

THE LAZY GUIDE #01

Choosing an
online course
platform



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



James Lavers is founder of digital publishing house "Lazy Coach" an online educational company formed in the U.S.

After burning out as a stay-at-home Coach in a failed attempt to balance work and family, James figured out how to turn his coaching into online courses that could serve and sell while giving him the freedom to truly connect with his kids.

A "reluctant pioneer", James is passionate about providing the kind of mentoring and guidance that simply wasn't around when he got started.

Since 2005 his coaching and courses have helped Authors, Speakers, Coaches, Thought-Leaders & Advice Experts at every level in 143 countries to do what he did and transform their know-how & expertise into web-based educational courses and digital products that make money and make a difference around the world.

Prior to Lazy Coach, James served as a consultant and Producer in the infomercial and home-shopping TV industry. In 2003, a chance opportunity to help Anthony Robbins double his sales on QVC set James on a new path helping Coaches, Authors & Advice-Experts to serve more and sell more using the emerging technologies presented by the internet and online video.

James has featured on the BBC. He has lectured on digital entrepreneurship & creativity at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and for MBA Post-grads in collaboration with Cambridge Judge Business School. He has consulted for Sony, Samsung, Nintendo, Dyson, Bare Essentials, Decleor & Elemis to help their spokespeople better sell their products and monetise their brand message on TV, online and on video.

Today James continues to help his clients engineer greater levels of freedom by teaching them how to remove the constraints of time, geography and "hard work" from business.

If you'd like further help or instruction from James, check out the back page of this report for more opportunities, and visit www.lazy.coach to join the tribe :)

“WHICH PLATFORM SHOULD I CHOOSE?”

I often teach my clients that one of the BEST places to start, when creating content and online courses, is with annoying questions.

Yep, you heard right... *annoying questions!*

What makes them annoying is they're often not in your direct area of expertise...but are on a closely related and often essentially linked topic. Think of a master-apple-grower being constantly asked about which fertiliser to use, rather than the finer points of growing exquisite apples. Or think of an expert in cross-stitch being constantly asked about the best chair for stitching in...rather than the intricacies of creating magnificent needlework!

This report, is based on one such annoying question.

“Which platform should I choose?”

Man oh man, if I had a dollar for every time I get asked this!

OK, I confess! Having created a bunch of successful courses in the last decade I have a tendency to be dismissive about platforms, bordering on indignant at the myriad of choice available today that simply didn't exist when I was getting started. I often feel I'm transforming into a grumpy old man bemoaning the luxuries enjoyed by the spoilt youngsters who "...don't know how good they've got it!"

But seriously, as with all annoying questions, they often shed light on a very real sticking point...

...and truly, there's nothing I love more than freeing you from sticking points that prevent you sharing your expertise with the world...and being well rewarded for it.

So let's get started with what the heck a platform IS...



SO WHAT IS AN ONLINE COURSE PLATFORM?

I'm not a techie nerd, so the truth is I don't *really* know what an online platform is...at least from a programmer or coders' perspective.

But I CAN give you a useful definition that will help you use them and make fast, effective decisions about which is best for you.

Here it is.

An online platform places one party in touch with another. Amazon for example, places those looking to sell their books (amongst other stuff) in touch with those looking to buy them. And it's the same in the real world as well. For instance, a platform at a train station puts one party (the traveller) in touch with another party (the train driver).

So an online course platform provides a web-based touchpoint between you, the expert, and those wanting access to your expertise.

Or in even simpler language: it's *somewhere online to present your stuff so people can watch it, learn from it and put it into action.*

So. What's the problem? Why oh why is choosing and using an online course platform such a confusing and overwhelming subject for so many Advice-Experts?

Well there's a tonne of reasons, but mainly I think it comes down to 3 things.

Firstly, it all just seems so damn technical!

This makes giving up easy if you mistakenly convince yourself you're a moron when it comes to anything remotely technical.

Next reason it befuddles so many is because there's so damn MANY of 'em, and they ALL seem to present themselves as some version of "*the only platform you'll ever need!*".

The result? Mass confusion.

The third reason is people often can't distinguish between the different TYPES of platform available or which CRITERIA to use in selecting one.

So the whole affair starts to become like trying to prepare a dinner party when you don't know who's coming, what they like or where it's happening...decision-making becomes impossible. All of which means you can't publish your course to the global audience who want it and are ready to buy it.

So. Let me walk you through a SUPER SIMPLE analogy to help you think about platforms in a simpler way...so you never get stuck choosing one ever again...



As a course creator (or soon to be) you're like a filmmaker. But what filmmaker would invest the time, effort and money to make a film if nobody sees it. That's where cinemas come in. Online course platforms are like cinemas. They're a place for someone to experience your "film" (aka: your course)

So, why so many different types of online course platform? Well, it's no different from cinemas. Think about it, you've got small-home-cinemas, open-air movie theatres, SKY Movies/Netflix and full-blown IMAX Multiplexes!

Like cinemas, there are different types of platform...

PLATFORMS
ARE LIKE
CINEMAS

THE 4 TYPES OF COURSE PLATFORM

When it comes to platforms...like cinemas, there's basically 4 different types. Many platforms overlap into other types. This report includes a Directory of online course platforms (I know cool right?) where we've sorted them into their primary type to make selection easier.

The 4 Types of Online Course Platform.

1. **SELF-HOSTED** (theme/plugin)

This is like building your own cinema. A self-hosted platform sits on your own (usually Wordpress based) website. Best for: "techies" and for tailoring bespoke options. Also often good for their low or one-off cost. Worst for: capacity issues, technophobes.

2. **SOLO** (standalone)

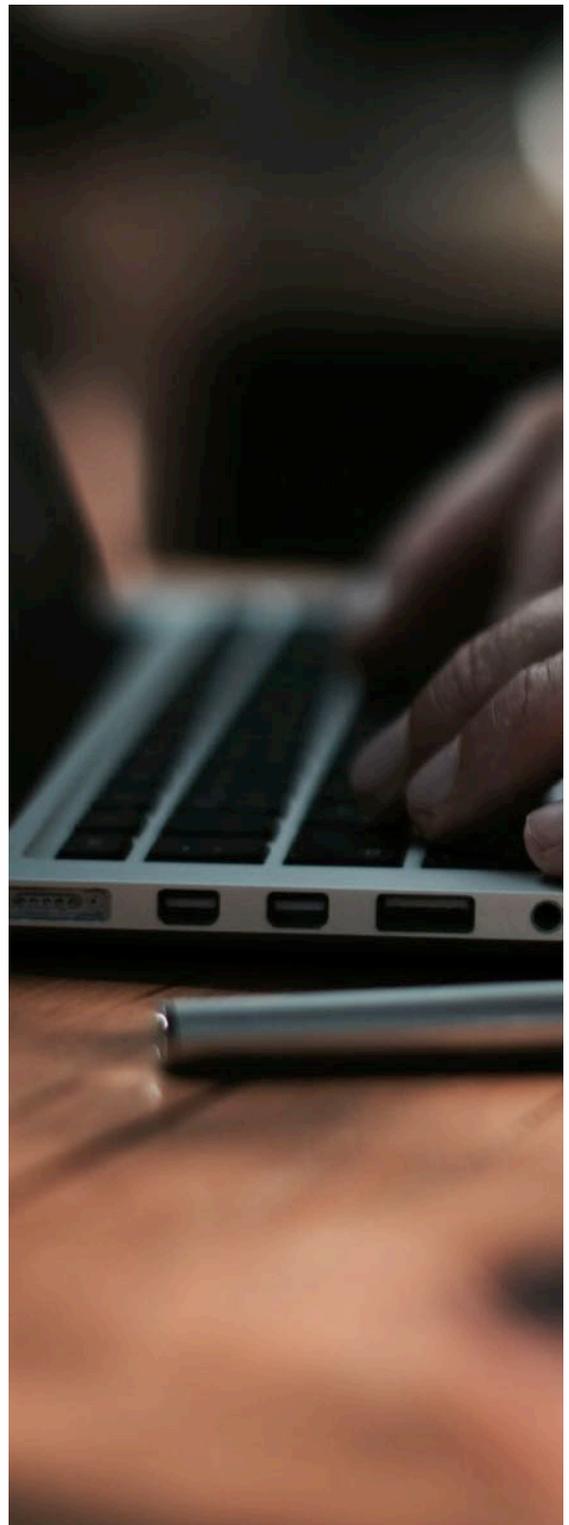
Like an outdoor cinema, this platform is designed simply for the delivery of your course material...nothing else. Best for: those who are already setup with 3rd party CRM, page-building and payment solutions. Worst for: Fiddly...getting all the solutions "talking" to each other.

3. **MULTI-FUNCTION** (all in 1)

Like a Multiplex Cinema. This platform isn't just a place for your course content...it also can handle other stuff such as affiliates/page-building/CRM and more. Best for: simplicity, speed and integration. Worst for: higher cost and design limitations.

4. **MARKETPLACE**

This is a platform that is to courses, what Amazon is to books. Like a "Netflix" for courses. Best for: exposure to existing course buyers and showcasing. Worst for: low-earnings, rules and data-sharing.



WHICH ONE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

As I know you're quickly seeing, there's no one "right" or "best" platform. It's thinking like this that actually keeps people paralysed by choice, constantly comparing, uncertain, and overwhelmed to the point of inaction.

The ONLY answer to "Which one is right for me?" is...

...IT DEPENDS!

It depends on your criteria.

Get clear on your criteria and decision making can be done quickly and effectively.

Picking your platform is a process of elimination that you go through with every new course you create..so now I'm going to guide you through this process right now with three super-easy questions...in less than a minute you'll know exactly which type of platform to go for :)

1. Exposure vs. Money

Is this course *mainly* about getting exposure and building a following or mainly about making money?

(I know it's both, but which is the greater?)

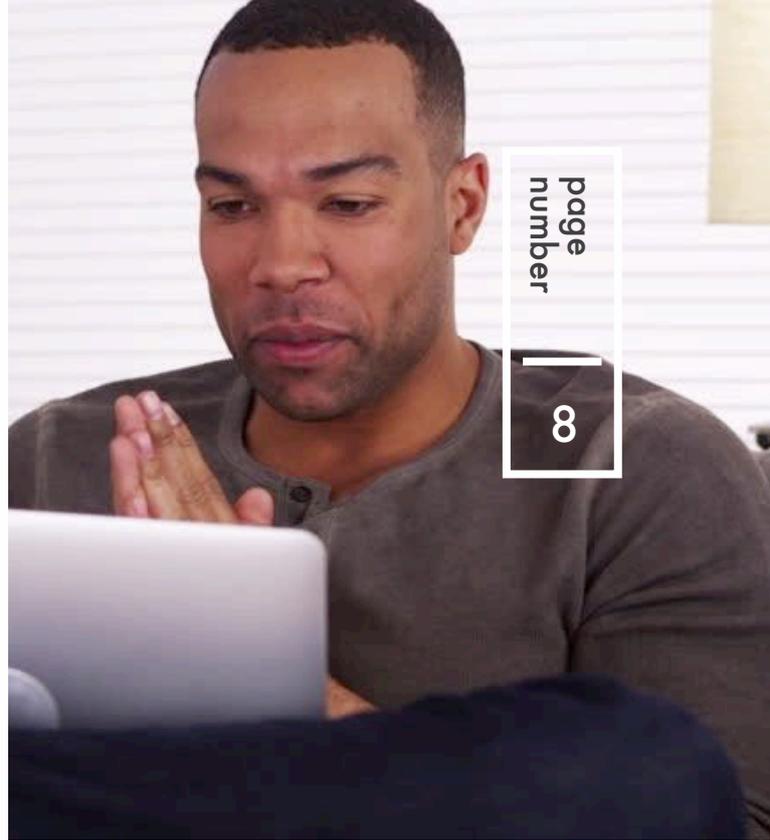
If you answered "Exposure" then choose a MARKETPLACE platform, if not, move on to question 2.

2. Keep vs. Start Over

Do you have a bunch of existing systems such as page-builders, email marketing software, CRM, Affiliate management etc, that you intend to keep or are you ready to start over with many or all of them?

If you answered "Start Over" then choose a MULTI-FUNCTION (all in 1) platform. If not, move on to question 3...

NEARLY THERE...



3. **DIY vs. Done for you**

Do you want to pay a conservative one-off fee and set it all up and do it yourself, or are you happy to invest monthly and have much or all of the setup done for you?

If you answered "DIY" then choose a **SELF-HOSTED (theme/plugin)** platform.

If you answered "Done for you" choose a **SOLO (standalone)** platform.

That's it... you now know exactly which type of platform to choose. You just streamlined your decision-making massively, which means you can get started so much sooner, and with much greater certainty!

Next it's time to turn to the appropriate page in the directory for your platform type and follow the instructions to select the right platform for YOU and YOUR COURSE.

DIRECTORY

AN (ALMOST) COMPLETE
CATALOGUE OF ONLINE COURSE
PLATFORMS ORGANISED INTO
THEIR VARIOUS TYPES.

(Accurate as of September 2017)

IMPORTANT: HOW TO USE THIS DIRECTORY.

Now you know which type of platform you need, scroll to the appropriate section of the Directory for your type to select the one for you.

WARNING! DO NOT GET CAUGHT UP IN BROWSING PLATFORMS FROM OTHER TYPES, YOU'LL GET DISTRACTED AND START DOUBTING YOUR CRITERIA.

You'll be presented with multiple choices for your type, and this is where in my experience it's best to put logic aside and TRUST YOUR GUT. You've used your HEAD to select type... it's time to use your gut to select the specific platform.

Here's how.

Check out the websites of each of the platforms for your type. Often they'll have a video or explainer section that will tell you what the platform has got for you. If you revert to logic at this point you'll get caught in "comparisonitis"... It's difficult for many people... but, if you trust your gut you'll quickly find that one platform will "speak" to you more or feel better than the others. Don't justify why... trust yourself.

I've seen time and time again that this is the most effective method. If you find yourself second guessing and worrying if you've made the right choice... stop it! The key is not to let the process drag on... take a maximum of 5 minutes (time yourself) to check out each platform in your type, then go with the one that feels right.

But wait! Now it's time for the HEAD to come back into play :)

Rather than just jumping straight into bed with your new platform... where available take the TRIAL of the platform (almost all offer a 30-day trial or money-back guarantee period) or register as a trainer/tutor/educator for the appropriate platform so you can get inside and start creating!

That's it, you're good to go... just remember there's no one best platform... only the one that's best for YOU. Above all have fun, this is the start of an exciting journey for you and your customers!

SELF-HOSTED

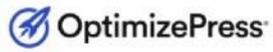
digitalaccesspass.com

The screenshot shows the homepage of Digital Access Pass. At the top left is the logo "Digital Access PASS". The navigation menu includes: HOME, PRICING, FEATURES, BLOG, TESTIMONIALS, SUPPORT, DOCUMENTATION, CONTACT US, and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. A "Members" link is visible in the top right. The main content area features a large heading: "LOOKING FOR A WordPress Membership Platform". Below this, it says "That Does More Than Just Protect Content & Can Automate Your Entire Online Business?". To the right is a video player with a play button and the text "Ok, so you wanna start a Membership Site...". Below the video, the text reads "Better Software. Better Support. DAP (It's Just Better!)". At the bottom, a dark banner contains the text: "DAP Offers You End-to-End, Total Membership Site Automation Payment Processing, Content Delivery, Email Marketing - In one Single Tool" and a blue button labeled "Get Started Now!".

wishlistmember.com

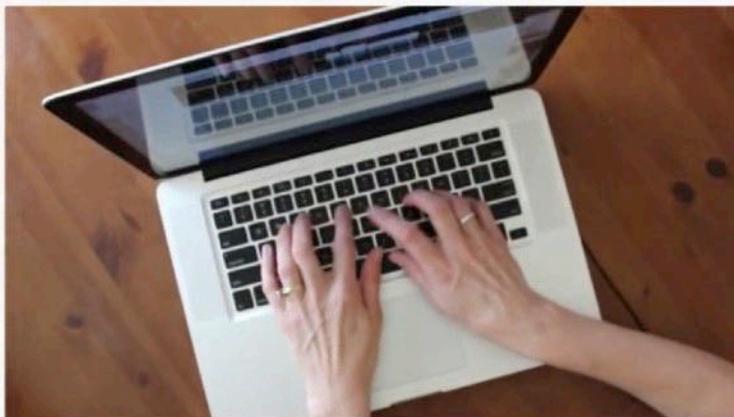
The screenshot shows the homepage of WishList Member. The navigation menu includes: Home, About, Features, Showcase, Reviews, Training Videos, Pricing Options (highlighted in yellow), and Support. The main heading is "Quickly Protect Your Content With WishList Member™" followed by the subtext "Trusted by over 82,297 membership sites and online communities.". In the center is a large graphic with the "WishList MEMBER" logo, where "WishList" is in large black letters and "MEMBER" is in smaller blue letters below it. A YouTube icon is visible in the bottom right of the graphic. At the bottom of the page, it says "30-Day Money Back Guarantee & NO Monthly Fees" and a yellow button labeled "GET STARTED TODAY".

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	\$199 per month	\$299 per month	\$449 per month
Setup Fee	\$0	\$0	\$0
Storage Space	10 GB	20 GB	50 GB
Custom Domain	✓	✓	✓
Integrated LMS	✓	✓	✓
Number of Courses	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Number of Students	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited

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Select Your Standard Plan: <input type="text"/>	Select Your Preferred Plan: <input type="text"/>	Select Your Premium Plan: <input type="text"/>
Sign Up	Sign Up	Sign Up
Features: Sell Courses Your Logo and Branding Unlimited Courses 10GB Storage	Standard Package and... Reporting Page Locking Course Bundles Form Maker 25GB Storage	Preferred Package and... Custom URL Surveys Admin Training 50GB Storage

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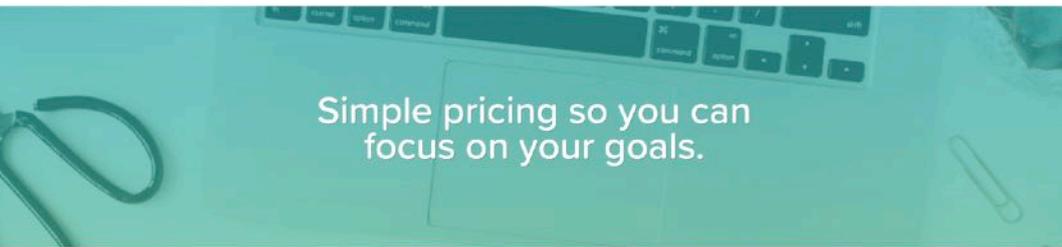
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Virtual Classroom Mobile app Vanity URL Co-branded web app 10 GB storage	Everything in the Plus plan and 1 course author Create, run and sell online courses Tests with multiple choice question Assignments Discussion forum Conditional access Certificate of completion Integrated payment gateway 25 GB storage	Everything in the Pro plan and 5 course authors Custom domain 2 hours of personalized training 50 GB storage	Everything in the Premium plan and Custom course authors Organizational hierarchy and groups Single sign-on Tests with 10 question types Bulk data upload Advanced reports Custom mobile app Custom payment gateway Premium data API Custom stylesheets Custom SMTP Dedicated onboarding and customer success manager

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 monthly yearly?

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eCommerce Pricing

Pay service fees in one of 3 currencies:
British Pounds, Euros, or US Dollars

GBP	EUR	USD
£18 / mo	€25 / mo	\$25 / mo
Deliver a course as low as £6.00	Deliver a course as low as €8.00	Deliver a course as low as \$8.00
Schedule Demo	Schedule Demo	Schedule Demo

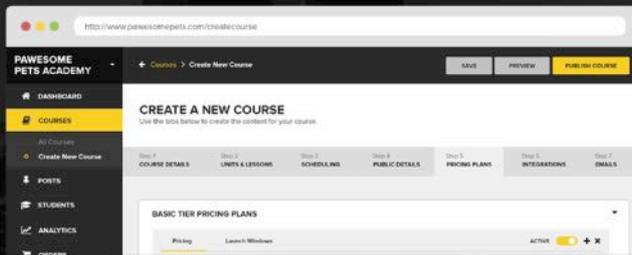
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MULTI-FUNCTION

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Get started	Get started	Get started	Get started
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kartra.com



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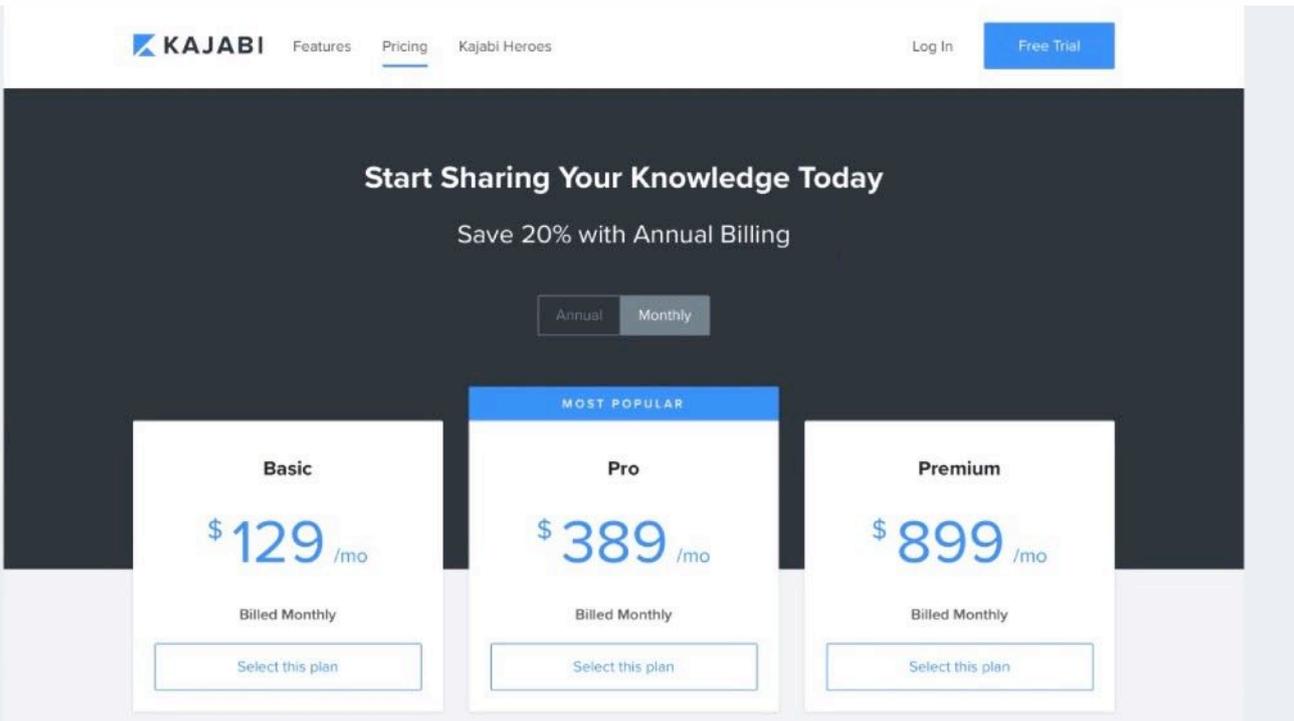
Host videos & webinars, plus tag users as they engage



Customer Management

Contact history, emails they've opened, products purchased

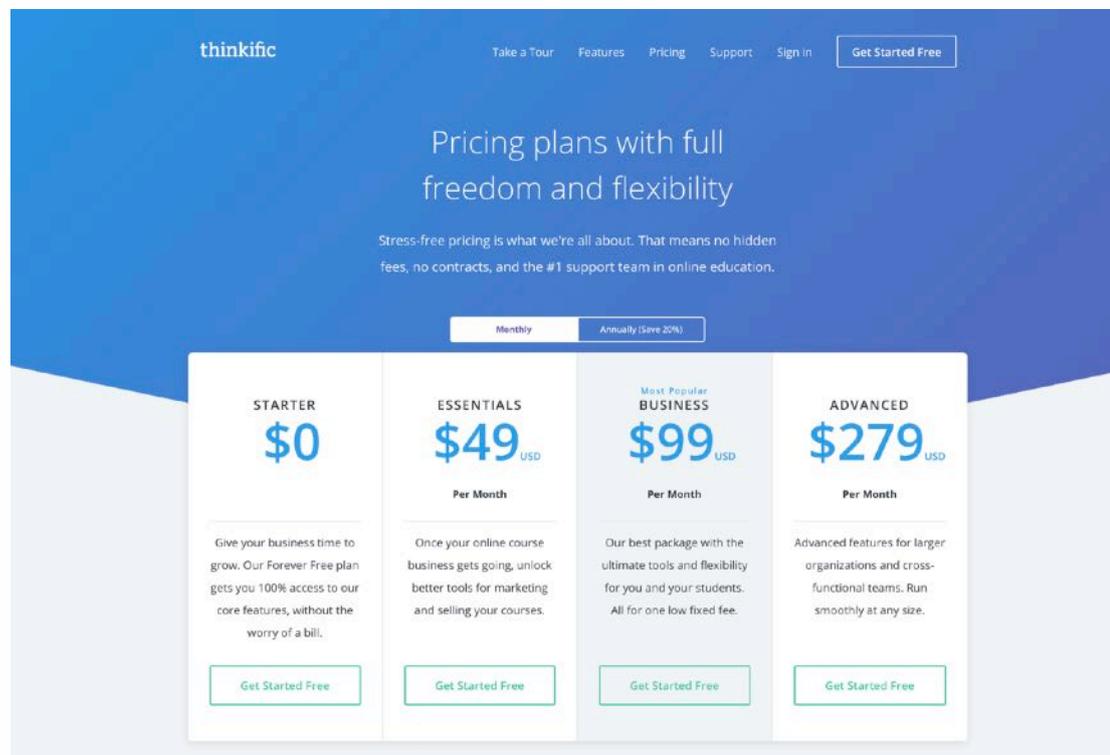
kajabi.com



The screenshot shows the Kajabi pricing page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Kajabi logo, links for Features, Pricing, and Kajabi Heroes, a Log In button, and a prominent Free Trial button. The main heading is "Start Sharing Your Knowledge Today" with a sub-heading "Save 20% with Annual Billing". Below this, there are two tabs: "Annual" and "Monthly". Three pricing plans are displayed: Basic (\$129/mo), Pro (\$389/mo), and Premium (\$899/mo). The Pro plan is highlighted as "MOST POPULAR". Each plan includes a "Select this plan" button.

Plan	Price /mo	Billed Monthly	Action
Basic	\$129	Billed Monthly	Select this plan
Pro (Most Popular)	\$389	Billed Monthly	Select this plan
Premium	\$899	Billed Monthly	Select this plan

thinkific.com



The screenshot shows the Thinkific pricing page. The navigation bar includes the Thinkific logo, links for Take a Tour, Features, Pricing, Support, and Sign In, and a Get Started Free button. The main heading is "Pricing plans with full freedom and flexibility". Below this, a sub-heading states "Stress-free pricing is what we're all about. That means no hidden fees, no contracts, and the #1 support team in online education." There are two tabs: "Monthly" and "Annually (Save 20%)". Four pricing plans are displayed: Starter (\$0), Essentials (\$49 USD), Most Popular Business (\$99 USD), and Advanced (\$279 USD). Each plan includes a "Get Started Free" button.

Plan	Price /mo	Billed Monthly	Action
STARTER	\$0	Billed Monthly	Get Started Free
ESSENTIALS	\$49 USD	Billed Monthly	Get Started Free
Most Popular BUSINESS	\$99 USD	Billed Monthly	Get Started Free
ADVANCED	\$279 USD	Billed Monthly	Get Started Free

A man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a suit and tie, is looking at a laptop. A woman with curly hair, wearing a white blouse and a necklace, is also looking at the laptop. They are sitting at a wooden table in a modern office setting. The word "MARKETPLACE" is overlaid in a white box in the center of the image.

MARKETPLACE

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From Our Teachers [See All](#)



Earn Money
"Teaching on Skillshare provides a passive income stream, and that's the holy grail for someone in my shoes."
Brian Chernoff, 18,000 students



Launch Your Career
"It's enabled me to support my family as a freelancer... I never thought I'd be able to work from home like this."
Jake Berrett, 20,000 students



Give Back
"The most rewarding part is witnessing other people embracing their creativity. Being a part of that process with them is such a gift."
Rita Sheron, 7,000 students

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Monthly plans Annual plans

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per month

Choose this plan

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- Monthly payouts
- 2 owners/authors
- Product support
- Custom domain support

Professional

Our most popular plan

\$99

per month

Choose this plan

Professional includes
Everything in Basic, plus:

- No transaction fees
- Instant payouts
- 5 owners/authors
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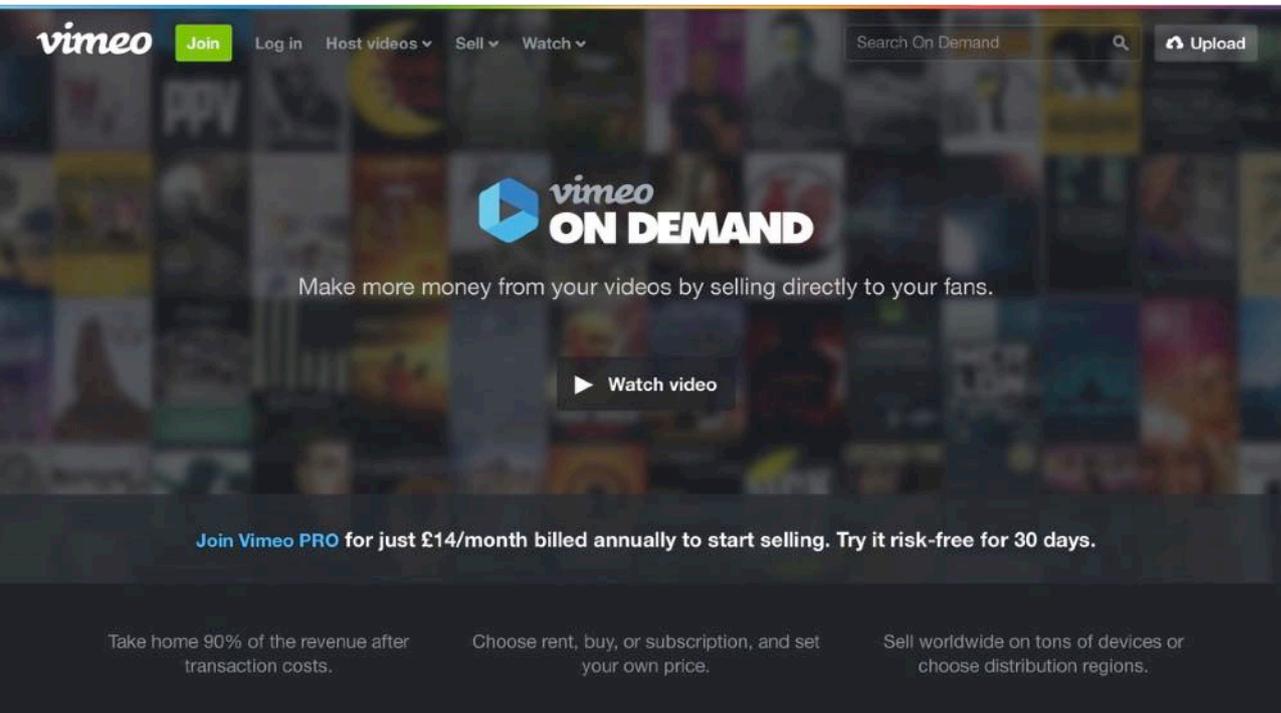
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Freedom Engineering™ will give you the Master-steps to create a client-focussed, culture-driven, cash-rich "boutique" venture that is lean, portable, flexible and fun...PLUS, you will claim back that all important resource...TIME!

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- How to create scaleable digital products and online educational assets that you create once and which give you cash for years.
- How to lead and engage a raving fan base who listen to you, love you and want to buy everything you create.
- How to REALLY free yourself from trading your time (your life!) for an hourly or daily fee.
- How to surpass industrial-age thinking and open yourself to easily serving the demand of a global virtual marketplace. (aka: how to think like a techie millennial on amphetamines...even if you're over 40 and afraid of anything with an on/off switch!)
- How to do all of the above without compromising your family, love, health, happiness...or SANITY!

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