



JAMES SCHRAMKO

Learn and Teach Better with Dr. Justin Sung

Educators and students alike can learn from Dr. Justin Sung. This former physician helps people teach, as well as learn how to study effectively.



Dr. Justin Sung

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my show. This is episode 935. Today, we're going to learn how to learn better, actually. Welcome to the show, Justin Sung. How are you?

Justin: Hi, James. Yeah, I'm great. Thanks for having me.

James: We have a mutual friend, [Will Wang](#), lovely fellow. And he said, You've got to speak to this guy, Justin, he teaches people how to learn better. And I thought, well, that's actually really interesting and useful for my audience. So I'm glad to have you on the show.

And I've had the chance to have a look over your website, to have a look at your little trailer video. You made a little introduction to me as well, which was great, just explaining what you do. And I've got to say, it's really fascinating what you're doing over there.

From physician to educator

Justin: Yeah, thanks. And shout out to Will, Will Wang, for the connection. Yeah, it's just one of those things that 10 years ago, I never thought that this would be what I do full-time. You know, I come from a medical background, used to be a doctor. So if you told me when I was 17, 18, trying to desperately get into medical school, that one day my job would be to just help people learn from around the world, yeah, I don't know how I would have felt about that.

James: It is an interesting one, because I don't often speak to people who have very strong academic roots and who have gone into things like being a doctor, or dentist, or surgeon, or lawyer or whatever, who have gone so early across. I do have people who have sort of served out their career, I've got dentists, but he teaches dentists. I've got lawyers, and they're still practicing law, but also using the online stuff to augment what they do.

How did you transition from being a medical doctor to essentially information service? I don't know whether you classify yourself as a software company or an education company, but it is quite a switch. And it's pretty early on, too.

Justin: Yeah, so I guess, it does seem quite early on. But for me, it was actually quite a gradual thing. So, when I was going through medical school, started getting in the education space, from essentially the moment I got into uni. So I was actually already kind of teaching in the education industry for around six, seven years, before I actually made the switch to go full-time.

So I was going through medical school, but I'd set up my business, and I'd been running that concurrently. So it was actually quite a gradual transition. And I did actually start by just teaching other people that wanted to get into medical school. And I started down with just teaching content knowledge. And then I did that a lot, very extensively.

I was kind of doing a few hours of study for medical school, and then I was doing like 30, 40 hours of just teaching people every week. And then I realized that it's not really making a big difference. Like, yes, I can help someone understand a concept, I can help someone think about a topic, but the issue is that they weren't able to do that themselves.

And then they have an issue with another part of the concept. And the people that need lots of help, they continue to be the ones that need lots of help. And it was quite rare, for someone who didn't know how to think about it, to actually get to the point where they were at the same level as other people that, you know, you might think naturally had a more of an affinity for that subject.

And that's when I started looking a lot more into well, can we sort of just teach the learning skills directly? Is it possible to do that and just skip the whole content path and get into the point where they don't even need external help to learn the content? And that was around sort of 2013, 2014, I started dabbling in that.

And eventually, I just realized content training was completely just a waste of time. I was getting way more consistent and better results with just teaching the actual skills, and so that's why I quadrupled down on. And yeah, at a certain point, I figured, well, actually, I get a lot more fulfillment out of doing this than I was in my clinical job as a doctor. And I just made the switch.

James: Yeah. Okay. So you're essentially teaching people a better software system for their brain.

Justin: Yeah, essentially, yeah. I think the important thing is that it's not an update. It's not an iteration. It's not a version 2.0. It's the version, you know, 1.0 of a completely new operating system.

James: Right. So it's like ditching basic and then installing OS.

Justin: Yeah, exactly. So it's a complete swap.

James: So we'll get into some of the things you've learned during your research, because I think that's what fascinates me, and I really think will help a lot of people here. Because a lot of people consuming this podcast have courses. And I'd say virtually everybody listening to this buys courses. They buy books, they do training, and it would be really great if they could get better outcomes from that. So I'd like to get some insights into what that operating system looks like.

But just as a quick overview, so far, I understand you've trained about four and a half thousand people internationally. You have a website called icanstudy.com, where you're teaching this new way of thinking. I liked that your system requires about 20 minutes a day.

These are the sort of things that appeal to me, thinking I could actually go through this, because if you can learn this new operating system, and then apply it to the next course you buy, or the next book you read, or whatever, maybe you're going to get a lot more out of it for a lot less effort. So it's the sort of life skill that I imagine has compound effects over the rest of your life.

The credibility that comes from research

But I also liked how you went and did a lot of research. One thing that you have, that's missing from just about every single information product I've ever looked at, is underneath your trailer video is a list of references, which is obviously what academics do. Because I know you've written, you've actually published a few research papers of your own, or medical papers, some kind of papers. So you've listed all these sources. So it made me feel like you actually know what you're talking about.

Justin: Yeah, well, one of the pet peeves that I have is that people often say, Oh, this is an evidence-based; evidence-based has become this kind of buzzword. And they say, Oh, here's a paper that shows it. It's like, that's just not how real science works. You know, you can ask anyone that is a real researcher, and they will tell you that to form an opinion about a single concept, you need to go through hundreds, if not thousands of papers.

And I don't know how many people listening to this will be heavily involved in the real research space, but you talk to any real scientist, and they'll tell you that to get the label of evidence-based, there's a high threshold that needs to be met.

James: I think in the last two years, I've discovered that most of my social media feed are part-time researchers. They have very strong opinions on all sorts of things, from medical to politics space, you know, since the pandemic came, and so it's fascinating. It's why when you actually find a real researcher, it's really interesting to see the difference.

Justin: Yeah, because there's nuance, and that nuance can't be appreciated, you know, through just kind of skimming through a couple of articles that are free to access on. It's not easy, though, because they're protected behind journals, and you have to pay a lot of money to get journal access and things like that. So it's not easy, and it takes a lot of time as well.

James: And then don't we have things like confirmation bias where we're looking for the answers we want, and we reject the ones we don't find?

Justin: Exactly, yeah. And it's actually a skill to manually overcome that, which I guess for me was good, because the medical training and the medical background kind of did a lot of the training for that. But even then, you know, there are a lot of doctors and medical students out there that kind of claim to be the sire of effective learning principles.

And you just look at what they're saying, and it's like, this is just not evidence-supported whatsoever. It's just as bad as pretty much any other layperson. But yeah, you know, that idea of taking the research approach was something that was very, very important to me. And I also noticed that there weren't really any people really taking it as seriously.

I think the difference was that for me, when I was going through it to begin with, I was learning it for myself, and for my students, first of all, so what mattered was the outcome. Like, I needed the outcome, that was not a compromise at all. I wasn't trying to sell it, I wasn't trying to market it. I didn't care about that whatsoever. I just wanted results.

And then that led me to be less biased at what was already out there, and look a little bit more closely at just, what does the research say? What works, what doesn't work? Let's keep what works, let's disregard the rest. And so a lot of these things that, you know, people that leave uni, and then they get into their professional lives, and they're starting to learn how to learn more effectively.

And they're getting better at figuring out how to consume content and use it in a more relevant and applicable way. They feel like they've got a bit of mastery over their brain. So it's kind of like saying, Well, let's look at 100,000 people that are in that situation. What are the little optimizations that all of these people are doing? How can we turn all of that into a system?

And what are the things that some people are doing, that they may think is helping them, but actually, there's an even better version of that, or they think it's helping them but it's actually not that, it's actually a combination of three other things that's making it seem like it's that, but we can actually optimize?

So that was kind of the mindset, and it ended up creating a system that was very different to what was already out there, but as a result, very, very consistent and effective in getting people to learn in a very, very efficient way.

James: I like how you track the success results, you know, you measure the metrics on the outcomes of your students. I've heard it said somewhere that we tend to teach the things that we needed the most. And I like how you've taken all that research.

One of the things you mentioned is that some of the ways that people are learning could be 30, 40, 70 years out of date, expired, I think you said, past the use-by date, but they're still taught.

And I've been very skeptical about, well, the education system, I guess, as a parent, and as a student. See, I'm not an academic. I did, I think, one semester at university for a marketing degree, and it just didn't work for me. And I must learn in a different way. But it's good to have someone say, You know what, actually, a lot of the stuff that people are doing, or the way that people are teaching, is set up for them to not succeed.

Learning methods that don't actually work

That actually is a bit of a relief. So I really do want to unpack, what are a couple of things that people think are true that are not? And I just want to cite one more reference point here, there was a pretty popular book that teaches people about ways of thinking, and the author actually got in trouble for fudging his research.

So, you know, I know there's got to be flawed methods out there. What are a couple of the classics that a listener might be doing, thinking, oh, they're doing a great job here, but it's actually not helping them succeed with their learning?

Justin: So I think there's two different things that we can really focus on that I see people make of really all ages. The first idea is that we often have certain conceptions about how learning needs to happen in different contexts, that are based on just our prior experience, that aren't necessarily accurate.

The best example of this is, let's say that you've got an accountant or someone that's trained to be a financial adviser, they're sitting their exams, or recertifying, or something like that. The way that they learn on the job, and the way that they learn in pretty much every other aspect of their life, is often completely different to the way that they think that they need to learn when they open up a textbook.

As soon as it enters into that formal learning type of setting, the entire paradigm around learning just seems to change, because the way that they were trained on how to learn formal academic kind of curriculum was based on when they were in school. And in school, you know, that sort of saying about how, if you try to measure, like, how smart a fish is, by its ability to climb a tree or something.

You know, the issue was with formal education, everyone is the fish that was taught how to climb a tree, because the early, early, early research said, Hey, there are some things here that actually work. And then that became mainstream knowledge.

And then the latest research is actually saying, Actually, it turns out that it doesn't really work as well as we thought it worked. And also, it actually only works in a very small set of parameters. Like, it only works in some very, very fixed type of instances.

And knowing that now, there's kind of a shift going on. But there's a 30- to 50-year delay between when research starts picking up on an issue, to when mainstream advice starts changing. So it's not going to be for another 50 years, probably, that the tune starts changing in terms of how people should be thinking about things.

So there are a lot of these misconceptions. So one of those things is that, if you're wanting to learn something, you have to just sit there with the book, you have to read it. And then you have to write things out again, and you have to just copy things and be very repetitive, and very note-heavy. So that's completely not true at all.

In fact, there's very little research to actually support that that system of doing things activates the right pathways in our brain that leads to effective learning. And actually, most professionals out there, they actually know this intuitively, because the things that you know and can retain the most, and the most easily to the deepest level, you've probably never read an extensive linear notes for and copied them out again, and again.



You never made a series of flashcards that you needed to go through again and again, and none of the university strategies are even used. However, that is knowledge that you may feel very, very confident on. So the first thing that I'd recommend is actually challenge the way that you're learning and think about, where does that come from? And if that comes from just the prior experience from uni, that's something to maybe look at.

If this many people do it, it's got to work, right?

James: There's a certain belief in the copywriting community that the best way to learn great sales copywriting is to hand-copy all the greatest sales letters. This is debated a lot in copywriting forums. Some people swear by it that they became so good because they hand-wrote the best sales letters and it just, you know, they reckon it opens up a certain part of their brain and lodges in there. Other people say that it's baloney. What do you say, Justin?

Justin: So I've heard this before. And from a cognitive perspective, that's not going to be a consistent way to get very good. So the first thing, I often give this sort of example, let's say that there is a technique that the 100 best copywriters on the planet use, right? Of 100 of the best copywriters on the planet, 99 of them use this technique, or use this way to try to improve.

And I said, I've got this technique. Would you want to hear what this technique is? Would you want to learn this technique that are used by 99 out of 100 of the best copywriters in the world?

James: I guess I'd still be wondering if it's just, you know, is there a correlation or causation error? Like, is it just something that they all do, but it was taught by somebody, and it wouldn't make any difference whether they do it or not? I'd still want to know who the one is.

Justin: Yeah, and your line of thinking is a minority. Most people would say, Hey, that's a high success rate. But actually, if you've got a million copywriters, and all a million of them are doing it, and then only 99 of those are actually succeeding, that is a very, very low success rate. And you might still get 99 of the 100 best copywriters using that technique. But hey, you've also got 999,000 other people that are using that, that aren't getting those types of results.

And the other thing is that you get this success bias, where you only hear from the people that are doing really well. I mean, when's the last time you looked at a YouTube video, and someone was like, Hey, I'm a crap copywriter. Here's what I do to be terrible at my job. Like, no one does that. No one wants to talk about all their failures.

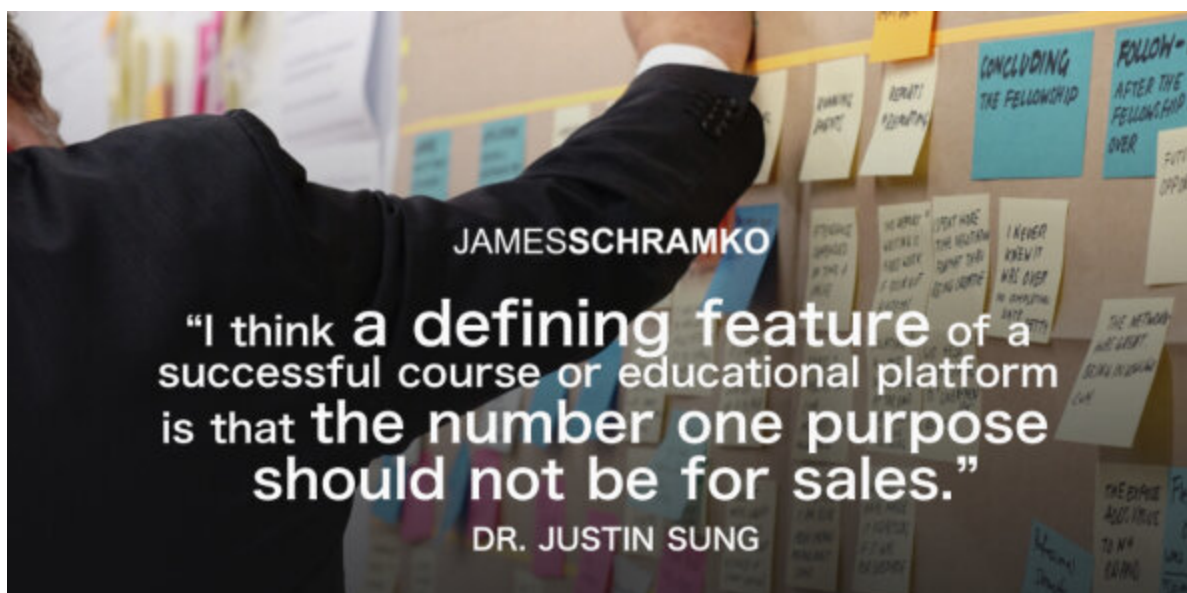
James: That's funny. I often say, I'm not a very good podcaster. But I've just cranked out 900 and something episodes. And, you know, I got in early and just kept doing it. I'm still learning how to be better at storytelling and improve the sound quality, get better guests like you, Justin. Like, that is fascinating. Yeah, I totally get you with the success bias.

What do they say, that the history is written by the victors? That's a classic case of, we're really only hearing from people who feel like they've got the system. And that's really what I was saying before, the thing that I saw in your situation that I do not see very often is actual research sources cited.

I know we all do it, I probably do it. I may not fully understand what has led to my successes, and I can look for patterns and find things that I think are quite repeatable across my students, you know? It's the best I've got to work with, but I'm still hungry to learn, I'm still interested in finding out from you.

How to make better learning material

What can we do to learn better? How can we make better courses and education for our own clients?



JAMESSCHRAMKO

“I think a defining feature of a successful course or educational platform is that the number one purpose should not be for sales.”

DR. JUSTIN SUNG

Justin: I think one of the most important things, and I've helped a number of people create online courses and look at the education of design thing, I think a defining feature of a successful course or educational platform, is that the number one purpose should not be for sales.

And I know that from a business point of view, the purpose of it is for sales. I mean, most people are not going to sweat and bleed to create a course for just the sake of helping other people, you know? We want to have some kind of reward for it.

But the number one outcome needs to be on creating really, truly effective learning, and evaluating every single component of the design to see, does it allow you to achieve effective learning? And that's not an easy thing to understand, because you may look at a component and not know whether it produces effective learning or not. And that does require some specialized knowledge.

But, you know, there are a few things that we should first do is, number one is, really challenge and be very critical about the decisions that we make when we're creating a course or making a decision on like, a learning management platform or something. Think about what the flow is that we want the user to go through.

What are the general feelings that we want them to have? What is the progression and the foundation that we want to build, and what is going to be the best way to deliver that? When I create a course, it might take me, let's say, a thousand hours from start to finish. At least 600 of those hours I spent without creating any actual content.

I'm just thinking, I'm just going through different scenarios. I'm looking for things that, assumptions that I've made, you know, what have I included in a certain order, because I think that's the best way to do it? How do I know? How can I be sure? Am I willing to bet \$600,000 on the fact that that is the best order to do it in? Because that could be the opportunity cost of producing something that's sub optimum.

When I was first going through to teach someone about how to learn, which is a super complex topic, I made a lot of mistakes. My success rate for people getting through my course and learning the system was probably less than one percent. Almost every single person that went through the course was not able to learn it correctly. And trust me, when I first built it, I thought it would work. I thought it was going to be the thing that just cracks it open.

And for the three years after that, the system itself almost didn't change at all. But I was just completely focused on what is the user psychology at every single moment of going through this learning experience, and what are the areas that they're tripping up on, and trying to figure out, as early as possible, where they're tripping up on something. Because if you leave it too late, it's really hard to look back at 100 different touchpoints and figure out which combination of two or three created a deviation from the desired outcome.

You have to really be tracking every user on a very close basis to figure out, at what point do you see the earliest sign that something is going wrong? And then iterating on that very, very rapidly.

Save yourself a lot of resource and energy this way...

Another thing, a very quick tip, I would say is, when you're building courses, build them with the idea that you're going to rebuild it and update it 10, 20 times after that.

Don't make the perfect course that's super rigid, and then if you want to change a single component, you have to rerecord everything that follows after it. You're 100 percent going to have to change it when you get real market data and user feedback. There's definitely parts you're going to restructure, reorder, it will be vastly different from however you thought you'd go, even if you did heaps and heaps of planning, no matter how confident you are.

So just keep that in mind when you design it, start with a skeleton and add new things on based on that user feedback. If I had done that, to begin with, I probably would have saved myself a couple of hundred thousand dollars and a few thousand hours in just re-creation time.

James: That's really, that's a power tip. I'm so lucky. When I started speaking at - you know, running my own paid workshops, a real estate educator at the time, he said, Look, make sure you chapterize your training, put it into modules. And so I would start each session with a new title slide and deliver that module.

So they were sort of interchangeable. Later, I could supersede a model and replace it with a new module and just slide it in and make up the overall course. In the platform that I use, the [learning platform that I use](#), I requested the feature to track students' progress through the course so that I could see how far they're making it through.

And you can also have little prompts, if someone stops engaging with it, that you can follow them up. And you can use things like the ability for them to tick completion and then be issued a certificate and stuff, things that sort of encourage people to conclude.

But I'll tell you, one of the most eye-opening things for me lately was I went through a live delivered course. I think it went for about a month. And it was two sessions a week. And from the start of the course, to the finish of the course, I completed all the homework, I did the assignments, and I learned a brand new skill.

So the outcome of the course was exactly what was on the sales page, that I would end up with the ability to do a certain skill, that I would have these certain deliverables. And it was great.

The problem of consumption without application

I think it's a huge problem in the online industry, both sides of the fence, people creating crappy training. And we've all done it, you know, because we're often good at a thing, but we're not educators. And then the second part is people just consuming and consuming. They keep buying stuff, like, 50 percent of Kindles have never been opened. That blows my mind.

I don't have the source to cite there. But I've researched it a few times, and it keeps coming up, that we all buy courses that just become digital shelfware, they just sit there in our browser tab or in our inbox with the confirmation of purchase, but we never go through it. So we can change. And I imagine, you know, the fascinating thing is how meta it would have been for you to approach taking everything you've learned and put it into a course, and then to remove all those biases and to not just sit back and accept that.

But I will say, from what I've seen of your stuff, you've done the thing that I would recommend anyone do. And that's, focus on just having a great product. Because it's so much easier to make sales and to have retention if you just make a good product in the first place. And I totally agree with you, whatever you have now, will not be what you have even a year from now.

In the online space, it does move. I'm literally changing my entire platform right now, after hundreds and thousands of posts, and after terabytes of data, after so much ground covered, scrapping it all to start again, as I've had to do in a cyclic nature online. You've got to do that.

And I think you should put as much focus on obsolescence and rejuvenation as you do for creation. I reckon I've scrapped more stuff than most people will ever create. That's how obsessed I am with that renewal process.

Justin: Yeah, totally agree. The course that I've created has been updated probably thousands of times, even just in the last 18 months. Like, there's points where I'm updating things 10, 20 times a day, just because there's tiny little optimizations that can always be made. So yeah, I mean, we've got kind of this weird problem where our results that we're getting are just a lot more consistent and better than a lot of other kinds of courses that try to do what we do in terms of learning to learn.

And part of that is just because of the fact that there's just a really low bar that's been set by other people that just sort of created these learning to learn courses without really having an experience in it. And then, obviously, also part of the attention to detail that we have. But the issue that we've got now is that the results that we have don't seem real.

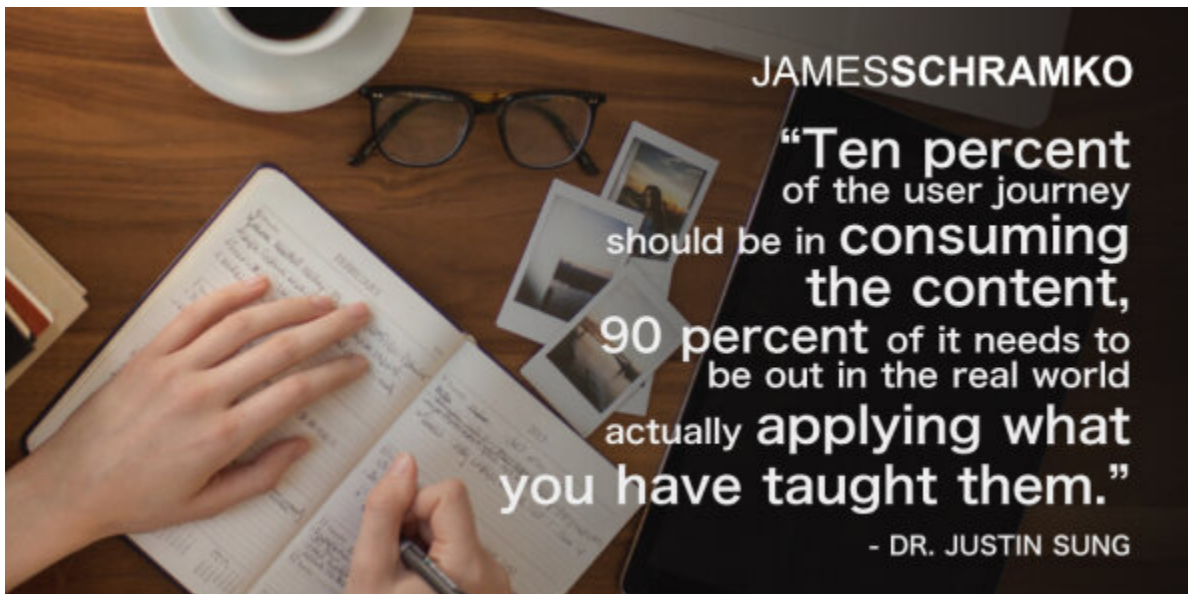
So, you know, like we've mentioned [Will Wang](#) at the beginning who's helping me with marketing-related stuff, one of the problems we've got is how do we turn our real results into things that actually seem legitimately believable? So we even did things like run focus groups with our users to say, What is the amount of improvement that you feel is actually realistic? And it's only about a third of the actual results.

So you know, a conundrum is, do we actually lie about our results just to make it more believable? Or do we use the real one? And, yeah, so that's an interesting thing. But what you mentioned before about people just consuming content, that's actually a really, like a prevalent thing. I was actually talking about that on an Instagram live thing that I was doing last night.

There's this illusion of progress that people tend to have where they're sort of obsessed, and they get a lot of that fulfillment or satisfaction and that dopamine hit from having the lightbulb moment. It's like a lightbulb moment addiction. So they'll go through a course and learn skills, and it's that feeling of, Hey, this makes sense. I feel like I'm learning something, this feels new, it feels novel, like I feel like this can really make a difference.

But the part that's missing is, how does that translate into real transformative impact on that person's life? And I know people, and I'm sure you know people as well, that will go through a course that's got so much good stuff in it. And they'll take away one or two things, only one or two things from that.

And they sort of haphazardly implement that. And then six months later, you might check up and see, Oh, how's all of that going? And they've sort of fallen back into their old ways anyway, and they just moved on to the next course. Because there's the feeling of progress, but it's actually just the illusion of progress, you know, there hasn't been any real transformative change that's occurred. Which would probably make another tip that I'd say, for any course creators, is have a lot of practice and a lot of that qualitative feedback, and a lot of immersion.



Ten percent of the user journey should be in consuming the content, 90 percent of it needs to be out in the real world actually applying what you have taught them. And if that balance is not there, then you're not going to have real outcomes. Yes, you may have marketable statistics that you can use to push a sale. If that's the primary objective, then that's all you need.

But if the objective is to create real learning outcomes that last long-term, there has to be an overwhelming component of real practice and real feedback. So that when they leave your course, they are set. They do not need to go back to it again. They don't need the new next course. It's a tricky one as a business owner.

What is the course creator's role in client outcome?

James: There are people in our industry who have sold the new next thing every single year for the last decade, and they charge for it as well. And there's actually quite a lot of pushback. And probably rightly so. I've seen the posts, they're like, Hang on a minute. I paid you five grand for a lifetime membership in this particular training, which you said was the best of the best, and now one year later, you're telling me that that's all obsolete and that I have to do this new thing. And I have to pay again, even though I had a lifetime membership.

It creates bad will. I see there's too much evil marketer, and not enough good educator in that. What you're explaining, actually, regarding the people getting that little hit of feeling like they're making achievement, I think some people actually do that whole process through the sales page. They read a sales page, it perfectly describes a problem they're having, it seduces them with the exact solution that they would love to have. And as soon as they hit the order button, they get that adrenaline of problem solved. And often they just forget about it from that point on.

And I think what I'm taking away from what you're saying is, as an educator, we should make sure that the very early stages of our program create a win for a client that gets them excited for the next win. And as we're talking about this, it sort of reminds me about, maybe I've been accidentally lucky. But by having a community since 2009, I was very early to realize that the power is not in just the content.

If I can balance that with coaching and community, that's the power in it. And because I'm able to interact with my clients in the private forum, and because I run training every single month, we have the live Q&A and we have usually a single topic training of which guys like Will Wang and [Kan Huang](#) have come and delivered training. That gives people the platform to be able to ask questions around the content, to get context around the content, how does it apply to their situation? What's changed from what we were teaching before in the market? Those sorts of things.

And that's when you end up with the thousand changes. It's not just happening in the core content, it's happening around the content. And that's what was so powerful about the live training I went through recently, is the experience of that, the connection of the group, the ability to get coaching, not just the content, but I'd say the content really was only 10 percent of it. The outcomes became real because of the environment.

So if you're watching this or listening to this, and you're a content creator, or an educator, this is why I think courses and published content, like Seth Godin has been talking about, and like Alex Hormozi does, it's all going to be commoditized, it'll be free or given away. I give away content all the time because the real value in it is creating an experience around it, and getting the outcomes for the people.

And that's where you do have to roll up the sleeves. And it is a bit of hard work. But if you have a great product, you don't have to focus so much on the marketing side of it. If you've got a product that people look at and think, I want that - and by the way, I liked your outcomes, I thought they were believable, because you've got all the legitimizing factors.

Look at those certificates on your back wall there. You're a medical doctor, you've got research citations. So I do believe that what you're saying is true versus some of the marketers who change topics, like, once every three months. One minute, they're doing masterminds, the next minute, they're doing NFTs, the next minute, they're in crypto, the next minute, they're doing the Amazon store. Like, seriously, guys, you've got to slow down and stick to something and master it.

The marketing aspect of course creation

Justin: One thing that I just want to say about that, actually, not from the learning point of view, but from the sort of business side of things that I've really had to figure out and I struggled with was that, especially if you're kind of in an early stage step, you often don't have access to like, world class marketing expertise and a team of people that can really, you know, you're figuring a lot of stuff out yourself, you know? You're reading books, like, you know, Seth Godin's This Is Marketing, you're trying to get an understanding of how to do content and things like that.

And there are a lot of conflicting messages around how things should be done. So I can definitely see that people would fall into the trap, and I did as well, and using what will be considered, I guess, sort of conventional marketing strategies to try to push something across and work people down the funnel and things like that, it might work, you know, yes, it could work.

But I think it's really important, and this is something I had to work, you know, realize through the lot of money I wasted on ads, well, spent on learning, I guess, through mistakes, is that you have to be really in touch with what your audience really, really wants, and what types of things are going to push different buttons for them.

And for me, I'm in a very skeptical market. There's so many learning to learn scams that are out there, legitimate scams. And there's so many people that over promise and massively underdeliver. So there's almost this industry of bad will that's already being set. So the skepticism that people have for, I guess, a product or a service like mine is very, very high.

So I realized that if I do anything that feels like just conventional marketing, I get a lot of backlash from it. So for me, I really focus on building that trust and building the legitimacy, trying to have conversations with people where they can have critical thoughts and questions that I have the opportunity to answer and sort of alleviate and address those.

And that's not necessarily conventional marketing kind of wisdom. But I think, you know, if we go down to the principles, it's you know, you really want to know your market, you really want to know them, you want to see into their minds, and really think about them as like, another individual that you're working with, rather than kind of this magical concept of marketing where you somehow follow this template and the leads will just trickle in by the hour, which I think is rarely the case.

I wish I was in an industry where that was the case. But I don't think that's usually works out that well, for most people, especially in the early stages.

James: We all come into this industry with the dream, the leverage, the Pina coladas by the pool, I can tell you, it's a little bit of blood, sweat and tears, and crawling over broken glass, and eating beans before you get there. But what you're talking about resonates with me, because in my world, I am seeing people use outdated techniques or things that are just not going to work.

The days of putting up an auto webinar and just paying for some Facebook ads, and it automatically being delivered and people loving your product and it growing automatically, that's not happening easily. It can happen, but it's very rare. The people who are pioneering that method, like Rich Schefren, with his evergreen webinars, that was happening back in like, 2008, 2009.

We're talking, it's easily a decade old, that stuff, but people are still teaching it today as if it's the brand new technique. So I love what you're saying.

Justin: I think they're teaching it as the tried and true. It's the, this is the thing that works.

James: In the online space, like, that's just eons. It's out of date. And look, you've done what I recommend people do, you've just gone and accessed people who have their finger on the pulse, and you've sped up the result. If I was selling your product, then the simple way to do it would be to get people results in advance, just like my friend [Dean Jackson](#) talks about.

You could have them learn a technique and then apply it in real time, and see that they've automatically already learned something. And that's just layers and layers of proof. And then I'd be putting lots of stories of the success students. Because you have got so many successful students, you could even do an entire podcast or show around case studies of transformations. And the proof in that would overcome any hype concerns regarding your amazing results.

What any learner can do to get results

I'm interested, if I'm going to enroll in a course, let's say this afternoon, I buy a course, say a digital marketer is selling me a course on how to be a TikTokker or something, right, it's something that's new to me, and I hit the purchase button, what could I do as a student to maximize my success?

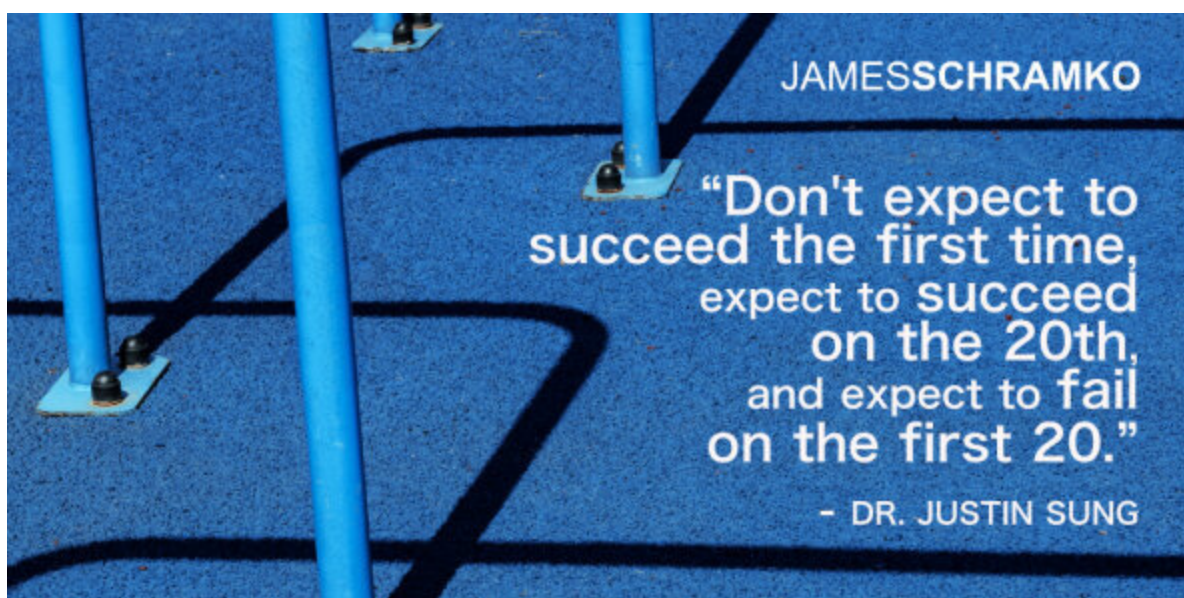
Justin: So first of all, go into it with the mindset that you will have to obviously put in the work, as we talked about, it's not, you know, the problem wasn't solved when the credit card was charged. So that's the fundamental prerequisite. Get into things and trial them out early, really, really get heavy with the experimentation.

Often, I see people really waiting a long time, trying to wrap their head around it and see exactly how to do it the best way to minimize the chance of error. And I can understand that. But the issue is that there are so many ways to do something wrong, and only a few ways to do it right. And you can spend a decade just thinking about all the ways you're going to do it wrong.

But by the time you go to execute, you're now worried about avoiding so many things. Number one, you can't even do it right. And number two, you're probably going to make just a different set of mistakes anyway. So it's better to just figure out, what are the four to five mistakes I am going to end up making out of that list of 7,000 possible mistakes? And figure that out early.

Day three, day four into a course, you should already know what are the mistakes that you are most likely to make based on experience, not theory. That's probably the biggest one.

James: So it's basically, if I'm going to commit to a course, I should commit to the resource required to consume it and attack it. Like, put it in that, like I actually have this rule, I won't buy a course unless I'm prepared to like, be at my computer, log in and rip through the course. Otherwise, I'm just going to buy it and it will sit there for one day down the tracks. So put inside the resource to attack it.



Justin: Yeah, rip through and experimenting like crazy. The mindset I'd say is, don't expect to succeed the first time, expect to succeed on the 20th, and expect to fail on the first 20. Like legitimately, go into it not looking for success, but just trying to find, what is the way in which I'm about to fail this next attempt?

James: That's good advice. My instructor actually gave me that feedback from the course that I did. We were required during the course to provide four pieces of homework. And I submitted eight. Each time there was homework, I did double the homework, so I could maximize my exposure to feedback and learn faster. And I made a lot of progress in just one month from a standing start.

And he said that he was inspired by my willingness to test and push things, I think he said push, to push areas, and the innovation curve was rapid. And I feel like I did make good progress, because I just threw myself at it. I'm like, Okay, I've made this investment in myself. And that's a really important distinction.

When we buy a course, we're not donating to the course provider. But if I buy access to your membership, Justin, it's not because I want you to go and buy a new mansion or whatever. It's because I'm selfishly wanting to be better off, right? That's the bottom line. And so I'm like, I want to get the best value for myself out of this investment.

Justin: And that's actually a mutual line interest. As a course creator, my objective is to make sure that every one of my students has a massive success, because there's nothing better for my reputation than an entire generation of massively successful previous students and clients.

James: You could end up on a podcast talking about it if you did enough good work.

Justin: If you play your cards right.

Wrapping things up

James: I love it. Well, Justin, this has been really good. Just sort of in summary, I think what we've really covered today is a little bit about the transition from a traditional role into an online role, some of the challenges you've had and how you solved them, how we can as course creators and information marketers do a better job for our customers, and how us as consumers, which we all are, can consume, better understand our style, commit to actually following through and be prepared to abandon some of the isms that we've been taught.

I think there's a few rookie copywriters around the world saying, Thank God, I don't have to hand-write for the next 300 hours these things, it's not going to really make me a better copywriter. I love that. It's been great.

You've got this website over at icanstudy.com. I'm actually interested in going through that, because I'm looking for another thing to learn now, and I'm constantly improving. I want to learn it so that I can be a better creator. But I also am a lifetime learner. I've read a lot of books, I've done a lot of courses.

It's the only reason I was able to quit my job back in 2008, is because I took on the responsibility to educate myself and to be in that rare atmosphere of understanding how things work and to be able to transfer that knowledge to others. And to get, of course, the value creation of that, people will pay for that.

This is really helpful for me personally. This is episode 935. I want to thank you, Justin, for putting aside a few minutes to educate us about this whole new world. And I'm really excited for what you're doing. In the general scheme of things, you've only been in it for a short time. And it's obvious to me why you're getting the success you are, so well done.

Justin: Thank you. Yeah, and I appreciate you having me on here. I know the website is I Can Study, but we have thousands of professionals, not students, in the conventional sense, that are on it, so don't let the name fool you. It's applicable for really any type of learning that you want to do.

James: You said you have students who are eight through to 70s.

Justin: Yeah, yeah. So our youngest student is eight, that's probably a little young. We normally recommend on 14 plus, but there's no age limit on this. Yeah. So our oldest student is, I think, probably just turning 75 or something like that.

James: Love it. All right. So yeah. I don't know if you've got any specials for our listeners or whatever.

Justin: Oh yeah, sure. Yeah, so for anyone that's fortunate enough to listen to this episode, we've got a special offer available. So you can use, on our checkout page, the coupon code Schramko, which is obviously James's last name, S-C-H-R-A-M-K-O, Schramko. And you'll get a \$15 off your initial signup, and we'll make sure that this coupon is available for use for at least the next year after this goes live.

And if you're listening to this, and it's already been a year since it's gone live, chuck it in the checkout anyway and just see, we may have just decided to keep it going because we've just had so many people sign up through it. And I think, honestly, people that are willing to listen to a podcast about this topic, that are proactive enough to do that and take it seriously, that is the ideal type of person that we love working with. They're so malleable and they usually grow really, really quickly.

James: Love it. Thank you so much, Justin. I'm not an affiliate or anything, but it's great that you could provide some value for my audience. And I hope we can track your success in the future and get you back on the show.

Justin: Thanks, James. Would love to be back.

A top-down view of a person sitting on a bed. They are wearing a grey sweater and blue jeans with a hole. In front of them is a silver laptop. To the left is a large open book. To the right is a calendar for August and September with a pen and a sticky note. Another book is open at the bottom of the frame. The scene is dimly lit with a blue tint.

JAMES SCHRAMKO

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