

MODULE 10: ONGOING SALES

“Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving, but they don’t quit.”
~Conrad Hilton

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Planning Beyond Your Launch

My name is Mandi, and I am a starter. (((Hi, Mandi.)))

I love to launch new projects, brainstorm new ideas and try new things. I'm a fairly good finisher as well, as long as there is a solid deadline and a concrete end point.

Maintaining? I'm not so good at that.

I don't think that's necessarily a character flaw or problem as much as a personality trait, but I do think it's really important that I understand this about myself because maintaining is pretty important – even though it doesn't come naturally to me – and I have to work through my desire to move onto the next idea or project and leave the last one dangling.

This is especially true when it comes to ebook publishing. You work and work and work to get an ebook launched, and it is tempting to consider the launch the end of the project. But if you really want to create a passive income from ebook sales, you have to create a plan for maintaining the momentum even once the launch momentum begins to fade.

From [Amy Lynn Andrews](#):

Ebbs and flows in sales is natural for a product like an ebook. The main way to keep sales going is to constantly make connections in new circles, both online and offline. I take advantage of as many opportunities as I can to be on podcasts, radio interviews, blogs and other media if I know it will give me exposure to a new audience.

[Read Amy's full case study interview here.](#)

And that's the key, I think: Passive income doesn't mean you never touch the product again; it just means that you aren't creating something new in order to make each and every sale.

Focusing only on the launch is short-sighted and will put a cap on the amount of income you're able to earn from your ebook. On the other hand, planning for your ongoing promotions is a great way to maximize future sales so that you really can earn as much as possible for all of your hard work. And not just this year, but for years to come.

In this module, we're going to talk about some of the many ways you can promote your ebook after your launch.

Running Regular Promotions

The most important thing you can do is plan for and take advantage of opportunities regularly. You want to mention your ebook often, introduce it to new potential customers and invite people to purchase it as often as possible. Here are a few ways to do that:

Promoting Your eBook on Your Blog

If you're a blogger, don't be afraid to mention your ebook whenever it's relevant to your audience. As long as you're providing quality content on a regular basis, readers are usually very patient with self-promotion, and you don't want to miss out on those opportunities to tell a new visitor about your ebook or to remind someone who has been on the fence about purchasing it.

One option is to blog about related topics regularly and include links to your sales page in those posts. You could also offer free downloads, sample pages from the ebook, or discount codes as appropriate. When possible, make these posts shareable on social media so that the post – and therefore information about your ebook – spreads to a wider audience.

In addition, be sure to include an ad for your ebook in a prominent space on the sidebar of your blog so that new visitors quickly discover your ebook. The more closely related your blog content is to your ebook topic, the better this strategy works!

From [Joshua Becker](#):

There are two main ways that I accomplish ongoing sales: 1) Annual sales on the product. Because they are short, I sell my books at a \$2.99 price-point. But once a year during the first week of November, I mark them down to \$0.99 and make a big push on *Becoming Minimalist* and through social media. This helps to get the books into more people's hands who in turn refer it to others.

And, as I mentioned earlier, this accomplishes getting the book again onto Amazon's radar who can help push it as they notice a large number of people beginning to buy it. 2) While my website's front page always contains a link to the books on Amazon, I do not advertise the book in every post that I publish. That being said, I do make a point to edit past posts that receive a large amount of search traffic with a link to the book. I consider them entry posts where a large number of first-time visitors happen to enter the blog. On those posts, I make a point to add a short blurb about the book and how it might be helpful for what they are searching for.

[Read Joshua's full case study interview here.](#)

Take Advantage of Seasonal Opportunities

Be sure to keep the seasons in mind when planning your promotions. When are people thinking most about the topic of your ebook? When are they least likely to be thinking about it? (Hint: for a lot of topics, the holiday season is not the best time to run special promotions.)

Plan your special promotions accordingly with discount codes or bonus offers that create an additional urgency for them to buy the ebook during those seasons rather than offering coupon codes when no one is really interested in buying.

Work with Affiliates

As we talked about in Module 9, whether you're planning for seasonal promotions or just looking for ways to boost affiliate sales, be sure to regularly offer affiliates coupon codes, giveaways, content they can share, post ideas and more to help them promote your ebook regularly as well. There are limits to the number of people you can reach through your blog, but working closely with affiliates gives you a much wider reach!

From [Katie Kimball](#):

As far as promoting older books, I have done a few things:

Released 2nd editions that are 25-50% longer.

Scheduled special promos with affiliates, like putting a code for Better Than a Box into Heavenly Homemaker's eCourse just before a bundle sale – it did plenty well enough for the 15 minutes it took to set that up.

Having sales always pushes purchases.

The Bundle of the Week sale was a good thing, too – and I sold 114 copies of Better Than a Box with the 50% off code we included with the bundle, so that was also decent fallout without much extra work.

Ultimately, once you have done all the work for a product, it's very nice to have something "to sell" that you can choose to market heavily or leave alone for a few months.

[Read Katie's full case study interview here.](#)

Publishing Additional eBooks

Another big opportunity – and the one that works best for “starters” like me – is simply releasing more ebooks.

There are obviously a lot of ways that releasing additional ebooks can boost your income, but one not-so-obvious benefit is that they can actually boost the sales of older ebooks as well, especially those that are closely related.

Amazon.com and other ebook marketplaces make it easy for users to see all of the ebooks from one author, and customers who are happy with one ebook are likely to search to see what other ebooks an author has written, which boosts the sales of all of those ebooks.

Similarly, you can create a storefront on your blog or website where readers can see all of the products you have available so that even if they came looking for just a single product of yours, they have the opportunity to purchase multiple products or ebooks.

And finally, use the back matter of your ebook to promote other titles. It’s worth updating this page in all of your ebooks when you release a new ebook just to be sure that purchasers are aware of your entire collection.

Releasing multiple ebooks is a time-consuming activity, so obviously it’s easier said than done. However, if you are already contemplating a series of ebooks, knowing that releasing multiples can boost your sales on your older ebooks as well is great motivation to actually dive into the next one!

Create a Book Club {But Think Outside of the Box}

A book club is another great way to create discussion, excitement and a built-in incentive to buy *now*, but don't limit yourself to the traditional book club approach. Here are a few examples of "book clubs" that build the community around an ebook:

After Tsh Oxenreider from [Simple Mom](#) launched [One Bite at a Time](#), she was approached by a fellow blogger who was interested in blogging her experience as she worked through the 52 "simple life" projects in that ebook. Tsh invited her to guest post on Simple Mom each month, and that ongoing series has worked to keep the ebook in the forefront of readers' minds as well as to open up discussion about each chapter.

I love that idea because it's such a creative approach to hosting a book club. Tsh get to promote the ebook without actually writing those extra posts, while Jeanett gets exposure for her own blog on a huge platform – making it a win-win for both of them as well as readers who can learn from Jeanett's experiences!

From [Tsh Oxenreider](#):

How has the One Bite at a Time series, which is actually hosted by a reader rather than yourself, helped you maintain sales since the launch of the ebook?

The topic of simplifying can easily (and accidentally) portray the author as an expert. I wanted to dispel this notion, and also submit the idea that simplifying can look different for different families. Having a reader write their experience going through the book shows other potential readers that my ebook can be an ongoing experience, it's not a prescriptive mandate, and it can be fun, too. Sales are always higher the few days after one of her posts goes live.

[Read Tsh's full case study interview here.](#)

Another option is one that Darren Rowse has used in the past. His [31 Days to Build a Better Blog](#) was originally a challenge he hosted on ProBlogger. Only after a few years of running that challenge did he decide to compile the content into an ebook that people could buy and work through at their own pace.

But, what ended up happening was people formed their own groups to work through the ebook together. That, of course, meant that readers were inviting fellow bloggers to join them in the challenge which helped spread the word about the ebook and increase sales as well! Genius.

From [Darren Rowse](#):

31DBBB was a unique ebook because when I wrote the bulk of it I did so with no intention of it ever being produced as an ebook. It was originally a series of blog posts that I put together in August of 2005.

The series was so successful I repeated it in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Each time I ran it I saw traffic to my blog in larger numbers than I'd ever seen it before so a lot of my readers were familiar with the idea of 31DBBB before I ever turned it into an ebook.

At the end of the 2009 series readers asked if I could turn it into an ebook because they wanted to do the series again and again at their own pace. I was skeptical about the idea of publishing an ebook with repurposed material but did it anyway. I added a little new content into the ebook version but it was 85% what was on the blog.

The ebook sold thousands of copies very quickly!

Sales came fast when I launched it but continued to be a steady daily seller – largely off traffic that comes to ProBlogger each day.

I have run annual sales on the ebook where I discount it once a year (and these have driven good sales too) and I mention it in blog posts and on social media from time to time.

The other source of sales was unexpected – I saw numerous groups of bloggers take the 31DBBB challenge together. At one point a group of craft bloggers went through the course, another time a large group of parenting bloggers from a forum did it and another time an industry association did it. Each time this has happened we've seen great sales of the ebook.

In 2011 I realised that there were a number of days in the ebook that were getting a little dated and tired and my team and I began to plan a 2nd edition. This edition saw us replace 7 of the older days with new ones (you still get the old ones in a separate ebook) and give the rest of the ebook a complete overhaul (there's a lot of new stuff in there).

This helped with sales but was more to make the ebook more useful.

[Read Darren's full case study interview here.](#)

If you want to have more control over the conversation – either to moderate it or just to be able to add thoughts/questions/etc., a forum or Facebook page might be the way to go. While a forum can be installed on your blog (we use the Mingle Forum plugin for this course, which I really like) to bring in more pageviews, there are reasons to consider a Facebook page as well: namely, when someone interacts with your page, their Facebook friends see that interaction, which can help grow brand awareness and interest in your ebook.

From [Amanda White](#):

The Facebook page was intentional. I launched Truth in the Tinsel as a challenge. The book is an Advent book with activities for 24 days in December. So, I wanted families to buy the book and then update their adventures on the FB page. I hoped the FB page would be a little community where we could all gather together to share our experiences—and keep doing the book for the entire month! People update pictures, ask questions and give advice. Which in turn, gets Truth in the Tinsel talked about on FB a lot. That Facebook page is amazing and makes me smile every day in December.

[Read Amanda's full case study interview here.](#)

And finally, if your ebook is one that could be used in a group setting offline (a Bible study, for example), adding discussion questions to the end of each chapter or as a separate download to encourage customers to really interact with and use the ebook as part of a traditional book club is a great way to get them to invite their friends to purchase a copy and participate.

When & How to Update Your eBook

If you're ready for a larger promotion, it might be time to update the ebook and do an actual relaunch.

How often you do this will depend on the niche and the type of ebook. For example, [Susan Heid](#) offers multiple planners and seasonal survival guides, and she updates those each year. Doing so gives her the opportunity to relaunch the product and also invites past customers to purchase updated copies (which she can do since they're actually tied to the calendar year).

From [Susan Heid](#):

[Launching annual products] has been a big PLUS! You basically have the "idea" but you do have to update it each year, so instead of it sitting in the back of your site, you get to "roll" out a new version each year, creating traffic, excitement from those who've purchased before and obviously a return income on a product that has already been out generating income.

It can be tough when you are releasing new ideas and then the timeline coincides with a product that needs a revision or update, so I've had to really buckle down to schedule correctly and not go by the seat of my pants!

I honestly do not see a con with this type of product at all. Although I likely will not be developing more that take time away from new ideas and projects. I currently have three products that require updating, the planner is the most time consuming, as we've made big revisions each year to meet need, suggestions that moms have sent in and create a better product.

[Read Susan's full case study interview here.](#)

On the other hand, [Katie Kimball](#) will often relaunch her products a second time with additional recipes/content, and while she does not charge past customers for those updates (a decision I agree with), doing that allows her to create the excitement of a product launch without actually having to create something from scratch. She is also able to invite past customers to help her promote the new launch when she sends them the updated ebook, and since word-of-mouth marketing is among the most effective, that's a huge benefit.

While cookbooks or project ebooks can be updated with new content, other digital products may simply need to be updated with current information. For example, this course will likely need to be updated once a quarter as policies, tools and the industry change, which is one reason I chose a course format as opposed to an ebook. A blogging ebook might need to be updated once a year. For other ebooks – parenting advice, Bible studies, simple living manifestos, etc. – the opportunities to update the content may not be as obvious, but an update could include additional content, extra tools and resources, or simply a fresh design.

The benefit of an update and relaunch is that you can actually put together a relaunch tour – similar to (or even bigger than) your launch tour. In this way, you're bringing in another burst of income and helping the sales momentum to pick back up!

The Pros & Cons of Participating in Bundles

Another popular option for promoting your ebook is a bundle sale.

First, a little history about the bundle sale and my experience with them since I am coming at this topic with a bit of a bias:

In 2010, a group of business bloggers launched the first bundle sale (that I know of), featuring a variety of digital products at a highly discounted price. Over the course of the next year, there was one or two other bundles, and in 2011, Corey Allen from Simple Marriage approached me about putting together a family life ebook bundle. As part of that bundle, we offered authors 80% of each bundle sold through their personal affiliate link, and non-author affiliates earned 60% of each bundle sold through theirs. Corey and I split the remaining profit.

That sale was a great success, and we repeated it again in 2012. Later that year, a friend of mine tragically lost her husband, and I put together a micro-bundle to help raise money for her family, which raised more than \$26,000 for them!

The idea of bundle sales was gaining popularity, but it was that fundraiser that sparked the idea of micro-bundles, and I began making plans to launch BundleoftheWeek.com rather than co-host another Simplify Your Family Life sale.

Since then, bundles have grown tremendously – not only in popularity, but also literally grown in size. Many bundles network include 50-75 ebooks, dozens of bonus offers from sponsor companies, etc. I have mixed feelings about this, honestly, not just as the founder of a micro-bundle site but also as author.

To be clear, there are many benefits to participating in bundle sales – a burst of income (and some authors earn several thousand dollars when participating), increased exposure to new audiences, links to your ebook or site (although not all bundles include links to the individual ebooks, so that's something you might want to ask about ahead of time), etc.

The problem, as I see it, is that if we oversaturate the market with bundle sales, we're essentially taking away any incentive for purchasers to buy our ebooks directly from us as authors. And while a traditional bundle can earn a blogger with a decent-sized audience a fair amount of money (since you're taking home a high percentage of each bundle sold through your link), bloggers with smaller audiences don't make out as well. In addition, the percentages offered to both bloggers and affiliates seems to be decreasing, and I've seen offers as low as 50% for authors. I'm not entirely sure about the justification for that split, but I can tell you that Corey and I each took home a fairly big profit from our first two sales while offering the higher percentages, so the lower splits concern me.

That's why my approach at BundleoftheWeek.com has always been to compensate authors first and to compensate them based on every bundle sold rather than just on the bundles sold through their links; I honestly believe that authors deserve to be paid for their expertise, craft and the work of writing their ebooks even if they don't have the audience to bring in tons of bundle sales.

While bundles – the big ones or the micro-bundles we host at BundleoftheWeek.com – still offer a good opportunity for ebook authors, I think it's important to evaluate each opportunity and choose carefully. For example, my personal commitment is to only participate in one big bundle sale a year (and for now I

think the team at [Keeper of the Home](#) is doing the best job with them). My ebooks were also included in various smaller bundles at [BundleoftheWeek.com](#), but if I spend more time promoting huge ebook bundles, I feel like I am really just annoying my readers and shooting my future sales in the foot, despite the earnings potential they offer.

I also like the approach that Katie at [Kitchen Stewardship](#) takes. She promises her customers that her brand new ebooks will not be included in a bundle for a certain period of time (6 months, I believe) so that they know they won't turn around in 3 weeks and regret purchasing the ebook at launch.

Finally, another approach that can also work is to release a new ebook as part of a bundle. I did this a few weeks ago with [101 Days of Christmas](#), which I released as part of the Christmas Planning bundle at [BundleoftheWeek.com](#) before enrolling it in Amazon's KDP program. My launch announcement included an option to buy the ebook by itself as well as information about the bundle sale, which I encouraged people to take advantage of.

The benefit of this type of approach, especially when participating in a larger bundle sale (where you're earning \$20+ per sale) is obviously increased revenue. However, the question then becomes how you launch or promote that ebook outside of the bundle. My recommendation to a few people who have asked me about that scenario lately has been to wait a little while and do their launch tour separately from the kick-off bundle so that they can really maximize both promotions.

The bottom line is that there are plenty of bundle opportunities out there, and they can be a huge boost to your ebook sales, but you need to consider each one and the effect it will have on your non-bundle sales and your reader loyalty rather than just saying yes to every opportunity in order to earn the cash. Taking the long view approach really will pay off better in the future!

When an eBook Flops

What kind of marketer talks about failure in a course about how to successfully sell and write an ebook? Well, that's a good question. I could pretend it's all sunshine and roses and if you simply follow the steps outlined in this course you'll be a millionaire in no time.

Except, as you've probably guessed by now, that's not really my style.

The principles in this course are sound, and I'm confident that you absolutely can find success with ebooks. But sometimes...an ebook just flops.

I won't pretend it's not disappointing when that happens -- especially when you've invested a ton of time and money in it -- but it's definitely not the end.

What I love most about Seth Godin's writing is his approach to failure. He stresses over and over that failure is inevitable if you're innovating, and while it might sound like just another cliché, you really can use failure as a stepping stone to success.

As I've mentioned before, I've found that my ability to predict how well a product will do has gotten better over time (although it's still not perfect!), and it's gotten better at least in part because of the failures I've experienced along the way.

Rather than being discouraged by failure when it happens, take the time to learn from it: Did you overestimate how interested people would be in the topic? Did you miss a certain feature or subtopic that people really want in an ebook on that topic? Is there too much competition? Did you drop the ball on your launch promotion?

Finally, think about how you might be able to move forward and salvage some of your hard work: Could you offer all or part of it as a free ebook for subscribers down the road? Could you take what you've written already and rework it as part of an update or a different ebook? Do you need to plan a relaunch?

Successful people aren't perfect, but they do keep moving forward, learning from their mistakes and trying new things along the way!

Don't Forget to Think About Your Taxes

One final reminder: your ebook income is just that – income. And that means that if you're in the U.S., you need to report it to the IRS and pay taxes on it (if you're in another country, I'm afraid I don't know enough about your tax system to offer any advice!).

The best thing you can do is begin keeping monthly records from the moment you receive your first penny – whether it's on your blog, publishing an ebook, etc. If you're not already earning an income online, then you should really start the moment you incur your first expense because you'll want to keep careful track of those as well. If you are already earning income and not yet keeping careful records, start keeping them today. If nothing else, it will save you from having to recreate even more records when it's time to file your taxes!

Your income includes money earned from ebook marketplaces like Amazon, BN.com, etc. Each of those companies should issue you a 1099 at the end of the year showing your earnings, but you'll want to be sure they match your records.

Depending on the number of PayPal sales you make, you may also receive a 1099-K from PayPal, but even if you don't, you are required by law to report that income.

And if you participate in bundle sales or other promotions, the money you receive for those is income as well. But keep in mind that if it comes through PayPal, that income will be reported on your 1099-K if you've passed PayPal's threshold.

On the other hand, you'll want to be just as careful to track your expenses since those will reduce your income and the total amount of taxes you pay. Expenses include upfront costs such as design, editing and conversion as well as the amount you pay to affiliates or for advertising. They also include PayPal fees and the amount it costs to list your ebook with various marketplaces.

Keeping these records monthly makes it much easier to file your taxes as opposed to trying to remember and recreate every piece of information for the entire year, so even if it feels like a pain, start doing it today!