ACROSS THE TABLE

BUSINESS CONSULTING

INDUSTRY STACK 19 · TRAINING / EDUCATION

The Training and Education Stack

Nine systems for building, selling and delivering courses — in the industry where AI can now make the content and the teacher.

Knowledge Article I19

AI Stack Series · acrossthetable.biz

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WHO THIS IS FOR

You teach. Online courses, corporate training, certification programs, coaching cohorts, workshops. Your product is knowledge arranged so somebody else can use it.

This guide is for the course creator or training business deciding how much of the production to automate, and where automating it would quietly destroy what people are paying for.

That tension runs through the whole guide. It is worth sitting with.

START WITH THE WORK, NOT WITH THE APPS

These are not twenty lists of AI apps. Each stack starts with the jobs a particular business performs, then matches AI and conventional software to those jobs. Treat it as a menu to evaluate, not a shopping list.

For this kind of business the work runs in one line, start to finish:

> **THE PATH THE WORK TAKES**
> Student → Enrollment → Learning → Assessment → Retention

Broken into the steps a customer actually moves through:

- Prospect
- Enrollment
- Course
- AI-assisted learning
- Assessment
- Completion
- Next program

Read that line left to right. Somebody is interested, they enroll, they learn, they are assessed, and they either complete and come back for the next thing or they drift away.

Completion is the number that matters and almost nobody manages it. Low completion means low word of mouth, low repeat purchase and refund requests. The money in education is in the second program, which only sells to people who finished the first.

THE STACK, PIECE BY PIECE

Every tool below is matched to one of those steps. You do not need all of them, and you should not buy all of them at once. Read the “What it is” column first and find the step where your business is losing the most time or money.

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Tool	The step it covers	What it is	Price
Thinkific	Courses	Host and sell online courses on your own site.	Free tier; per month by plan.
Teachable	Alternative course platform	Course hosting, payments and student management.	Per month by plan.
Zoom	Live instruction	Video meetings, webinars and recordings.	Free tier; per user/month.
ChatGPT / Claude	Curriculum assistance	OpenAI’s general assistant — writing, analysis, research and, with Agent mode, multi-step work.	Free tier; paid plans per user/month.
Canva	Course visuals	Design everything else — decks, social posts, flyers, simple video — with AI help built in.	Free tier; Pro per user/month.
HeyGen / Synthesia	Training video	AI presenters and avatars that speak your script in many languages.	Paid per month by video minutes. / Paid per seat/month.
ElevenLabs	Narration	Realistic AI voice generation and cloning in many languages.	Free tier; paid per month by characters.
HubSpot	Student CRM	Customer records, marketing, sales and service in one platform.	Free CRM; paid hubs per month.
Stripe	Payment	Online payments, subscriptions and payouts.	Percentage per transaction.

Where two names share a row with a slash between them, they do the same job and you pick one, not both. The description shows the first of the two.

The first two rows are alternatives — pick one course platform. The video and voice rows are production tools you may never need, depending on what you teach.

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What to watch out for in each one

None of these are reasons not to buy. They are the things owners tell us they wish they had known first.

- Thinkific — Marketing is still on you.
- Teachable — Transaction fees on lower plans.
- Zoom — Recording consent, again.
- ChatGPT — It sounds confident when it’s wrong. Check anything that touches money, law or a customer.
- Claude — Same rule as any assistant: verify facts and never paste data you wouldn’t email.
- Canva — Easy to drift off-brand. Lock a brand kit.
- HeyGen — Disclose synthetic presenters. Get consent for any real likeness.
- Synthesia — Heavier process, heavier price.
- ElevenLabs — Voice cloning needs explicit consent.
- HubSpot — Costs step up sharply by tier and contact count.
- Stripe — Per-transaction fees. Watch disputes.

WHERE AI ACTUALLY FITS IN THIS BUSINESS

Curriculum development, quizzes, student support, content personalization, course summaries, instructional media.

In plain terms, that means:

- Building the curriculum outline and the assessment questions from material you already have.
- Producing the course workbook, the summaries and the handouts that otherwise never get finished.
- Answering routine student questions so instructor time goes to the hard ones.
- Translating or re-recording a module for a different audience without filming again.
- Reading where students drop out and telling you which module is losing them.

Here is the uncomfortable question for this industry. If your course is information that a student could now ask a chatbot for directly, the course is under pressure. What survives is what AI cannot give them: a cohort, accountability, feedback on their own work, a credential that means something, and your judgment about their specific situation. Build toward those.

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WHAT TO SET UP FIRST

Do these in order. Finish one before you start the next. Most owners who try to do all of it in one month end up using none of it.

1. **Pick one course platform and keep enrollment simple** Every extra step between interest and enrollment costs you students.
2. **Measure completion by module** Before improving anything, find out where people stop. It is almost never where you expect.
3. **Fix the drop-off point** Usually that means breaking up a module, adding a checkpoint, or replacing a long video with something a person can do.
4. **Add support that is not you** Routine questions answered automatically, hard ones escalated. This is what lets a course scale past your own calendar.
5. **Then add production tools** AI video, narration and translation open up new audiences. They are leverage on a course that already works, not a way to fix one that does not.

WHAT IT COSTS TO START

Course platforms charge a monthly fee, and some also take a percentage of sales. At volume the percentage model costs far more than it looks like it will — do the arithmetic at your expected revenue, not your current one.

Payment processing is a percentage of every enrollment.

Video and voice production tools are per month or by minutes generated. These are the ones to add last, because high production value does not rescue a course with a content or structure problem.

The price column in the table above tells you how each one charges — per user, per location, per contact, or a percentage of every sale — not what you will pay. That is deliberate. The charging model is what decides whether a tool stays affordable as you grow, and it is the part that does not change every quarter. Get the current dollar figure from the vendor’s own pricing page before you budget.

THE RULES UNDERNEATH ALL OF IT

Legal · Privacy · Data protection · Security · Compliance · Records · Audit · Risk · Human oversight — underneath every one of the twenty stacks, not an afterthought.

If you issue certifications or credentials, understand what you are claiming they mean. Misrepresenting accreditation is a serious matter.

Student records, particularly for minors or in formal education settings, carry privacy obligations that are stricter than ordinary customer data.

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Disclose AI-generated instructors or narration. A synthetic presenter that students believe is a real teacher is a trust problem you cannot recover from.

You need the rights to everything in your course — images, music, clips, quotes. AI-generated material is not automatically free of claims.

Refund terms must be clear and honored. Education has high refund expectations and consumer protection rules frequently apply.

MISTAKES THAT COST THE MOST

- Measuring enrollments and ignoring completions.
- Producing hours of video because it feels like value, when shorter and more practical teaches better.
- Using an AI presenter without telling students.
- Selling information a chatbot can supply, instead of the feedback and accountability it cannot.
- Choosing a platform on revenue share without modeling what that costs at scale.

THE CEO DECISION

- What is your completion rate, by module?
- What are students actually buying — the information, or the structure and feedback around it?
- How many students buy a second program from you?
- What percentage of your revenue does your platform take, and at what volume does that get painful?
- If a student asked an AI assistant your course's core question, what would still be missing?

YOUR QUICK REVIEW

- ☐ I know completion rate by module.
- ☐ Enrollment takes as few steps as possible.
- ☐ Routine student questions are handled without me.
- ☐ Any AI-generated instructor or narration is disclosed.
- ☐ I have rights to every asset in the course.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Tool	Where to find it	What it is for
Thinkific	www.thinkific.com	Turning expertise into a product you sell.
Teachable	teachable.com	Creators selling training directly.
Zoom	zoom.us	Client calls your meeting AI can join.
ChatGPT / Claude	chatgpt.com / claude.ai	Your default thinking partner when you want one tool that does most jobs well.
Canva	www.canva.com	Small teams with no designer who still need consistent-looking work.
HeyGen / Synthesia	www.heygen.com / www.synthesia.io	Training, onboarding and updates you don’t want to film every time.
ElevenLabs	elevenlabs.io	Narration, IVR, audio versions of written content.
HubSpot	www.hubspot.com	Small businesses that want one system of record.
Stripe	stripe.com	Getting paid online without a merchant-account project.
Across the Table AI Assessment	acrossthetable.biz/#assessment	Fifteen minutes. Tells you which job to start with before you buy anything.
The Scaling Edge	acrossthetablebiz.substack.com	Weekly newsletter for owners without a business background.

Go deeper on the pieces

Each of these is a full guide comparing the three tools that do that job:

- Ask and reason — acrossthetable.biz/knowledge-articles/ask-and-reason/ (covers ChatGPT, Claude)
- Put you on video — acrossthetable.biz/knowledge-articles/put-you-on-video/ (covers HeyGen, Synthesia)
- Make the deck — acrossthetable.biz/knowledge-articles/make-the-deck/ (covers Canva)

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- Fill the pipeline — acrossthetable.biz/knowledge-articles/fill-the-pipeline/ (covers HubSpot)
- Give it a voice — acrossthetable.biz/knowledge-articles/give-it-a-voice/ (covers ElevenLabs)

CONTINUE LEARNING

The Across the Table AI Assessment takes fifteen minutes and starts from the work the business performs.

The guides above compare the individual tools for each job.

READ AND CONNECT WITH ACROSS THE TABLE

Across the Table website: https://acrossthetable.biz

The Scaling Edge newsletter: https://acrossthetablebiz.substack.com

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@AcrossTheTableConnie

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/connie-jacobo-ramirez

Questions: info@acrossthetable.biz · 480-582-4716

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101 N First Ave, Suite 2325-1495, Phoenix, AZ 85003

info@acrossthetable.biz · 480-582-4716 · acrossthetable.biz