

# Break free from the 1:1 *client trap.*

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Working for yourself is a dream come true. But now that you've proven you can do it, and be successful at it, where do you go from here?

# This one is for *deciding*

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If you've ever downloaded anything about online courses, you've been promised a pot of gold. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to help you decide whether to do this at all, and if so, what it should be.

Here's what I think is actually happening. You built a business on being genuinely good at something, one person at a time. It worked. That's the problem. The only levers left are working more hours or charging more, and you've probably pulled both.

What I've seen work is smaller and far less glamorous than the ads suggest. One client, a wedding stylist, went back through years of email inquiries and found nearly a thousand people who had asked her for advice. She sold her first course to them with one email. No ads, no launch, no countdown timer. She already had the audience and the material. What she didn't have was a decision.

So this guide is deliberately not a build manual. Three steps: distill your genius, set your strategy, and understand what makes a program actually change someone. You'll leave with a topic, a revenue number, and a clear head. When you're ready to build the thing, that's the Learning-Based Business Plan, and I'll point you there at the end.

I've spent twenty years at this, with Wells Fargo, Apple, Coca-Cola Consolidated, and Genentech, and with a lot of people running businesses much closer to your size. The pattern holds at both ends. The ones who move are the ones who wrote something down.

So: clear an hour nobody else has a claim on. Go to the spot where your good ideas tend to show up. The porch, the corner booth, the chair by the window with the bad lamp. Bring the beverage of your choice, plus your best pen if you're going analog. Then let's find out what you'd actually want to teach.

— *Jeannie*

JEANNIE SULLIVAN · JEANNIESULLIVAN.COM

# The 1:1 client trap

*You're already a genius.*

You have a successful, thriving business working with clients one-on-one. They trust you. They refer their friends and colleagues. You're grateful for that, and you're also overworked and exhausted.

Your days are booked solid with clients you (mostly) enjoy and work that feeds your soul. But there's a glitch. The only way to make more money in the future is to work more hours or raise your prices.

**You're in the 1:1 client trap. There is another way.**

You could create a learning-based revenue stream that complements your individual client work and lets you:

- Engage groups of clients in a transformative learning experience that adds a revenue stream to your business.
- Increase your individual client rates without feeling like you're leaving anyone behind.
- Break free from the hourly pay cycle, and remember why you wanted to start your own business in the first place. Freedom.

In this guide I'll share my recipe for designing a one-to-many revenue stream for your signature curriculum. Each section has specific tips and action steps that, if you take them, move you closer to the real destination: more impact, more money, more time.

## STEP ONE

# Distill your *genius*.

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Find the perfect topic for a profitable course. The question I get most often is: “But what in the world would I teach?”

# Three things to get clear on

Distilling your genius into a learning-based revenue stream starts with identifying your superpowers. But that alone isn't enough.

## Your superpowers

Your strengths and your expertise. The things you are already known for, whether or not you would have chosen them.

## Your purpose

Meaningful work, and the impact you want to have on the people you teach. This is the part that keeps you going when building the thing gets tedious.

## Your flow

Your natural mode of creating content and connecting with people. Design against it and you will not finish.

*The questions on the next page will walk you through all three.*

# Time to reflect

Answer quickly and honestly. First instinct, not best answer.

## QUESTIONS

## YOUR NOTES

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When people reach out to you for help, what do they ask for?

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What type of advice do you find yourself offering without being asked?

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If money weren't a consideration, what would you like to teach people?

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What are your three biggest life lessons?

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Do you prefer a big party, or a small dinner with no more than six people?

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What are your top five strengths from CliftonStrengths?\*

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What's more exciting to you: big ideas, details and process, or people?

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\* All my private clients take the CliftonStrengths assessment to identify their top five themes.

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# What's your topic?

FOR INSTANCE

## Pricing your first six months of freelance work

*The client onboarding system I use every single time*

# Meet Jessica

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One of my clients, Jessica, a wedding stylist, had an inbox full of requests to grab coffee or meet for lunch with women interested in launching their own careers in the wedding business. She is successful and approachable, so of course they sought her out. She wanted to extend her insight, and she was already full with her own one-on-one client work.

She could also empathize. When she was starting out, she searched everywhere for resources that would help her succeed, and they were very hard to find. She remembers one little book she found in a church library that taught her the basics. The rest she figured out on her own.

She had a real desire to share what she had learned, and to keep these women from that same hardship.



# Jessica's course design process

Jessica has an eye for design and detail that shows in her planning and styling work, so it's no surprise her preference was to first make the content beautiful, then make it engaging and action-oriented. She mapped the overall structure of the program, then built an elegant presentation template.

Next she created a presentation for each module, then a resources guide and a script. Her process was heads-down and focused, and it let her express her creativity. Because she prefers small groups and one-on-one conversation, most of her program is self-directed, with individual coaching available as an option.

Do you see how she identified a topic that leveraged her expertise and had meaningful impact, then structured the program to match her creative style and her natural way of connecting with people? That's what I want to help you figure out.

## THE POINT

*Her program looks the way it does because of how she likes to work. Yours should too.*

## STEP TWO

# Set your *strategy*.

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Big profitability requires a plan. And the first step in making one is understanding what is not part of it.

# Three myths, in your way

I want you to set specific goals for your one-to-many program that achieve the outcome you crave: more impact, more money, more time. A plan doesn't have to be complex. It does have to be honest about the myths.

- 1 **Launching an online course is the best way to make quick money as an entrepreneur.**
- 2 **If I build an online course, I've got to be a cheesy online marketer to sell it.**
- 3 **I'm not good with technology, so I could never figure all this out.**

*A quick note: even if you're thinking about a live, in-person event or a retreat, the pages that follow apply to you too.*

## MYTH ONE

# Launching an online course is the best way to make quick money.

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You see the ads every day. Courses that will help you shed fifty pounds in a week, find the love of your life before you get home tonight, make a million dollars by next Tuesday.

I'm not interested in helping you build that. Those are the infomercials of online learning, and while selling them might make you quick money, they also make it hard to sleep at night.

So I'm not promising you a pot of gold at the end of the learning-based revenue rainbow. I am confident that if you get strategic about your revenue goals and your outcomes, the time and energy you pour into designing a transformative experience will pay off over the long run.

# Let's do some math

| COURSE PRICE | BUYERS IN A YEAR | REVENUE  | AT \$125 AN HOUR |
|--------------|------------------|----------|------------------|
| \$497        | 80               | \$39,760 | 318 hrs          |

That's nearly eight weeks of one-on-one work you didn't have to do.

When was the last time you took a two-month vacation? Or decided never to work Fridays again? What might your life look like with 318 hours handed back to you, without losing the income?

The wonderful thing about learning-based revenue is that you create it once, and it pays out repeatedly.

**1. What is your revenue target for your learning-based revenue stream?**

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**2. What is the best possible outcome of that revenue, on your work and on your life?**

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## MYTH TWO

# I've got to be a cheesy online marketer to sell it.

Adding a course, a retreat, or an afternoon workshop to your business will most likely require some marketing. Three strategies make that easy, and none of them involve a countdown timer.

### Teach next door to your day job

Pick a topic that is a natural fit with your one-on-one work but meets a slightly different budget or service level. Then the marketing you already do creates a pathway to your course.

### Show the thinking

Share your insights on the topic through your writing, videos, and other meaningful content. People buy from the person who already helped them once.

### Invite, on purpose

Include an invitation for everyone who reaches out with questions, every future client on a waiting list, and everyone who stumbles into your existing funnel.

REMEMBER JESSICA?

Nearly a  
thousand people  
*had already asked her for help.*

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She went back through years of email inquiries and built a list of people who had asked her for insight, mentoring, or advice about starting a wedding planning business. Without a single Facebook or Instagram ad, she sold several courses. All from an email invitation, and no outlandish promises required.

## MYTH THREE

# I'm not good with technology, so I could never figure this out.

There are plenty of easy platforms for packaging content and automating enrollment, and you don't need to become an expert in any of them to choose one.

### Just starting out?

Build an email course in Flodesk and take payments with Stripe. That is literally all you need to begin.

### Want more features?

Let's talk before you commit to a platform. There are plenty of ways to run a profitable pilot before paying for a full buildout.

### Hosting live?

Calendly makes scheduling and registration simple, and Google Meet is a reliable place to hold the session. Add a private community space so people stay connected afterward.

### What Jessica did

She hosts registration and all her materials on Squarespace. One tool, already familiar.



### STEP THREE

# Design for *change*.

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This is where experts get stuck. You know so much that writing it all down feels impossible. So before you write a word, get clear on the one sentence your program has to deliver, and on what actually changes a person.

# Before we go on

You've found a topic and a platform. You know you don't have to be salesy. And you've seen what the money and the freedom could look like. Write those three things down here. They are what you carry into the build.

**YOUR PROGRAM TOPIC**

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**YOUR REVENUE GOAL**

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**YOUR PLANS FOR THE TIME IT BUYS BACK**

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# Name the transformation

Before any of the building starts, one sentence has to be true: by the end of your program, what will learners be able to do that they couldn't do before?

That sentence is your transformation target. Everything else in a program is downstream of it, which is why this is the last decision this guide asks you to make and the first thing you'll bring to the build.

## YOUR TRANSFORMATION TARGET

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### HOW JESSICA SAID HERS

*After completing my program,  
participants will know how to start their  
own wedding planning business.*

Specific enough to build against, plain enough that a stranger would understand what they were buying. That is the whole standard. You can see how her program came together at **[engage.jessicarourke.com](https://engage.jessicarourke.com)**.

# More than just information

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**Access to information is not the problem you are solving for your learner.**

A quick search on almost any topic will return more than a person could read in a week. True, you may be able to organize it better than the search results did.

But the reason people invest in your signature curriculum is the transformation it brings them, and that does not happen from information alone.

What sets a real learning program apart from a product is a design that inspires change. Three strategies do most of that work, and they're on the next page.

# Three ways to inspire change

## Stories inspire

When someone is learning a new skill, the best predictor of action is vicarious experience. They hear a story about someone like them succeeding and think: if they can do it, I can too. Telling client stories throughout your program isn't social proof. It's priming them to act.

## Action creates

Real change always requires action of some kind, and sometimes that action is about mindset more than anything else. Either way, be specific and direct about what each topic asks the learner to do.

## Feedback sustains

External accountability is what makes the world go around. Without it, few of us meet our goals. A feedback loop can be as simple as a follow-up email after each lesson asking whether they did the thing.

## BONUS

# Keep their attention

Think of every class you sat through with your eyes glazed over, daydreaming about getting out of there. Let's curate a different experience.

## Ask questions

A good rule of thumb: never go more than seven minutes without asking one. Online this feels harder, and one of the best tricks is calling on someone without warning. Suddenly everybody is paying attention.

## Let them figure it out

Give just enough information to get the task done rather than every detail and every edge case. The basics, the task, and then you, available for questions as they come up.

## Ask them to reflect

Get in the habit of asking learners to remember a time they succeeded at something similar. It connects them to their own stories, and it reassures them that they can do this.

# Give your learners a community of their own

Whether your program is a live event or a six-week online course, bring people together in meaningful ways. For some programs a private community space works; for others a monthly call is better. Decide what fits into your learners' actual lives, then commit to a rhythm.

They'll look to you first for cues about how to engage, so be the first one to share, ask, and support.

## CAPTURE YOUR IDEAS

# What you just did

If you wrote in the pages rather than reading past them, here is where you stand.

## 1 You distilled your genius

By identifying your superpowers, harnessing your purpose, and finding your flow.

## 2 You set a strategy

That names your profitability, maps the pathways that bring learners to your program, and keeps registration simple.

## 3 You know what makes it work

A named transformation, plus the story, action, feedback, attention, and community that turn information into change.

*What's left is the building, and a date on the calendar.*

*A pilot with a date is how you force the finish.*



# The Learning-Based Business Plan

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This guide was for deciding. The workbook is for building, and it's the same process I run with private clients. It picks up exactly where you are now, with a topic and a number and a transformation target.

- **The Course Design Canvas.** Your whole program on one page, so you can see whether it holds together before you build any of it.
- **Your signature process.** The five to seven steps of your method, the ones you're known for, separated out from the modules you'll teach them in.
- **Learner personas.** Two or three real people, described in enough detail that writing for them stops being guesswork.
- **Four delivery formats.** Which one fits how you actually like to work, rather than the one that sounds most impressive.
- **The learner's journey and scorecard.** How referrals come back around, and what to measure so you can prove the thing works.
- **Growth initiatives.** Where this goes after the pilot: mentorship, certification, licensing.

*Find it at [jeanniesullivan.com](https://jeanniesullivan.com), or bring your pages to coffee and we'll work out whether you need it yet.*

## ABOUT

# Jeannie Sullivan

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Jeannie is an entrepreneur, strategist, and coach whose expertise in learning, appetite for adventure, and stubborn optimism tend to leave clients and classrooms with a sense of possibility. She believes there is a learner and a teacher in all of us, if we're willing to use our real interests and our actual strengths.

She launched her consulting practice in 2010 near Columbia, South Carolina, where she still lives. With over twenty years of coaching experience, her corporate client list has included Wells Fargo, Apple, Coca-Cola Bottling Company Consolidated, Genentech, and AmerisourceBergen. Today she also works as a Learning Experience Designer at Veeam, where she co-leads AI Builders Lab, an internal peer-learning program helping teams build real fluency with AI tools.

That same curiosity shows up in her own business. Jeannie builds and runs her ventures alongside AI agents, and brings the same spirit of experimentation to helping fellow entrepreneurs and coaches distill their genius into profitable, transformative programs of their own.

FIFTEEN MINUTES

# Let's have *coffee.*

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Bring the pages you filled in, or the one question you got stuck on. Fifteen minutes, no agenda beyond the one you bring.

[jeanniesullivan.com/coffee](https://jeanniesullivan.com/coffee)