

The 5-Minute Guide to Starting a Membership Site

- SPECIAL REPORT -

Introduction

A membership site is in many ways the 'ideal business model'. This is the perfect balance between a recurring, stable income and the freedom that you get from any passive model.

Because you're earning money from a blog that's largely built, you'll be able to carry on generating revenue while you're sleeping or while you're relaxing in the Bahamas. But at the same time, you don't have the risk that comes from earning money from advertising or affiliate sales. There's no element of luck: once someone has signed up to become a member you can largely count on that solid income being there every month (though in all likelihood it will continue to grow!).

Better yet is that you don't even need to manage this site in many cases. In the full ebook, we discuss some ways that you can build membership sites that literally take care of themselves. For now though, suffice to say that you can take the money you've earned from your subscriptions and simply pay a team of writers to keep generating content. And if you create enough of a movement and enough excitement around your blog, then you can potentially even recruit your members as forum administrators or even content contributors.

It's the ideal solution and the best way to start making money online. There's just one problem: it's incredibly difficult.

Membership Sites: The Challenges

The big problem here is that a membership site is always going to be a 'tough sell'. In other words, it can be somewhat hard to convince people that they should sign up for a membership site and this basically boils down to one simple fact: you are charging people a recurring fee in order to get content; which they are used to getting completely for free from 99.99% of every other website they've ever visited.

There's another challenge too: getting people to pay for something that is intangible and that doesn't necessarily offer *immediate* benefit. How do you convince your visitors to put down money for something so abstract as 'membership' to 'digital content'.

Of course there are lots of ways – which is how so many big membership sites manage to succeed. And that's precisely what we'll be discussing here...

The Psychology: Why do People Join Membership Sites

One of the first ways you get a membership site to be an appealing prospect is to understand the psychology that drives to the sale: because this psychology is somewhat different from the psychology that drives conventional sales.

Understand that the key appeal of a membership site is right in the name: *membership*. People love feeling like they're a part of something and they love community. When someone signs up to become a member of a site, they are expressing their interest in the niche and showing their support for your brand. At the same time, they're also joining a community in many cases and thereby getting the opportunity to meet and discuss with like minded people.

And on top of all that, they get to feel privileged and exclusive. As soon as you create a part of your website that is off limits – especially if it's social in nature – people will wonder what is behind there and they will want to gain the status necessary to get access. People always want what they can't have and this is especially true if they know that others *do* have it.

This all works especially well though if you can make it appear as though your existing members are part of a privileged and exclusive group. Talk about the things that go on inside the members' areas occasionally and even consider giving a collective pronoun to your fans. If you have a website called 'Max Strength' then perhaps your subscribers are 'The

Maximizers’. Think about this too in the language you use whenever you are promoting the membership.

Note though that all of this will work best if you have some kind of *movement* behind your brand rather than just a topic. Make this something that people believe in, that they can get behind and that they can adopt as part of their personality. That means putting some kind of philosophy behind your offering and perhaps even tapping into an existing counterculture of some sort. When you do this, you will find people get much more committed and engaged with your brand and that will make them want to become members – if only so that they can display this membership as a part of their personality.

This is why the ‘Hashtag Nomads’ membership site works so well. Being a ‘digital nomad’ means being a pioneer and it means rejecting certain societal norms. People are proud to promote the idea that they travel and that they’re entrepreneurially spirited – and this can be enough to convince some people to sign up!

Tiers and Pricing

Even if you make your membership seem like the most exciting thing in the world though, you’re still going to struggle to get people interested in some cases. They’re still ultimately paying for access to content and this can still be a tough sell.

One option is to lower your price and thereby make it a more reasonable deal. *The Times* is a paper in the UK that charges for access to content but it only charges £12 for 12 weeks – which is the equivalent of around \$18. This is so cheap that many people won’t begrudge the site the money and won’t experience too much ‘buyers’ guilt’ when considering signing up. This should be your objective in many cases: remove the guilt that people feel by spending that much money.

But when you lower your price, you suddenly make your membership that much less exclusive and thereby that much less exciting. If *anyone* can become a member, then it’s not really that interesting!

What's more, is that charging such a low price means that you'll miss out on all the people who might *otherwise* have been willing to pay more. This is why it can be a good idea to introduce tiers in your membership program and different levels. For example, you might have a 'basic membership' that costs \$2 a month and provides access to everything in your site and a 'premium membership' that costs \$20 and gives your members all kinds of exciting privileges: perhaps even the option to become part owners of the site (which Longecity does) or to get one-to-one consultation from you as the creator.

This way you can maximize the amount of sign ups you get while *still* offering that advanced level of membership that allows you to charge top dollar.

You can mimic this idea in other ways too: for example by changing the payment structure. For example, you can offer people to pay monthly, quarterly, yearly or for a 'lifetime membership'. This works well because it *feels* like less of a commitment to pay monthly, meaning you'll attract all those people who don't want to spend a lot of money.

Likewise though, you'll still have the option for people who want to get the best deal and who are happy to spend the money. And if you *can* get people to pay for their lifetime's membership upfront then this will benefit you greatly: this way you can make sure that you get the full amount and that your member doesn't leave after a few months. Likewise, it means you have better cash flow and can elect to invest that money if you want to in marketing or in hiring new writers.

Finally though, having options and tiers also benefits you in one more way: it allows you to more easily get your visitors to transition from one level to another. In other words, it's easier to convince a non-member to become a member and *then* to become a premium member, than it is to try and get them to sign up for premium membership right away.

Imagine being asked to sign up for a website that costs \$10 a month – it would have to be pretty special for you to even consider that! But now imagine you *already* pay \$6 for a basic membership and you're being asked to increase that to \$10 for considerably more benefits. That's just a \$4 increase which really won't feel like much compared to what you're already paying. Psychologically, this is a much smaller hurdle. That's why

allowing your visitors to increase their spend with you incrementally is a much better strategy than trying to sell to them with the most expensive option straight out of the gate.

Free Trials

One more important trick you should use is the ‘free trial’. This is something that *most* membership sites offer in some capacity and it’s very valuable as it allows your visitors to sample what they would be getting if they paid and also allows for it to become something they are used to and that they rely on – and hopefully they’ll pay to keep it.

Often this principle is demonstrated with the idea of a puppy. It is said that the best way to sell a puppy is to let an owner take it home for one week – and once they’ve done that they won’t be able to part with it! In this case your blog is that puppy: but you have to make sure it’s just as hard to part with.

And on top of all of this, you can also consider using ‘inertia selling’. That means changing the membership from free to paid automatically unless the member intervenes: thereby making it easier for them to pay the full amount than it is for them to leave.

Offering a Compelling Package

All of this will help you a great deal when it comes to creating your membership site and making it sound like a fantastic offer. By having different levels of membership, pricing it smartly and focussing on the community aspect, you’ll find it’s much easier to convince people to sign up.

But this is all missing the point: really the *best* way to get someone to sign up is simply to make sure that you are offering fantastic value. That means creating a compelling blog but it also means adding extra content and extra benefits on top of that.

For example, on top of content you can also offer things like video, live seminars, tests, online calculators, apps and podcasts. Instead of just blog posts, consider adding ezines and ebooks. You can *even* consider including free tangible gifts such as promotional t-shirts for your members. Or how about entering them into a contest every month?

The more value you can pack in and the more different things that your visitors receive, the easier it will be to convince more people that this is a good investment and to thereby see your numbers start to climb. The question to ask yourself to begin with is always: would *you* buy this? Would you pay for membership to this site, or do you think it would need something more to convince you?

Note as well that it's not just about attracting subscribers in the first place – it's also about retention. One tool you can use to retain as many subscribers as possible is 'over delivering' which means offering more value than you even mention in any sales text.

In the ebook we look at many tools you can use to increase your offering and at some easy ways you can start adding additional elements to your package. We also examine in detail some of the most popular membership sites currently doing business and deconstruct exactly how they are convincing members to sign up and marketing themselves.

You'll learn the basics of creating a new membership site including all the tools necessary and you'll learn how to market it and manage it. Learn all that and more by checking out the ebook.

And until then, consider implementing these pricing strategies and sales approaches in order to make your membership sites more compelling and to convert more people into high-paying members that will stick with you for a long time.

TOP RECOMMENDED GUIDE:

The Step-By-Step Course On How To Start Your Very Own Recurring Membership Site And Get Paid Month After Month



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