tom Teague has been a pleasure to work with as my online business coach. Tom has been very insightful as I have navigated from my position and career as CEO of Innovative Commercial Environments to creating an online business. My new career as an author and keynote speaker will allow me to share my passion in teaching other CEOs how to implement the practical application of conscious capitalism principles. Tom's insights opened new possibilities, directions, and strategies that I had not thought of. He has become an indispensable asset for me with this new venture. I have found Tom to be deeply knowledgeable, thoughtful, helpful, and patient in navigating the sometimes-murky waters of setting up an online business. If you are an author, speaker, or coach who is looking to expand your business online, then *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders* is a comprehensive and practical roadmap that you can use. I *highly* recommend it!"

— **DeLinda Forsythe, CEO of Innovative Commercial Environments (ICE), Author of *Inspiring Generational Leadership***

"If you're sincere about building an online business, you must read and use the concepts in this book."

— **Jack Rand, Strategic Business Coach and Author of *Secrets of a Strategic Business Coach***

"I love that Tom has created a book that breaks down exactly what to do to create a successful online business! His book not only explains things in an easy-to-understand way, but it can also be used as a reference book for specific topics while you are implementing your online business system, one small project at a time! Tom's intention for you is clear— for you to achieve online business success faster! When you use *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders*, you'll be able to do exactly that!"

— **Kerry Mensior, Communications Mastery Trainer**

"Navigating the ins and outs of a successful online business is a time consuming, often frustrating experience. For the coach, author, or speaker, website building may not be something they want to spend a lot of time on. *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders* is a book written by a man who wished he had this book when he started his own online business. It will get you started and help you realize what you can do and what you would be better off letting someone else do for you. Altogether, it will make your life easier so you can focus on what you are truly good at—helping others!"

— **Tyler R. Tichelaar, PhD and Award-Winning Author of *The Nomad Editor: Living the Lifestyle You Want, Doing Work You Love***

"Tom Teague's *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders* is an extremely valuable resource for entrepreneurs. As a former software manager, Tom brings his knowledge of technology, business, software, and marketing into an organized process that is clear and understandable. Many entrepreneurs and small business owners struggle with how to get their marketing content, software platforms, and sales processes all working in a coordinated fashion. Tom's book lays out the right steps to follow to take your business technology and marketing funnel from frustration to flow. Tom worked with me for several months in 2020 to set up my website, online course, and marketing on Kajabi, and his expertise, skills at coaching, and encouragement were greatly appreciated. I walked through the process with him that he lays out in his book. So, I can highly recommend *Online Business Success for Thought Leaders* to every business owner who has been overwhelmed by the technology/marketing/software puzzle. Read Tom's book and get clarity, understanding, and a successful plan to move forward."

— **Richelle Wiseman, Book Writing Coach and Host of**
***Buzz on the Book Biz* Podcast**

"Tom played an instrumental role in helping me set up my online business. Not only did Tom help me figure out what I needed to do to sell my book and set up my blog on my website, but he also helped me come up with my strategy and an implementation plan for the big picture of how I would attract my ideal readers to my website. Tom helped me think through the entire customer journey and prioritize what I needed to do first. No matter what industry or customer you are trying to reach with your business, I highly recommend working with Tom to come up with an implementation plan for the big picture."

— **Erin Elise Kiu, Blogger at Fun & Holy and Author of**
One Transforming Love

"This book is excellent! It is a complete road map to your success in building an online business. It presents a no-nonsense way to build a business plan in simple, easy steps. A must read for those who have or want to start an online business."

— **Mike Reedy, Author of *Breaking the Compatibility Code***
and Founder of *The Ultimate Social Network*

Online Business Success for Thought Leaders

Create Visibility for Positive Impact

(Excerpt for Online Pre-Order Customers)

Tom Teague, PhD

Online Business Success for Thought Leaders: Create Visibility for Positive Impact

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Every attempt has been made to source all quotes properly.
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www.OnlineBusinessSuccessBook.com

To Lynn,
the one who lifted me up when I needed it the most.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge all the teachers and mentors in my life for their gifts of love, wisdom, enrichment, inspiration, and support. Some of the many teachers in my life include Mom and Dad, my ex-wives, my children, my brothers and sister and their children, my friends, my clients, my mastermind communities, and my work colleagues.

I want to thank the many mentors from my graduate studies, both at Carnegie-Mellon University and in my more recent "Internet Marketing Grad School."

Specifically, I want to acknowledge with gratitude the memories of my graduate school advisor at Carnegie-Mellon University, Professor Gary J. Powers, who inspired me by his personal example of innovative thought, interactive teaching style, enthusiasm for life, self-confidence, encouragement, quick smiles, and good humor. We lost him too soon, but his memories still inspire me today.

I want to acknowledge and thank my many mentors and coaches in "Internet Marketing Grad School," including Brendon Burchard, Frank Kern, Jeff Walker, Mike Koenigs, Pam Hendrickson, Chalene Johnson, Andy Jenkins, Mike Filsaime, Bill Baren, Clint Arther, Ryan Deiss, Russell Brunsen, Justin Livingston, Callen Rush, Rich German, Milana Leshinsky, Lisa Sasevich, Alex Moscow, David Mehler, Jennifer Hudye, Kai Van Bodhi, Spencer Burnett, Jay Fiset, and Alina Vincent.

Of these very capable mentors, I specifically want to acknowledge with gratitude Brendon Burchard. I have invested in most of his offerings since *Experts Academy* in 2013, becoming a Certified High Performance Coach™ in 2014, and I have continued to be inspired by him year after year since then. He reminds me of my graduate school advisor, Dr. Gary Powers, because both men have modeled for me positive qualities I admire—innovative, interactive teaching styles, enthusiasm for life, self-confidence, encouragement, smiles, and good humor.

I want to acknowledge with gratitude my clients, who have had faith in my ability to help them with their online businesses and who have worked with me, even as I have continued to be learning my way. I specifically want to thank Dr. Paul O. Olson, who is someone who helped me when I needed it the most by offering the opportunity to work with him. Paul generously opened doors to introduce me to his mentors, Alex Moscow and Jay Fiset, both of whom have been instrumental to my own progress. None of us can achieve our goals alone without the generosity and help of others. Thank you, Paul, for your kind, generous spirit and your support for me on my journey.

I want to acknowledge and thank my editors Tyler Tichelaar and Larry Alexander, and my writing and publishing coach Christine Gail for their support in creating this book.

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Preface
Journey of Discovery

At age sixty-two, on a Friday morning at the end of the month, I was given notice that my job as a technical software development manager would end that day.

For thirty-five years, I had been a high-performing, innovative contributor and leader of software development and information systems teams at Exxon and NASA. In between, I had taught chemical engineering design at Texas A&M and Rice University, and I had led joint industry technical data standards efforts for several years as an independent consultant.

My job termination experience was surreal. I was numb. A part of me just could not believe it was happening, yet it was. Mechanically, I just started packing up my office, wondering, *What's going to happen now?*

That morning, while packing my office, an attorney called. He was working with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) on a matter involving technology systems for real estate data. It would involve the possibility of some part-time consulting work to assist him. Did I have some time available to do that?

I thought, *Wow. Oh yeah, I've got time. What a blessing!*

Trying to maintain my composure, I replied, "Sure, I've got some time to help with that. What would be the next step to get started?"

It was one of those magical moments when the world seems to be crashing down all around you, but someone tosses you a lifeline.

The Latest in a Series of Major Life Transitions

I did not know it at the time, but that was the actual end of my corporate career, and the start of my next career as an independent entrepreneur and business owner. Searching the job market is not easy or particularly fruitful for baby boomer, sixty-two-year-old, highly experienced software managers. It was time to crawl out the window and explore the new path of entrepreneurship.

In my early fifties, I had experienced several major life transitions and personal losses over four years, including divorce from a fifteen-year mixed-orientation marriage, the loss of both my parents and my sister to disease, and the loss of my first entrepreneurial business dreams and life savings. The one bright spot was finding new love and happiness with Lynn, who had been married to her gay husband for sixteen years and was recently divorced.

These life transitions shook me to the core. I found that my religious beliefs and community were not that helpful to me in finding meaning in this time of turmoil, so I read widely for

several years on spirituality topics and spent countless hours in introspection seeking a deeper understanding of inner human experiences. I started to wake up.

I am someone who looks for ways to simplify complexity into simpler ideas. Spirituality literature is rich with complex ideas, and to simplify and synthesize what I was learning about human spirituality, I wrote a book: *Awaken to Choice: An Ungodly Approach to Creating Heaven on Earth*.

Internet Marketing Grad School

Writing the book was the seed of an idea for my next career: What if I could become an Internet-based thought leader—an author, a speaker, a coach, and a teacher/trainer—teaching and coaching others on how to create inner peace, using the principles in my book? That would be a huge shift in my life and career! While I learned how to self-publish the book, I really did not know how to get the word out that this book was even available, much less create a new career from it.

Contemplating a new career based on my book, and doing some basic math about book sales, I realized relatively few authors sell enough copies to live on their book royalties alone, so I started investing my time and a lot of money over five years in what I now refer to as "Internet Marketing Grad School."

I learned many facets of online business from other internet-based thought leaders, including Brendon Burchard, Frank Kern, Ryan Deiss, Andy Jenkins, Mike Filsaime, Mike Koenigs, Pam Hendrickson, Chalene Johnson, Bill Barron, Justin Livingston, Lisa Sasevich, Jay Fiset, Alex Moscow, Jennifer Hudye, and Alina Vincent. All these entrepreneurs are exceptional, successful examples of internet-based thought leaders—they write, speak, coach, and teach others on their topics of expertise, and they reach their markets through internet-based marketing and sales.

From my corporate career as a software development leader, I already had skills in writing, speaking, teaching, and mentoring. I felt that acquiring coaching skills and credentials would be necessary as well. Even though I have informally mentored people throughout my career, I invested in Brendon Burchard's Certified High Performance Coaching™ program to have a proven structured coaching program I could use in my new coaching career.

Swimming in the Sea of Uncertainty—N'BASO and Focus

When I was tossed overboard by my job termination to sink or swim in the world of an independent business, I experienced the entrepreneur's dilemma—the N'BASO syndrome, a term I first heard from my friend and colleague, business coach Jack Rand. N'BASO is the acronym for Next Bright And Shiny Object. N'BASOs are the creative ideas we independent entrepreneurs are interested in chasing. And they keep showing up all the time. Which one to chase?

This is the experience of swimming in the sea of uncertainty. Which way to shore? As much as I would like to, I could not undertake all my ideas at the same time and get the results I wanted. As

an independent business owner, I am knowledgeable, capable, and passionate about several topics. I am also tempted to spend time learning the new skills I need. Even though I was experienced at my previous career, I was a novice at this new one, and there was a lot to learn. Which topic was the right one for me to focus on first?

I was also looking for a new job based on my corporate software development and data management experience. I looked for a long time before giving up, and I still look at job postings occasionally. My experience in the job market is that most employers are not looking for baby boomers at my experience level.

Coping with a spouse coming out as a lesbian after fifteen years of marriage the year I turned fifty, I found myself wanting to help other straight spouses navigate those painful and stressful life transitions. How can families navigate the coming out experience in a way that preserves love and human dignity in their families? I believed there was a way to navigate this transition with less pain and to keep families from "exploding" apart in anger when a spouse comes out. I was still interested in and passionate about that topic.

I loved teaching. I could teach and coach others how to choose happier lives, using the framework in my book, *Awaken to Choice*. There is so much suffering in the world that we inflict upon ourselves due to our unawareness of how we think and the unconscious choices we make. I was still interested in and passionate about that topic. My big vision for that topic was that we could achieve world peace through inner peace, one person at a time—that is how we create heaven on earth.

I loved mentoring and coaching. I could use the structured Certified High Performance Coaching™ program to help others discover higher levels of personal and professional performance for themselves. There are so many ways we can help ourselves and others using the principles and habits Brendon Burchard teaches. I was certified to coach people using that program. I was still interested and passionate about that topic.

Then, finally, there was my current passion and area of focus, based on my studies in Internet Marketing Grad School. After struggling through the learning curve on this topic, I finally understood how to systematically solve the puzzle of creating an online business in a teachable way. I believed there was a definite need for this in this emerging industry.

On my journey through the sea of uncertainty and Internet Marketing Grad School, I have met many coaches, authors, speakers, and consultants who have a genuine desire to help other people and make a positive difference in the world. However, they struggle, as I did, with getting their online technology in place to support their mission. I am a kindred spirit with this community, and I wanted to help my fellow entrepreneurs navigate their online journey much more quickly and easily than I had.

Even with my technical software background in my corporate career, I struggled because the technology tools that support an online business have many moving parts, and every business is unique, so it is a complex problem to determine which tools are needed. I finally experienced a

breakthrough in how to help myself and others make those decisions more efficiently and effectively. And that is what this book is about.

In the end, we need to choose one thing to focus on right now. For me, that is working with my community of coaches, consultants, authors, speakers, and professional service providers to help them achieve online business success faster and to have a greater positive effect in the world.

Remaking My Self-Identity

One thing I did not anticipate on this journey was how long it takes to shift your mindset, your identity, your way of thinking about yourself, and the way you talk about yourself to other people. For the first two years of my transition from corporate manager to business owner, I would still introduce myself to people based on my old identity as a software development manager. After all, I was still trolling in the job market, and it was what I did during a long and successful career.

Early on, I was not that comfortable introducing myself as an author and a coach. And to be honest, I was still swimming in the sea of uncertainty—I was trying to do too many things at once and trying to figure out the one thing I should focus on. It is hard to introduce yourself if you don't have clarity about who you are, and how you serve others.

Remaking self-identity is a stressful journey for anyone, and I experienced more personal loss along the way, more financial struggles, and most significantly, the loss of my love relationship and third marriage. I was so distracted trying to figure things out and get clearly focused on my career that I did not focus enough attention on the most important thing in my life—my love relationship. I cannot change my past actions, but that is a loss I regret very much. I have learned important lessons about myself in the process. Interestingly, what helped me the most in coping with this last divorce was rereading my own book: *Awaken to Choice*.

One core lesson I learned about self-identity in *Awaken to Choice* is I have an ageless spirit, or life energy, that lives inside my physical body, and it's the body that ages. However, that inner spirit remains young, alive, and optimistic. No matter the age of my physical container, I feel on the inside as if I am in my late twenties or early thirties. Inside, I feel I am always starting out on fresh new adventures as external circumstances change. And the best insight of all is I get to choose the life I experience.

Ready to Go?

At this point, six years into this latest life transition, I am clearly focused and comfortable introducing myself as an online business coach because coaching is what I do. I write, teach, and coach entrepreneurs about the best ways to create and maintain an interactive and audience-engaging online business platform that aligns with and supports their business goals and their mission to create positive change.

I have created the *Online Business Success System* for you. It is a proven systematic approach to using online technology that will help you create more visibility and greater opportunity to

achieve your passion and mission. I have successfully taught this method to dozens of entrepreneurs over the last three years.

This book is your roadmap—a box-top picture—for solving your online business puzzle. Solving the puzzle is still your responsibility because every business, including yours, is unique. You can help yourself along on your own journey by reading this book and applying what you learn.

Let's get started!

Tom

Introduction
The Online Business Success System

Becoming a Thought Leader in the Expert Industry

My first-year experiences in Internet Marketing Grad School included reading Brendon Burchard's number one *New York Times* best-seller, *The Millionaire Messenger*, watching his *Experts Academy* course on DVD (now available online), and attending his four-day live event, *Experts Academy*.

Burchard, who self-identifies as an author and personal development and online marketing trainer, taught me at the *Experts Academy* about an emerging "expert industry" that was a new career possibility for anyone with knowledge and expertise in any subject area who was interested in teaching it to others. You can create a business by selling your expertise through books, online and offline speaking and training, live events, and offering coaching and mastermind programs.

With his *Experts Academy* online course and live event bundle priced at $1,997 and attended by 800 people, Burchard's sales revenue, before expenses, worked out to $1.6 million, proving the validity of the title of his book, *The Millionaire Messenger*. At his live event, he offered other related online products such as *High Performance Academy*, as well as the opportunity to participate in his year-long mastermind program.

At that time, Burchard defined an "expert" as someone who was an author, speaker, trainer, coach, or online marketer. More recently, the term expert has morphed into "thought leader" because of the rise in social media of thought leaders who have thousands, and even millions, of social media followers.

You may start in this industry identifying yourself with one of the expert roles, like I did, thinking of myself as a new author and possibly a coach. But, when you go down this career path, it is likely you will take on *all* these thought leader roles to varying degrees—author, speaker, trainer, consultant, coach, online marketer, and online community leader.

Attending *Experts Academy* was a pivotal turning point in my life, inspiring me to consider a new career teaching the principles of my book, *Awaken to Choice*. Burchard's positive, uplifting, and interactive style of teaching and his knowledge about online marketing is some of the best available in this industry. It was a great foundational training course for me to take.

Having said that, I believe most thought leaders would agree that it simply is not possible to teach everything you need to know in a single course or live event.

My lingering question on leaving *Experts Academy* was: What exactly did Burchard do to become successful in his new career as an expert and thought leader?

Creating a successful online business is more nuanced than it first appears. For example, to sell at least 800 copies of *Experts Academy* online and create his best-selling book, Burchard shared that he needed to build an online community of followers and figure out how to approach the publishing industry as an author. Then he needed to build a network of peer thought leaders who also had online communities willing to help him promote and sell both his book and his *Experts Academy.* Finally, he needed to combine these tasks. He did so by adapting an online marketing and sales concept that Jeff Walker created known as the "Product Launch Formula."

How do you do all of that? That is a bigger question.

It just so happened that at that same *Experts Academy*, Walker was a guest speaker. He gave a talk about online product launches. At the end of his talk, he offered the audience an opportunity to sign up for his online training and event bundle—*The Product Launch Formula*. That sounded like an important next step to me, so I invested in his program.

Investing in *Experts Academy* and *Product Launch Formula* began my journey into what I now refer to as "Internet Marketing Grad School." There was a lot to learn about online business, and it required the investment of tens of thousands of dollars and several years of my time.

The Technology Puzzle

When I got home from *Experts Academy*, I pondered the next step in implementing what I had learned. How could I apply what I had learned to promoting my book?

I thought, *I've got this. I am a technology guy. I can figure this out.*

I conveniently forgot I was not yet a "marketing and sales" guy, so I focused first on the technology to support an online business with online marketing and sales.

All the thought leaders I was listening to at the time were saying "start with WordPress" to build your website and go from there. The advantage of WordPress is that, by itself, it is free. It is not really free, though, because you need to subscribe to a relatively inexpensive web hosting service. Therefore, WordPress is nearly free. It has the disadvantage of being hard to learn. And there was no guidance from any of my training on what *content* to put on your website. Then I discovered that WordPress does not directly support online marketing and sales without buying other systems.

Some people coming from an online marketing perspective only were saying: "You do not need a website. You just need marketing and sales funnels." I fell for that line, too, for a time. Neither the advice, "Just have a WordPress site" or the advice "Just use marketing and sales funnels" was correct. You need both a website and a marketing and sales funnel system.

At first, I did what many people do. I created an "extended business card" or an "information brochure" website. It really did not do much to drive business. And to be honest, I was not clear yet on what my business was going to be.

I discovered quickly that the disadvantage of WordPress is it does not do anything but provide public content website pages and blogs. Anything you want to do to support online business activities, including online marketing, automated email, sales, and product delivery on your website requires additional, non-WordPress systems. These can either be WordPress "plug-ins" or separately hosted online applications that require monthly subscriptions.

Burchard and Walker were both saying, "Start by building your email list," which is another way of saying "Start building a community of followers you can send email to." But WordPress does not have any native ability to capture names and email addresses, or to send automated email. To do that, you need an email automation system with a monthly subscription fee.

How do you build your email list? You offer something valuable to your audience in exchange for their name and email address. To set this up, create an opt-in page, a value delivery page, and an automated email response. With WordPress, you need to create and link to a separate webpage that is, in turn, integrated with a separate email automation system.

Then there was the idea of selling and delivering an online product, for example, an online course to interactively teach the principles in my book. That would require licensing another piece of software to take payments and automatically provide login access to the private course content. My course content would be hosted streaming videos and downloadable worksheets. So next, I needed to learn how to produce and edit videos, which required additional investment.

With complex technology on top of the need to understand online marketing, sales, and content delivery, the whole thing seemed overwhelming and expensive. Making this even more daunting, I was not sure yet exactly who my audience was, and I wasn't even clear about what I was going to be selling to pay for all the technology needed to make the sales.

After many months of struggling to solve this puzzle, I realized no one was teaching the whole process of setting up and running an online business. No one was teaching what I needed—a systematic way to put the pieces together so they support your online business in both the short- and long-term.

Breaking Through—Using an Agile Approach to Develop Your Systems

The solution finally dawned on me. *Every online business system is a custom-built system.*

I realized the solution to this complicated puzzle was to use the project management techniques I used at Exxon and NASA for twenty-plus years to build custom software systems—agile software development.

You may be saying to yourself, huh? And I would not blame you. Most people do not have experience in managing software development or cannot see why it is relevant to an online business system.

With the agile approach, you can build sophisticated, but easy-to-use systems incrementally, one step at a time. At each step, you fully align the software's functions with solving the end user's most important problems, and at the same time, the software helps you build your business.

It may not be obvious that an online business platform with social media profiles and pages, websites, blogs, marketing pages and email automation, online sales, and online product delivery is a custom software system. But when you think more deeply about it, it really is a custom system, tailored specifically to the business' needs.

Every online business is a unique blend of customers, problems, and solutions. The online systems needed to support customers in solving their problems are unique to each business. Therefore, your online business platform is a custom software system.

The reason I struggled with building an online business successfully is that I kept trying to do one thing or another based on what I learned at the latest seminar or training course I attended. But it was never really clear how the most recent thing I learned fit into the overall system. It was also unclear how the latest thing I learned fit into a defined business strategy.

Building your online system is much simpler using the agile approach because you build your system tactically, one piece at a time, each piece dealing with a specific short-term business goal, while also aligning that solution with achieving a clear long-term strategy. In this way, a specific tactical project becomes part of a larger strategy.

The Online Business Success System

I developed the Online Business Success System to help you create and manage your online business systems both strategically and tactically. There are four steps:

1. Clarifying Business Strategy
2. Selecting Systems
3. Creating Online Assets
4. Sprinting to Success

I will introduce the steps here, and then thoroughly explain each step throughout the remainder of this book. I recommended reading the book straight through the first time and then using it as a reference book for specific topics as needed while you are implementing your online business system, one small project at a time, to align with your business goals and strategies.

Clarifying Business Strategy

The foundation of any custom software system is understanding what the business needs. For thought leaders seeking to help others through their knowledge and expertise, the primary requirement is to understand their audience—who they are, what their problems are, and how to help solve them.

Next, you need to think about the best ways to engage your audience online. Getting their attention is your first challenge. Then you need to engage them interactively in a series of online and offline conversations about their problems and how you may be able to help them. These conversations make up what's called "the customer journey."

The customer journey is a process where you meet and get to know people over time through a series of online and offline conversations. They need to get to know, like, and trust you *before* they will buy from you. Similarly, you need to get to know, like, and trust them so you know how you can best serve them. This process is especially true if you plan to work together in a coaching or professional services relationship. Along the way, you are progressively building and cultivating relationships. You create a series of steps where you provide a valuable service or information, and then serve and support them with your knowledge, experience, and perspective.

The business aspect of this relationship is that along the customer journey, customers and clients pay you to help them solve problems. And your job as the business owner is to provide value by helping people get what they want and need at each step along the journey.

Your specific, unique customer journey is the backbone of your business model and your business strategy. The journey includes defining a clear set of products and services and the delivery systems for those offerings. You need to set up a pricing structure that allows people progressively to get to know, like, and trust you at low financial risk until they discover the value of what you have to offer. In designing the customer journey, you plan to progressively serve your clients, meeting their needs and helping them solve specific problems most effectively at each stage.

Selecting Systems

Once you have defined a clear business strategy, you are ready to implement the online and offline systems that will support the customer journey.

In building any software system, the first step is to understand the functional business requirements. Thought leader online business platforms need to support four major business functions that guide your audience through the customer journey you designed for them.

The four major business functions of an online platform are:

1. Free Public Content
2. Online Marketing
3. Online Sales
4. Purchased Private Content

Typically, you publish **free public content** on social media to meet your audience online, and from there, you guide them to your website, your blog, your videos, and your **online marketing**. This online marketing page may be a webpage where you offer something valuable for free, such as a video, a free informational PDF, or a video series in exchange for their contact information. Once you have contact information, you can continue both **online and offline conversations**

using a sequence of webpages and email until you make a *sale*. After making the sale, you can deliver both online and offline *purchased private content*, including such things as online subscription programs, online courses, coaching programs, and mastermind programs.

One approach to providing these business functions is to knit together many separate online software systems, such as:

1. A public website and blog builder like WordPress or Wix.
2. A landing page builder like Optimize Press or Lead Pages to build online marketing webpages.
3. An email system like Aweber or Active Campaign to support online marketing email.
4. An online shopping cart system like Shopify or Woo Commerce to support online sales.
5. A calendar system like Calendly or Accuity to support offline sales processes.
6. A customer relationship management system like PipeDrive or Hubspot to support offline sales processes.
7. A live virtual event meeting platform like Zoom or GoToMeeting to support live online events.
8. A commercial-free video platform like Vimeo or Wistia to support video streaming.
9. A video editing system like Camtasia or iMovie to support video content editing.
10. A private online content delivery system like WishList Member or LearnDash to support online learning.

An alternative approach is to use integrated online software support systems like Click Funnels, Kartra, or Kajabi that integrate support for multiple business functions in a single system.

There are trade-offs to consider in selecting systems—balancing complexity, features, and ease of use. In my experience as a software technology manager, it is best to minimize the number of apps and platforms. It makes your life easier and will save you both time and money.

Creating Online Assets

Once you design the customer journey and select the supporting software, you can start creating and building essential online assets needed to support your customer journey.

What are online assets? They include all the content you produce (text, images, audio, and video), the various webpages, forms, customer databases, online products, and email you create to interact with your audience online and offline.

Specifically, your online assets typically include:

1. Social media pages
2. Webpages (home, about, contact, resources)
3. Blog, Vlog, Podcast pages
4. Marketing pages and email (funnels, webinars, launches, affiliate support)
5. Online calendars and email reminders
6. Sales pages

7. Payment pages
8. Online products (membership sites requiring customer login)
9. Live events and workshops (either in-person or virtual)

With this list, it is natural to think creating online assets is complex and expensive. Yes, it involves both cash and time. All of this could be looked at as a necessary expense to be minimized. I find it more helpful to think of online assets as business assets. You invest both time and money in building them, and over time, they support your business' growth and produce a return on investment.

Online assets allow you to meet people online, build a relationship with them, and help them solve problems. Some of the people you meet will become your customers and provide business revenue in return for the valuable services you offer, providing fuel for your business and helping customers solve problems.

Creating online assets is a core business activity—it is how you connect with your audience and deliver value.

As you create more assets, they become the source of multiple revenue streams. You will grow both your online assets and your business revenue over time.

Sprinting to Success

Since there are so many online assets to create, it is easy enough to get stuck in analysis paralysis trying to figure out what to do first.

When you are starting out, it is natural to want to minimize expenses, so free sounds good. It is also natural to want to focus on meeting people online on social media, building a website, and moving forward through the customer journey with them, eventually getting to your offerings.

Unfortunately, this natural and intuitive approach has the drawback of requiring lots of time and effort without producing any sales revenue. So, even though it is free or inexpensive, it's easy to get discouraged because you're not producing sales revenue from these activities.

The counter-intuitive approach to building online assets is to start from the end and work backward through the customer journey.

Start with having a service to sell. It could be your coaching program or a live event workshop, whether virtual or in-person.

Create the payment page first. This supports you with the offline sales process, where you schedule your conversations, make offline sales, and then take payments online. The automated email purchase confirmation email you send after the purchase provides confirmation to your client and provides additional information, for example, the purchase contract or live event details.

Next, create the sales page to support offline sales. This sales page would describe either your live event or your coaching program. The button on the sales page takes people to the payment page, which leads to the purchase confirmation email you already created. Now when you are talking with people offline, you can take them to an online sales page that summarizes your offer so they can review it before they purchase.

As an alternative to one-on-one offline sales conversations, you can scale up your conversations by talking to more than one person at a time. This is the point where you can set up a live webinar or live workshop where you teach from your expertise and invite people to the sales page you previously created. Typically, you will need to have a registration page, a confirmation page, and a complete set of email reminders both before and after your live event to encourage everyone to show up and to follow up with them after the event.

I will pause here to ask you to notice a few advantages of using this approach.

1. You are creating online assets as a series of small projects, called "sprints," that can be done rapidly. The result of each sprint is a working online asset that supports a specific business need; for example, taking a payment and sending a confirmation email.
2. You are incrementally layering your assets with each sprint, creating your full system—payment page first, sales page second, live event third. Your system is building up incrementally, using what you already built in the previous step.
3. You are supporting your offline sales process with online assets.
4. You are leveraging your time through automation each time you build an online asset, enabling you to scale up to serve more clients.
5. You are making sales revenues along the way to help pay for the system's license fees.

Summary—Your Roadmap to Online Business Success

The Online Business Success System is what I needed when I started as a new author and coach. I needed a systematic way to put all the pieces of my complex online business puzzle together. If I had the roadmap then, the journey to where I am now would have been so much faster. That is my intention for you—for you to achieve online business success faster!

The first critical step is clarifying business strategy, which is described in Part I.

Part I
Clarifying Business Strategy

I see now that my first attempts to dive into the technology of an online business after coming home from *Experts Academy* was important, but it was not the right first step.

The first step in building an online business system is to understand the "requirements." In other words, get a clear picture of your business strategy.

For thought leaders, the primary requirement is to understand who your audience is, what their problems are, and how you can help them solve their problems.

Clarifying business strategy consists of the following:

1. Understanding the thought leader business (Chapter 1)
2. Engaging your audience (Chapter 2)
3. Seeking business clarity (Chapter 3)
4. Defining business strategy (Chapter 4)

Part II
Selecting Systems

Now that you are clear about what business you are in and what your business strategy is, you can tackle the technology puzzle with more direction and purpose.

In this part of the book, you will choose the technologies you need to support the customer journey you defined in Part I.

One of the first principles in building business software systems is only to build the capabilities you need when you need them. However, when you select the technology components of your *complete* system, the overall system design needs to support your long-term strategy; for example, it must support all the steps in the customer journey you created in Chapter 4.

In Part II, we will look at the following:

1. The overall process of how to build/select software systems (Chapter 5)
2. The tools you need to support offline business processes (Chapter 6)
3. The tools you need to support online business processes (Chapter 7)
4. The ways you can simplify your life by streamlining your systems (Chapter 8)

Part III
Creating Online Assets

At this point, you have defined a clear business strategy and a customer journey. On this customer journey, with your guidance, your ideal client will take steps to get from where they are to where they aspire to be.

You have sorted through the technology and systems and found the ones you will use to build the roads and bridges of your customer journey. You will use these systems to support your ideal customers as you guide them through a meaningful customer journey.

It is now time to look at the construction materials you will use to build the individual roads and bridges that make up the infrastructure for your customer journey and comprise your online business infrastructure.

In Part III, we will discuss:

1. Understanding the assets you need to build an online customer journey (Chapter 9)
2. Acquiring the skills you need to build online assets (Chapter 10)
3. Defining the specific assets you need to support your customer journey (Chapter 11)

Part IV
Sprinting to Success

What had I done to myself? I had just plunked down a $300 deposit for a hotel in San Diego to hold my first live event about ten weeks later, which I had boldly named *Build Your Online Business in a Weekend*. I was excited about the possibility of teaching others what I had learned about building online systems, and to have my students build the core part of their online system over the course of three days through hands-on learning.

This workshop was different than the typical three-day live event. For this workshop, I asked people to bring their laptops and to get their initial platform built using the hands-on exercises I would provide them.

Then I realized my website was very minimal and part of it (my about page) was built using older technology! Not to worry…I was convinced I could build the parts of my own website in a few days using the technology and methods I was going to teach—and I did. It was a minimal website to start, but it served its purpose, and I knew I would continue to expand and improve it over time.

This was the outcome I wanted to teach my students in the workshop, and it is the outcome I want to show you now. It is possible to build a working online system, one step at a time, a few days at a time.

With that in mind, and with what you've learned so far in this book, you are ready to build and launch your online business platform!

In Part I, you defined a clear business strategy and a customer journey that leads your ideal client through a transformational journey using your unique methodology.

In Part II, you selected the technologies and systems you will use to support the customer journey.

In Part III, you gained an understanding of online assets, the skills required to build them, and the order in which to build them.

In Part IV, you will see how to pull that knowledge together to build and launch your online system using an agile project management approach. Agile project management is an iterative and incremental approach where you build only the capabilities you need and only when you need them. In Part IV, we will look at:

1. Jumpstarting Your Online Business (Chapter 12)
2. Growing Your Online Business (Chapter 13)
3. Testing and Measuring the Performance of Your System (Chapter 14)
4. Achieving Online Business Success Systematically (Chapter 15)

About the Author

Tom Teague is an online business coach who earned his PhD in chemical engineering from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1980. He spent more than thirty years in a traditional corporate career leading software development teams to support collaborating engineering communities within large organizations like Exxon and NASA. Tom brings this practical, experienced perspective with building software systems to show thought leaders—coaches, consultants, authors, speakers, and professional service providers—a systematic way to create and deliver value for their communities using their online business systems.

Tom embarked on a journey into "Internet Marketing Grad School" for several years after he authored and self-published a book on human spirituality in 2014 titled *Awaken to Choice: An Ungodly Approach to Creating Heaven on Earth.* Even with very capable teaching from his many mentors, he observed that both he and many of his fellow students in Internet Marketing Grad School have struggled with the complexity of setting up their online systems to support and grow their businesses. That struggle is what motivated him to write this book. Tom believes building your online platform should take a few months, not years!

Teaching others is something Tom has long enjoyed and incorporated into his professional work, starting with engineering graduate school, and continuing as an award-winning instructor for Exxon internal facility design and simulation courses. In 1999 and 2000, he was invited to teach chemical engineering design as an adjunct professor at Texas A&M University and Rice University. He educated the participants in joint industry efforts in the early 2000s about using object-oriented data models and eXtensible Markup Language (XML) to implement technical data exchange standards. Since 2017, he has been teaching thought leader entrepreneurs how to design and build their online business systems to support online marketing, sales, and content delivery.