



Professional Booksellers School

2026 Profitability Master Class



Erin Matthews, Dean
erin@thelastwordbookstore.com

Course Description

This Profitability Master Class offers students the opportunity to analyze their business from three perspectives: improving income, decreasing expenses, and improving margin. Designed as part instruction and part workshop, students will learn best practices from both instructors and other attendees and then have time to start implementing those changes through coworking sessions with subject matter experts. It prioritizes sustainable incremental changes over large and/or expensive changes to the business model. All bookstore models are welcome, and the class is geared toward owners and managers of stores with at least twelve months of sales data.

Course Components

- 8 live online classes spread across eleven weeks
- Each class will consist of lecture, Q&A, and guided workshop time
- Twice-weekly course emails with links, recordings, and homework
- Weekly office hours with instructors
- Discussions, co-work room, and chat via Discord
- Weekly homework assignments using each store's individual data and processes

Course Requirements

The Profitability Master Class is designed for brick-and-mortar, pop-up, mobile, and hybrid bookstore models; it is not appropriate for online-only stores or resellers. Students must:

- Be a decision-maker in their store (generally, an owner or manager)
- Have access to at least twelve months of sales and expense data

Further, these are suggested, though not strictly required:

- Direct access to the store's point of sale system and ability to run reports

- Basic familiarity with spreadsheets such as Excel or Google Sheets
- Accounts with at least 1-2 publishers and 1 distributor
- Authority to communicate with suppliers (e.g. publishers, credit card processors, utility companies, etc) on the business' behalf
- Access to ABACUS

Project Work

This master class is designed to be a workshop. Each week topics will explore ways to cut costs or increase margins, followed by “study hall” time to apply these ideas directly to your own business. The work you’ll be producing are your own reports and plans, which you can share with the group and/or with the instructors in class discussions or in the Discord server. The “homework” is the work you do to improve your store!

Course Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, you will have learned how to:

- Take advantage of the most common underutilized income opportunities in the book industry
- Run and analyze reports and expenses
- Analyze inefficiencies and/or opportunities to decrease expenses
- Optimize regular buying patterns to take advantage of the best discounts available to them
- Recognize opportunities to increase profitability through a combination of increased sales and decreased costs
- Calculate your “break even” number
- Identify areas of expenses with potential for improvement through a combination of report analysis and comparison to ABACUS
- Treat ABACUS like your employee, not your boss
- Negotiate with suppliers for better rates
- Understand and apply Terry Pratchett’s Boots Theory
- Optimize returns (from the financial, not operational, perspective)
- Make conscious decisions about buying direct vs from distributors
- Find budgeting and financial strategies that work for you



2026 Profitability Master Class Schedule

Classes are Mondays, 12:00 pm ET / 11:00 am CT / 9:00 am PT



Class 01 / March 23 - Introduction to Profitability Terms, Tools & Resources

Class 02 / March 30 - Increasing Income Part One: Passive Income, Inventory Mix, Increasing Impulse Sales

Class 03 / April 6 - Decreasing Expenses Part One: Calculating Your Break Even Number, Negotiating Rates and Discounts

Class 04 / April 13 - Improving Margins Part One: Returns, Ordering Direct

No class April 20 or 27

Class 05 / May 4 - Increasing Income Part Two: Review of Strategies, Novel Income Streams

Class 06 / May 11 - Decreasing Expenses Part Two: Review of Strategies, Bulk/Pre-Pay Accounts, Outsourcing, Profit First

Class 07 / May 18 - Improving Margins Part Two: Review of Strategies, Using Promos, Co-op, Diversifying Inventory

No class May 25

Class 08 / June 1 - Review/Reflect: What's Working?, Creating and Planning for Long-Term Goals, Building Safety Nets

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Behaviors that violate this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive verbal comments related to any protected category above
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Unwelcome propositions, attention, words, or conduct of a sexual nature
- Unwelcome virtual contact inside or outside of PBS settings
- Inappropriate or obscene jokes, remarks, or gestures
- Intimidation, stalking, or trolling
- Disrespect towards difference of opinion
- Sustained disruption of speakers, conversations, classes, or events
- Unauthorized screenshots, photography, or audio or video recording

PBS expects all participants in its programs to follow established rules throughout official classes, office hours, virtual platforms, and related social gatherings.

PBS takes any violation of this policy seriously. Accordingly, participants who violate this policy may, in the judgment and discretion of PBS, be asked to stop; may be expelled from a PBS class or event, without refund if applicable; may be prevented from attending future PBS classes or events; may be banned from virtual platforms; and may have future PBS participation privileges revoked.

If you are being harassed, observe someone else being harassed, or have concerns about potential violations of this policy, please notify PBS staff immediately. PBS will take all appropriate action in response to protect anyone affected by violations of this policy.

Privacy Statement

For Stores

PBS asks for both public (address, etc) and private (square footage, POS, sales levels) information from stores who are members. We ask for this private information to help us understand and support students. The only public-facing information, in our website directory, is the store's name, address, contact information, and regional trade association. PBS uses both private and public information to analyze the effectiveness of our courses and our school, but reports only aggregate data. All other store information is protected and available only to PBS staff. Stores that use promo codes shared by Regional Trade Associations will be included on our reports to those Regionals, including which staff members took courses or classes and which were certified.

For Individuals

PBS asks for both public (bookstore, job title) and private (home address, demographic, years of experience) information from individuals who are members. The only public-facing information is the student's name, bookstore, job title, and earned certifications. PBS uses both private and public information to analyze the effectiveness of our courses and our school, but reports only aggregate data. All other information is protected and available only to PBS. Regional trade associations that support PBS and provide promo codes and/or reimbursement to their members receive lists of students enrolled/finishing/certifying in our courses receive a list with student names, bookstores, certification status, and emails.

For Homework

We recognize that homework can contain personal or sensitive information. Student homework assignments are uploaded into formats available only to the individual student, PBS staff, and instructors, with the exception of projects delivered live in class. These projects are announced well in advance and student presentations are never recorded. All student homework for PBS is owned by the student, not PBS or the student's employer, and is confidential and protected. *All shared, spoken, shown, submitted, and typed*

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