

How Jono launched a \$1M Course Business without a Course Platform

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SPEAKERS

Jono Petrohilos, Melody Johnson

Melody Johnson 00:03

All right. Welcome, everyone to another episode of the course consultants Show. I'm so very excited today to chat one of my guests and who I have been absolutely impressed with over the last couple of months getting to know Joe No, Joe is the co founder and director at Fitness education on line, a largest continuing education company in Australia. And he is also an amazing host and a podcast host. He is the current fitness Australia Educator of the Year in sells over \$1 million worth of courses a year. And he's absolutely the coolest guy. No. So, Joel, thanks so much for hopping on today's show. I'm so excited to interview you today.

Jono Petrohilos 00:50

No, thank you for that very kind introduction, melody that I wrote myself. So it was a was a good one, you read it out well. And I'm just happy to be on you know, I'm a listener of your show. That's how I actually connected with you. I was listening to your podcast, I was like, Hey, you know what, I like this woman, I'm gonna reach out on social media. And, you know, Here I am to be a guest. So I'm super excited. And I'd love to share any value. We'll give as much tips as I could to all your listeners.

Melody Johnson 01:15

Absolutely. And I know that you have an incredible background in fitness and actually transitioned into what you're doing right now. So tell me a little bit more about how you got started in fitness and worked your way into creating and selling online courses?

01:33

Yes. Awesome. I love that topic because I get to speak about my favorite topic in the world. Myself. So yeah, you know, in a nutshell, I was a fitness trainer. I used to run a Fitness Bootcamp. And long story short, I used to suck at it. Right. I was at those It was a franchise. So there were 75 different boot camp locations, all across Australia and New Zealand. And you were ranked on how good you were. One

being the best. 75 being the worst. Now take a guess what you think I was ranked melody at the start Anyway, when I first started,

Melody Johnson 02:07

I don't know maybe middle of the road.

02:10

You're You're too kind. I wish I was middle of the road. I was 75. Right. I was dead last. And I'm competitive. You know, I come second. It's something I'm upset. I come third. It's something I'm borderline depression. I came 75th. So not ideal, but I really loved it. I loved what I did. I just wasn't good at it. Right? So and I remember this clearly, I had to go to a convention at the end of the right with all different 75 trainers that all had their locations. And I didn't want to go because I was the worst one there. Right. And it's not like not like it was an imposter syndrome. I didn't think I was the worst one there. It was statistically proven. Yeah, there was a pie graph telling me how bad you know, you know, you suck at something when there's a pie graph telling you how bad you are. Alright. So anyway, I bit the bullet because I'm like, if I don't go, I'm definitely going to get fired. If I do go, maybe I will keep the job. And it was the best thing I did, because I went to that convention. And I learned and the owner was there. Well, there was a couple that owned it, who owned all different 75 locations. And it was just the best experience ever. Because I saw a winning there's such an open book. I'm like, I just gotta learn everything, otherwise I'm going to get fired. And I heard the story of the franchise, the franchise owner, and she was like, This is going back about 10 years, right? And she was telling me her story. And she's like, yeah, look, I'm a high school dropout. I was always the dumbest person in my high school. You know, finished school and started working at valley girl Deer Valley go in American not

Melody Johnson 03:43

familiar with that brand now.

03:45

So just like a like a Walmart. Okay, so, you know, dumbest person in high school, started working, dropped out of high school started working at Walmart got fired from Walmart, right and not for stealing or being late or anything just, you know, it wasn't good enough for Walmart. She's like, you know, that happened then I was depressed. But then I figured out personal training I liked it I got qualified started a boot camp, yada yada yada now I've got 75 of them. And I'm like man, you know at the time I was always University qualified as well. And I'm like this chicks a high school dropout who got fired from Walmart and she's got 75 different locations, but they always my excuse. And I was like alright, I'm gonna I'm gonna make a make something of this you know, so educated myself basically I was like alright, first thing I'm going to do is a course to make me a better personal trainer and upskilling course did that course and it was awesome. I learnt so much I was a better trainer. Yeah, and then I climbed up the rankings I was maybe you know 40 or 50 you know, then I did another course couple months later amazing. Again climbed up again did another course climbed up again did about four or five courses throughout the and also really immerse myself It wasn't just do a course then do nothing like I read books. I listened to podcasts. YouTube videos went to other instructors classes. Fast forward 12 months went back to that same convention melody. Now what do you think I was ranked?

Melody Johnson 05:09

I think you were your ranked one.

05:12

Yes, correct. And my clientele went from 20 to 100, also opened up a second location. And Joe was was, was good at what I did, and had a system, a proven system that I'm like, Hey, I was the worst trainer ever, if I can do this, you know, you got no excuse, and kept upskilling myself, but it got to a point where I'm like, you now know, I'm doing some of these courses, and they're not bad. But I feel I could put together something that's better than anything else out there. Because I think my system is better. And also different. Because a lot of the courses that are going to that I was going to some of them were just general business, hey, you want to get better at sales, you know, going through this sales course that would sort of help anyone, you know, real estate agents, personal trainers, business people, whatever, you know. And I will also do some specific to personal trainers. But a lot of the ones that I went through specific to personal trainers were more tailored for personal trainers working at a gym, you know, hey, you're a personal trainer, you're working in a gym, you do one on one clients, here's how to build your one on one clientele. So a lot of the courses that I went to, I sort of had to reverse engineer in my head and be like, okay, great networks with this, but how can I get it to work exactly in my business. And after about three of doing that I was like, I feel like, I've got something that's better and different than anything else out there. You know, I want to want to give it a crack. So I created my first course there. And that was a funny story in its own cuz this is back in, which is maybe 2014. Right? I don't think, Click Funnels and Kajabi on anything. These things existed in 2014, you know. So my first course was an E book melody, and I didn't even know what an E book was. I was scrolling through, I knew I wanted a course. And I did some research, I thought I needed a website. And I was like, oh, man, I gotta pay these guys. \$10,000 to do a website for me, I don't have \$10,000. So why not do it was scrolling through Facebook, and I saw an ad, you know, download or purchase my ebook. I was like, What the crap is an E book. So I purchased an upcoming board it was it was going through it. I'm like, hold on. This is just a Microsoft Word document says there's a PDF. I'm no, I'm no tech guy. I'm a fitness guy. But I know how to open Microsoft Word and save it as a PDF. So I you know, opened it up and you know, created a created Microsoft Word document saved as a PDF. And I'm like, Alright, you know, he's my, he's my online course. But I was going through it, I'm like, it just, it just looks like a PDF, like a PDF. Like, it looks like a Microsoft Word document. You know, I got to make it look nicer. I got to get some borders or headings or page numbers or whatever. And I don't know how to do that stuff, you know. But luckily, I stumbled on this site called Fiverr. You're familiar with Fiverr? Right melody.

Melody Johnson 07:57

fibers? A big one. I really liked them. I started out using them.

08:00

Yeah, went on Fiverr. And if you're not familiar with what Fiverr is, for some of the listeners, back in those days Anyway, you could get anything you want done for \$5. I still remember I went on there, there was a guy that said he would slap himself in the face for five bucks. So no, that's actually no yeah, I

purchased that one too. So I paid someone five bucks to make the document look good. And they did. And then while I was on there, they got me with an upsell or something, you know, I was like, I'll pay this guy \$5 to slap himself. And he sent it over to me. And he didn't hold back. Like it was a hard slap, you know, like a really, really odd slap. And I was like, man, I feel sorry for what some people are gonna do for money, you know. But then I looked at the video he sent over. It was an unlisted YouTube video. And it had 100,000 views. And I'm like, hold on, this guy didn't send me a personal slap. He slept himself once. And he's sold that 100,000 times of what this guy has made half a million dollars from slapping himself in the face that on almost similar to an online course. So I hold on if this guy can do it slapping himself in the face. I want to do the same thing with an online course create at once and again and again and again. But moral of that story, I learned what an unlisted YouTube video was. So I created some unlisted YouTube videos, put it on the the PDF, and that was my first course and it would sell for 500 bucks.

Melody Johnson 09:25

Wow, I have never heard of someone sharing that specific story about someone's laughing themselves. So I think that's incredible. So just to go back to your story, which was amazing. By the way, you you, you started at the bottom, you really dug into how you could become better. You wanted to learn the story of someone who started from basically being a dropout to having over 75 locations and boot camps and you started immersing yourself as you said in all of these different trainings and you realize that you were onto something there was a huge book, you could do things better, you can make it look better. And you didn't have to do everything over and over and over again from scratch. So let me ask you this when you are working with your clients, were you finding that you were just constantly repeating the same things over and over again? How did you start thinking about the content inside of your ebook?

10:22

Yes, good question. So let me go back and think so. Yeah. So when I was running my, and actually, we'll go, we'll go back a step here. Just to clarify also for the listeners, so the ebook that I created, so so I was running a Fitness Boot Camp, right, just helping people get fit. The ebook that I created was like a business ebook for other personal trainers, business wise, right. So the reason where I had a system is when I was running a Fitness Boot Camp, it was like a 12 week challenge. And I was essentially doing the same thing again, and again, and again. It was Alright, here's my 12 week challenge is my talk is that 12 weeks of workouts that I'm going to do, here's how I'm going to market it. He's the sales pitch I'm gonna use it was like Groundhog Day, I was I was living my life, 12 weeks over and over again. But because of that I had a system. It was like, I could give this to any idiot, here's your 12 weeks chance at at any any person. You know, here's all the workouts you need to do. Here's the exact challenges you need to do in your challenge. You know, here's the games you need to play. Here's my exact retention strategy. You know, here's what I say on the first sales call. Great, someone signed up, you know, here's how I follow him up after the first week of training. He's the message I said, He's the second one it was it was like a business in the box for a personal trainer was like they pay 500 bucks, they get the course. And they can essentially emulate what I'm doing in my tagline as well. Because when I was running that Fitness Bootcamp, I was making about \$100,000 a year running one boot camp session a day. So my tagline was, hey, do you want to make \$100,000 a year working 60 minutes a day? If so,

follow this buy this course for 500 bucks, it's like a no brainer. You know, if you're a trainer, most trainers don't make that much money. They're working their ass off. So it was sort of like, okay, it's worth the gamble forum. So it was like, I had the hook. And also the other thing that I it's like going back now is actually I'll do a bit of a tangent told me if it's the if I'm going off topic here. But knowing what I know now about creating courses, because now I've got a side business that where I help course graded somewhere there on courses. There's a few things that I you know why I got lucky at the time, it's not really lucky, because I did a lot of hard work in that. But I just did some things that looking back now it's it's a science, some of the things that I did right then. And it was like, um, I knew. So when I was when I went from the bottom from 75 to one, I did a heap of different courses, right to get better. And a lot of them were tailored just for personal trainers. And everyone I went to most of them were face to face courses back then. Most of them I went to there were like, at least 2030 Personal Trainers in the room. So it was like I already knew there was a market there. I'm not guessing and being like, if I put this together, do you think these people will buy it? Do you think these people will pay 500 bucks for it? Like, I know, because I was doing one of these courses every every, you know, four times a year, minimum four times a year myself. And every time I went there were 20 people that so it wasn't like a guest. It was like, Hey, he's if I can just work my way in here. He's something that people are already buying, how can I just get my specific thing in there? I think that's a good message for the listeners as well. You may not be able to be able to replicate exactly the way I did it there. But if you can just have a look and be like alright, cool. You know what people already buying this style of stuff you if they are great, how can I just get my little piece of it. And then the other thing that that worked really well for me, Russell Brunson calls it the opportunity switch, right. There's so many different you know, people trying to sell things online at the moment. And a lot of them are what Russell Brunson calls improvement offers, and it's hard to sell an improvement offer. But if you can have an opportunity switch, it's just a lot easier to sell. And that's the other thing that I did that I accidentally or got lucky or bumped into there were where everyone was just basically saying, Hey, be a better personal trainer, or Hey, grow your personal training business. I was like, Hey, he's a whole nother way to do it. You know, don't get out of the gym get out of one on one Personal Training, you know, he's a whole nother system you can do or make \$100,000 he working one hour a day was a different switch there. So that could be another thought point for the listeners as well where it's like, instead of going in and just being like, how can I make something better? What How can I switch or get something different? And another way to look at it like I'll give a fitness specific example here. That works may not work for the listeners but it'll just give another way to look at it. If you are trying to sell a fitness product. It's hard to sell a blues white you know Going through my course I'll teach you how to lose weight by eating healthy. No one's buying that, you know, I've tried it before, and it didn't work. But if you can have some opportunities switch, hey, you know, you want to lose weight, the easiest way to lose weight is via the keto diet, you know, some Oh, keto diet, never heard that before. Let me click here. And it doesn't have to be like, insert whatever thing there the, you know, the, the intermittent fasting diet, the, you know, Atkins diet, the protein diet, the banana diet, whatever, you know, some sort of opportunity switch there. So that's, there are a couple of the reasons I think I got lucky back then. But looking back now I realized that's part of the reason why he was able to sell off the bat.

Melody Johnson 15:39

Yeah, so let me just take a moment I like I've never heard the phrase opportunity switch. But one way I've heard it explained a little bit before is the mechanism that you achieve results. So I heard another coach use that. And I actually really loved the way that she had put it. And I like the way you said it, too. So one thing that I want to point out is an example of a course name or a course, Promise, Promise. So I know that a lot of times on especially in the b2b space, since you know, Joe and I are in that space. Um, we see a lot of these, you know, grow your Instagram by 1000 followers, which is okay, I guess. But one thing that, you know, could be possibly improved with that is grow your Instagram by 1000 followers a week using Instagram reels, or using Instagram Live or, you know, something like that. And so the difference and I've tried explaining this to a couple folks is that it's not always that, yes, you have a great system and guess you have a framework, but through what framework Are you using to provide that ultimate result? Now I know and you know, that there's so many ways that success happens over time, and you learn and you tweak and you grow, and but what is the main thing that you are promising? And how is the framework delivered so that people can ultimately get that result, which is a marketing process. So we all have to learn. So I want to know a little bit more about your thinking in terms of creating products now one of my students inside of my business of courses, shindig my membership, I know that she had a question of Hey, Jonah, sounds really cool. I don't know what kind of course I should make. I have a few. But I just seem stuck. How can I actually decide on what product I should be making right now? So let me ask you that if you know, you created a lot of courses for your course creator community inside of your own membership, tell me what were your what's your process look like for creating a new course or back when you were making courses? At the inception of your membership?

17:51

Yes, good question. So it's changed a little bit. So when I started off, I would create the courses based on what I thought people needed. Alright. And I got lucky in that my first one sort of was just really good. It was what I thought people needed. But it's also what they did need. So it just it was I got lucky there, right. But then the next few courses that I created, were hit and miss. It was like, Yeah, I think this course all sell really well. I'll put it together. And maybe it did, maybe didn't, because even if we go back with fitness education on one, I've got about 40 different courses there. Right? Half of them don't sell, right, but I've got 40 of them anyway. And I would just go by what I thought that was it originally, that's okay. It's not a bad way to do it. But now I go for a little bit, I work a little bit differently. I have a thought to start with. I'm like, okay, you know, I think this would be a good cause. But let me validate it. Now, I'm a huge fan of Facebook groups. So I've got the course creator, community Facebook group, it's got about 4000 people in there. I've got my fitness education online group, which has about 15,000 people in there. So now before I create a course, I simply make a Facebook post, you know, if it's fitness education online, you know, Hey, guys, I'm thinking of putting together a summit all around women's health and all events. I'm thinking of putting together a course specifically on how to train pregnant women who would be interested in that comment below, right? If it's cause greater community, hey, I'm thinking of putting together a course on how I built this Facebook group to over 4000 people in less than a year who would be interested in his comment below. Alright, now that's just step one, it still doesn't guarantee because there's a big difference between someone commenting below and giving you their credit card details and 500 bucks or more, right? But it's a good start point. I know if I make that post and I get zero comments. I'm not putting that course together. No way, right? Because if I can't

even get someone to comment, I got zero chance of actually selling it. If I put that course together, I get a heap of comments, or sorry, if I make that post my get a heap of comments. I'm going to put it together and that's another thing as well. But let's even simplify here. Let's just say I'll put it together and I'll get a whole heap of comments. I'm getting take the next step, right, there's still no guarantee that it's gonna sell. Because it's different, but at least it gives me some confidence there where I'm like, Alright, if a whole heap of people have commented down here, and they're interested, there's at least some sort of interest there. So that's what I do now, if I've already got an engaged audience. So I'm not Do you know if the listener already has an engaged audience or not?

Melody Johnson 20:23

Yeah, she does. She is pivoting from another business that was focused primarily on Pinterest. And so she's going to be pivoting into another topic, which she's still working on. But she does have an engaged audience. I think that's a great point that you made about just putting a post out there on Facebook asking around. So and I think that that is a really great point that I know, you talk a lot about inside of, don't you have like a free training for? Or you talk about Facebook groups a lot, actually. And you have quite a bit of content on Facebook groups, which is great.

20:59

Yep, exactly a huge fan of them. And I'll even go a step deeper there as well, for the people that maybe don't have a big audience. And if it's like, it doesn't necessarily have to be a Facebook group as well. I'm just the Facebook group guy, you know, but I'm sure if someone's an Instagram, I could do an Instagram story, you know, even an email, you know, Hey, guys, I'm thinking of putting together a course you know, would you be interested? If so replying to this, and I'll, you know, I'll put things in motions or whatever. If you don't have a big audience, that's okay. Or an established established audience, it's okay. It just means you need to find a way to leverage other people's audiences. But you'll just have to go a bit deeper. So let's say for example, now I've got 4000, in this Facebook group 15,000, I can make a post and get some good feedback, right? But if I didn't, what I would do is be like, Alright, how can I just have a good conversation with 10? People? How can I just jump on a zoom call with 10 different people and essentially say, hey, think about putting this course together? Would you be interested? Great, what would you want to see in their course? You know, what price point would you pay? yada, yada, yada. So if you don't have an engaged audience, find a way to get on a zoom call with, you know, 1020 people, and just have a deeper conversation that way there. And the way you would do that is also Facebook group. So you just have to leverage off someone else's Facebook or find a group that allows promos or maybe you're friends with an admin, and they'll let you do that post there or? Yeah, either way.

Melody Johnson 22:20

Yes. And I also have used in the past surveys for emails, and I'll provide some sort of incentive, like a coupon code or a free course or something just to give somebody a thank you. Because let's face it, people are super busy. nobody really wants to be doing surveys these days, unless there's something in it for them. I know. I'm like that if someone says there's a coupon in it for you, I'm gonna say, Yeah, that sounds great. Are some sort of gift card? So great. points. Don't know. So I want to know what kinds of things that you're up to right now. I know, you've got lots of really great resources inside of your

free Facebook group. But what can you tell us about what you're doing right now in your business? At the date of this recording?

23:00

Yes, yes. Okay. So date of September. So now I have two business, right. So I've got fitness education online, course create a community fitness education online, my goal is to be as hands off as possible there because revenues go to about a million dollar a year business, right? So my focus now is how can I keep that revenue going with me doing as little work as possible. And I've pretty much got that set up now as well. So I've got a full time I've hired a full time sales and marketing person. And Claudia, shout out if you're listening, and she does all of my sales and marketing. So all of my, all of my ads are my lead gen. And then she's got a sales team as well, which closed a lot of sales. And then I've also got an operations manager as well, who essentially takes care of all the courses with that side of things there. So that's my focus there. It's like, how can I get hands off and just get this business running itself without me there. And I wish I did that sooner as well, to be honest, but that's, that's where I am there. And even with that, with that side of things, as well, it's like, Alright, cool, you know, how can it be me hands off, but still continuously growing, I'm always looking at things to grow that sort of business there. And then simultaneously, I've got the course creator community, I haven't decided exactly what direction I'm going to go there yet. But that's essentially what it is. Now. It's a Facebook group. I'm just growing that Facebook group, I've got a membership attached to it as well. And I want to come up with a signature course there. I don't know exactly what it's going to be yet because I'm not a perfectionist. But if I put something together that like I do want it to be solid, you know, I do and I think I've got that skill set. You know, if I've got a business over here that makes a million dollars a year. You know, there's a lot of people that want to know that, you know, buddy, how do you make a million dollars selling online courses, I need to put that together in a way that that will go out to the market, and it'll probably have to be a few different courses, but that's what I'm working on on that side of themes there, it's like, Alright, what product can I put together? That I like to teach? That's different than the covers all the different things we spoke here, you know, that's an opportunity switch that has a mechanism because, you know, to get to a million dollars a year in fitness education online, it was hard work. You know, it was three years of, you know, no life and reading books and doing courses and mucking around with Facebook ads and learning sales and marketing and doing a hundreds of sales calls. And you know, and that's a hard sell, you want to make a million dollars a year, just keep up, you live for three years, you know, and how many people are going to do that there. So I've got to find a simple way. And that's sort of what I'm working on here. And I think it's going to be a Facebook group, something like that, you know, Hey, you, you're a course trader, you got to grow your list, you want to sell more courses, the easiest way to do it, the best way to do it is wire a Facebook group. He's a course that covers everything from A to Z, you know, how to grow the group, how to get engagement, you know, how to sell from there. So I think I'll put something like that out there on the market. I'm not 100% sold yet. But that's that's what I'm working on.

Melody Johnson 26:03

Yeah, no, that sounds great. And I think, you know, it's always really interesting to see how people think of their new ideas and how it actually works out. Because I know myself, I'm constantly thinking of new ideas. My husband is always like, you have so many ideas, melody, you should just go with one. And

I'm like, I know, it's just that I have such good ideas, I always have a hard time figuring out which one I should go with. Because I love the new ideas part. That's one of my favorite parts of being a business owner. But I really appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule, especially on a Friday morning, I really would love for you to share any free resources that you have. And then we'll just let other people share what they thought about this episode. I'm super excited and can't wait to be sharing about it. Any new free resources or old resources that you have that people can find you.

26:54

Yes, so what I would recommend is everyone join my facebook group, the course creator, one it's called the course creator community. It's one of the largest and most engaged Facebook groups in the world for online course creators. And all my resources are in there, you'll go in there, you're you've got to drop your email to join the group Anyway, you don't have to enter it in but you know, there's a question to drop your email there and you get, I'm always changing that resource. But at the moment, it's how to create your first course in 48 hours. So you can jump on there, but I'm always in the Facebook group posting tips and freebies as well. So what I recommend, join my facebook group, be part of the community and then you know, see what you like from there.

Melody Johnson 27:34

Fabulous. Well, thank you again, journal for joining me on today's episode. I'm so excited to share it and I can't wait to hear how your next idea comes into play.

27:43

Awesome. Thank you for your time Melody. It was an honor to be on the show. Thanks