

MEMBERSHIP SITE *Continuity*



CREATING WEALTH WITH
RECURRING REVENUE

Membership Site Continuity

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Introduction

Virtually every Internet marketer who wants to make money online is looking for a sustainable income to replace his/her 9-5 job. The challenge is that, unless you keep creating new products and/or promoting other people's products as an affiliate, the income dries up and runs out after each launch or promotion. Virtually no Internet marketer wants to work 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, just to make a decent living online. So, what's the answer to this dilemma?

The answer is membership sites. The reason why membership sites provide an answer to the aforementioned dilemma is because most membership sites run on a subscription basis. This means that customers will pay a monthly or annual membership fee to access the contents and/or resources of that site in order to be able to keep using it. So long as they remain a member of that site, they will continue to pay the monthly or annual fee, and they will continue to gain access to the contents and/or resources of that site.

This is a key reason why many Internet marketers look to create membership sites as part of their product offers. Instead of having to create products over and over again, they just need to host and update the membership site with relevant, quality information on their specific industry or topic. If they continue to do that, they will likely keep recurring paying customers to stay with them, providing them with a consistent online income. This is considerably less work than trying to create a new product from scratch time and time again.

Creating, maintaining, and promoting a membership site may sound overwhelming, but this ebook will help you to learn exactly what you need to do and what tools you will need to create and maintain your own membership site so that you can have a passive, consistent online income.

A Recurring Income Membership Model

As was described in the Introduction, a recurring income membership model is appealing to many Internet marketers because you don't have to create a new product from scratch every time you need to get more cash. While product launches can be quite profitable, it often takes a great deal of time and effort to successfully launch a product. In addition, while successful product launches can bring in a great deal of cash in a relatively short period of time, eventually, even the highest-quality products will experience dwindling sales, and with it, dwindling profits.

This is why recurring income memberships are considered the "dream" for most Internet marketers. Membership sites only need to be built once, not every month or few months as new products need to be. Once the membership site is built, you just need to maintain it and update it with quality, relevant information over time, a task that is much simpler than creating a brand new product from scratch.

To access the membership site, customers need to pay a recurring monthly or annual fee. If they choose to stop paying for access, they lose the contents and/or resources of that site, as they no longer have access to the site. To continue having access to the content and resources within the site, they need to continue paying. This is where Internet marketers can continue getting passive, continuous income without having to create product after product or doing promotion after promotion for other people's products.

Different Types of Products To Sell

When it comes to membership sites, there are several different types of products you can sell. You can sell a content-based membership site, which is a site that has content focused on a specific topic or industry. For instance, you could have a membership site that is focused around Internet marketing. Or, you could have a membership site that is focused on one specific aspect of a topic, such as email marketing or social media marketing. You can make the membership site as subject-specific as you want, but you have to make sure you don't limit the topic too much or you may have trouble trying to keep the membership site updated with new, fresh material for your paying members to use and benefit from.

Such a site would have useful information in it from the very beginning of the site's creation. Over time, more useful information would be added; this is the enticement for people to remain paying members of the site. If they don't remain paying members of the site, they will not get access to new information on the site as it is released, as they will lose access to the site.

Another type of membership site you can create is one focused around software products that help paying members conduct tasks more easily. For instance, you could have a membership site focused on Internet-marketing-related software programs that enable paying members to more easily conduct keyword research, email their lists, curate content to use in articles, blog posts, and ebooks, post to their social media accounts, etc.

Just as with content-based membership sites, there would be some software products available from the very beginning of the site's existence. Over time, more software products would be added. In addition, updated versions of the software programs would be made available to paying members, often with additional features versus older versions. Just as with content-based membership sites, if paying members stop paying for access, they lose access to the site and access to the software programs.

Another example of a membership site is one where articles and other content are presented in the form of articles and/or blog posts that paying members can use as they see fit, often referred to as private label rights (PLR) content. Paying members can continuously access the site and use the content within the terms and conditions that the membership site lays out when the customer pays for access. As with any membership site, if the paying member stops paying for access, he/she loses access to the site and the content within. Thus, he/she can no longer use the content according to the terms of the membership.

The key to any successful membership site is providing continuous value over a long period of time. You must be able to continue providing value in order for paying members to see the value in continuously paying for membership. If the membership site's value and usefulness drop in the eyes of the paying member, he/she will choose to stop paying for access, and, thus, you will have lost that customer, both in terms of the relationship and in terms of the present and future profits he/she would have brought you.

Thus, you must know your target market's wants and needs and be able to supply them with tools, resources, and/or content to fill those wants and needs. You must stay updated on your industry's challenges and problems and be able to find ways to remedy or solve those challenges/problems in order for paying members to remain members of your site.

Pricing Points And One-Dollar Trials

A common issue for many Internet marketers looking to create membership sites is, "what price should I charge for access?" There is no one right answer for this; you must know the target market you are serving, how much they value the content and/or resources you are providing to them, and what competitors are charging for similar sites with comparable content and/or resources.

Additionally, you must consider whether you will only have one level of access for members or more than one. This will determine whether you will charge one or more monthly or annual prices. Of course, the lowest monthly and/or annual price will get the least amount of access to the site and the content and/or resources within, while higher-priced monthly and/or annual prices will get greater amounts of access to the site's content and/or resources.

For example, there are membership sites that provide some Internet marketing products and/or content to members paying the lowest monthly and/or annual price. In some cases, that price could even be free. Oftentimes, this membership level is called "basic" and only allows access to a specific number of products and/or content within the site. In addition, benefits to "basic" members are very limited.

Higher-priced levels are often referred to as "silver," "gold," and "platinum," with each higher level of membership giving the paying customer access to more products and/or content and providing him/her with more benefits (such as getting a higher affiliate commission when promoting membership to the site, etc.).

Pricing for each membership tier will vary, but as mentioned before, the basic membership of a website can be as low as free. In other cases, basic membership is usually no higher than \$9.99/month, since paying members only get limited products, content, and/or benefits to use.

Silver memberships provide members with more products, content, and/or benefits to use; thus, these memberships will often cost between \$19.95-\$29.99/month. Gold memberships provide members with even more products, content, and/or benefits to use; thus, these memberships will often cost between \$29.95-\$49.99/month. Platinum memberships usually provide members with all of the products, content, and/or benefits a membership site has to offer; thus, these memberships will often cost between \$49.95-\$199.99/month. Depending on the value of the products, content, and/or benefits, platinum memberships of some membership sites can even cost more than that stated range, even up to \$495.00-\$999.99/month.

You should also be aware that many membership sites will provide several pricing options for members to choose from for some to all membership levels. The pricing options are usually monthly, annually, and sometimes bi-annually (once every six months). The monthly option costs the cheapest upfront, but actually costs the customer more over the course of six months and one year. Conversely, the bi-annual option will cost more upfront than the monthly option and less than the annual option, but cost less overall than the monthly option and more than the annual option. The annual option costs the most upfront, but also costs the least over the long term.

For example, if you charge \$29.99/month for a Gold-level membership, you could offer the customer the option to pay \$150 for a bi-annual membership and \$270 for an annual membership. If the member chooses to pay monthly for a Gold-level membership, he/she will have spent \$179.94 after six months and \$359.88 after twelve months. Conversely, if he/she opts for the bi-annual membership, he/she will only pay \$150 every six months, \$300 over the course of one year. The cheapest long-term option for the Gold-level member is to pay the annual option of \$270 each year. Giving your members multiple options to pay for memberships will make it more likely they will purchase based on their own budgets.

The key to remember is that you must know your target market's needs and wants and how willing they are to pay for resources, content, and/or benefits that will help to alleviate the challenges and problems they face in their industry to know what prices are the best ones to charge for your membership site. You

should also know what competing sites are charging for similar products, resources, and/or content so that your site is competitive with theirs.

Especially when you are starting out, and especially if you don't have much of a reputation, you may have to charge an equal or even lower monthly or annual price for your membership levels as compared to competing membership sites to convince people to pay for your membership. As you gain more of a reputation for providing quality content, resources, and/or products, you can increase your prices for new members who join your membership site after a specific date.

As a way to encourage more people to join their membership sites, many Internet marketers will provide a trial offer where people can pay a very small amount (usually \$1) to access the membership site for a specified period of time (anywhere from 3 to 7 days). The person can check out the membership site and see what it has to offer and see how much value and use it will be for the person. If the person thinks it will be of use to him/her, he/she can stay and pay the regular monthly or annual fee. If the person doesn't think the site provides enough value to him/her, he/she can cancel by either informing the membership site owner of discontinuing the membership or doing it himself/herself via PayPal or credit card, depending on how he/she made the trial payment.

Again, the key is to provide value. Offering a \$1 trial for a period of 3-7 days will give the new member time to evaluate your membership site and see if it will serve him/her with value; if he/she feels it does, he/she will likely remain a paying member, and your recurring profit will increase. If he/she feels it doesn't, then he/she will cancel the membership, and you will not get any recurring profit from him/her. In return, the former member will no longer have access to the site and its content, resources, and/or benefits.

Membership Site Platforms and Plugins

Now that you know about the benefits a membership site can bring you in terms of recurring profits, it's time to go over a few membership site platforms and plugins you can consider using to create and maintain your membership site.

AMember- One of the most popular and established membership platforms available. It serves non-WordPress websites, though its functionality and styling resemble WordPress. It has the feature of scheduling your content, which means that your content gets released over time; only those who remain subscribed to your site get access to that content when you decide to release it; those that drop their subscriptions before that time don't get access to it.

WishList Member- This is also a well-established membership platform that provides plenty of features, including the ability to only allow specific users to view private content and to allow specific users to register to gain premium features. This membership platform also allows you to integrate it with your WordPress site if you choose to do so.

DigitalAccessPass- This well-established membership platform works for both WordPress-based and non-WordPress-based membership sites. It was reportedly the first membership platform to allow "content dripping," or where you release your content a little bit at a time. It also provides built-in file and download protection of content you only want specific members to have, as well as Amazon SES integration and the ability to process payments via PayPal, Stripe, or credit cards directly.

MemberPress- This WordPress plugin enables you to use content dripping in your membership site, as it provides many features for dripping your content. This plugin also enables you to utilize coupons for members to get discounts and product groups to enable dynamically generated pricing pages (i.e. the prices are updated in real-time). This plugin also enables you to sell digital products securely and accept payments. An additional feature available with this plugin is the ability to pause the membership; if there is a problem with the customer's

payment (such as an invalid credit card, etc.), you can pause access to the membership site for that member until the situation is resolved, then resume access as normal.

Cart66- This WordPress membership plugin is a full ecommerce solution that enables you to sell both products and memberships. This easily enables you to restrict content based on membership level, making it a perfect option if you are offering varying levels of membership. You can also easily set up a recurring billing program, whether it would be monthly, bi-annually, annually, etc. In addition, you can drip your content with this plugin and even send out notification emails whenever new content is added to your site.

WP eMember- This WordPress membership plugin offers many tools, including a fully automated membership system that allows for easy payments, upgrade notifications, and cancellations. You can choose what type of content can be viewed by your customers, including categories, pages, posts, or comments. This plugin also allows you to create unlimited memberships, plus it allows you to see a member's membership level, payment status, and more. This plugin allows for partial content display, which can entice lower-level membership users to upgrade their memberships to see more of your content. It also allows members to bookmark specific pages within your membership site so that they can access them later more easily. Like MemberPress, it also has the ability to pause memberships and then resume them later. The cost for this plugin is just \$59.95, relatively low for a membership site plugin.

These are just a few of the membership site platforms and WordPress plugins to choose from; there are many more options to choose from, but this should give you a good primer on what features you should be looking for when choosing an option to create your membership site.

How To Simplify The End User Experience

In order for the members of your membership site to get the most value from your site, it has to be easy for them to use. Complicating the sign-up process and/or making it difficult to access the content and/or resources within the members area will just upset them and make it more likely that they will cancel their membership, causing you to lose a chance to strengthen the relationship and losing the recurring profits as well.

As was discussed in the last chapter with the various membership site platforms and WordPress plugins, there are many features you can consider adding to your membership site. You want to focus on features that will make the site useful and valuable for your members, but also ensure that it restricts access to areas and content they should not have access to if they haven't subscribed to the proper level for them. In addition, if they don't have permission to access and/or download something, they should not be allowed to do so.

You want to ensure that the platform or plugin you choose allows for easy user authentication that works when they input their username and password, including allowing them to have easy access to the sections and content/resources they should have access to. Members will get frustrated if the membership platform or plugin you're using denies them access to areas and content/resources they should have access to. Members really do not want to have to contact support (i.e. you and/or your support team) every time they want to access a different section of the site. Be sure you test the platform or plug-in thoroughly and familiarize yourself with its features before you promote and sell access to your membership site.

Conversely, you also want to ensure that your chosen membership platform or plugin restricts access to members who are not supposed to have access to specific areas and content/resources. If the platform or plugin doesn't deny access to members who aren't supposed to have access and word gets out that lower-level members are getting access to the same features and benefits as higher-level members, this will likely anger those higher-level members and

cause many of them to cancel their memberships, severely curtailing your recurring income stream.

As discussed in the last chapter, consider utilizing features such as pausing memberships and new content notifications to simplify the user experience. If a member has an issue with a credit card payment, you don't want to have to make him/her order access to your membership site and re-register for your site again because you had to erase his/her access information because of a missed payment. Instead, by pausing access to the membership site, once the missed payment issue has been cleared, you can resume access to the site with the same access information he/she had before the payment issue arose.

Some membership platforms and plugins give you the ability to notify members of new content that has been added to the site; this will make it easier for members to find the latest additions to the site instead of having to hunt for them or guessing when new content is added. It will save them time and effort in using your site, which will likely increase the chances of them staying as paying members.

Some membership platforms and plugins also give you the ability to allow members to bookmark certain areas of the membership site. This can allow them to refer back to content and/or resources they thought would be useful much more easily. Again, this will save them time and effort in utilizing your site, which will make it more likely they'll remain paying members of it for a long time to come.

Get New Members To Join While Focusing On Retention

A challenge that many new membership site owners have to learn to balance is focusing on retention of current membership site members while working on getting new people to join the membership site. After all, if you want to keep growing your recurring income stream and your reputation for providing quality content and/or resources, you have to get new people to sign up to your membership site. However, if you spend so much time focusing on getting new people to join your membership site, you may not spend enough time updating the site to continue providing value to your current members, which could cause them to cancel their memberships, thereby reducing your recurring income and your reputation.

Thus, you must work to strike the proper balance between the two. Keep in mind that you have already convinced current membership site members of the value you provide, so if you continue to provide value to them, they will be more likely to purchase your future product offers and/or higher-level memberships. Conversely, people you are trying to convince to purchase access to your membership site probably are unaware of the quality you provide and must be convinced of it before they will purchase a membership.

Therefore, you should do everything you can to keep your current members happy and willing to pay you, as you have already established a relationship with them. NEVER ignore or overlook your current membership site members and justify it by putting your effort into acquiring new members, as you will never increase your recurring income that way, plus you will gain a reputation for forgetting about members once they have paid you for a while, as if you are taking them for granted.

Certainly, a business will only grow beyond its current size with new customers coming in, so it's understandable and expected that you'll want new members to join your site. But, it's never acceptable to forget about and overlook your current members because they got your business to where it is today in terms of reputation and profitability.

How can you strike a good balance between the two? Consider splitting your work time evenly or slightly in favor of your current members; this way, you will be working toward keeping your current members happy and satisfied while also attempting to expand your business.

Also consider outsourcing some of the research and content and/or resource development to outsourcers while you work to acquire new members. You know your membership site better than virtually anyone, and you know what your business provides, so you can market your business to potential new customers better than anyone. Other people can provide quality products and/or software if they are trained properly; you don't necessarily have to do that. This can free you up to work on acquiring new members to your site while still providing quality and value to your current members.

Also consider using outsourcers to provide quality customer support to current members. If a member has issues accessing a specific part of the membership site or is having an issue with his/her payment, someone else who is trained can likely rectify those issues, giving you more time to work on acquiring new members to your site, thereby increasing your recurring income and your reputation.

General Maintenance And Customer Support

As mentioned in the last chapter and throughout this book, it is key that you provide continuous value to your current membership site members or they will likely cancel their memberships, causing you to lose reputation and income. Thus, you need to ensure their experience with your site continues to be a positive, useful one. This means you need to provide good maintenance of your site and excellent customer support.

Good maintenance of your site means that all sections of your site are functioning properly and that members can easily access the sections they are supposed to be able to access. This also means any downloads they are supposed to be able to download can be done so easily and without interruptions, etc. Any and all video and audio trainings should run smoothly and without interruptions or errors. You need to ensure that this is the case, either via your own efforts, the efforts of your outsourcers in charge of maintaining the site's operation, or a combination of the two.

If you need to shut down access to the site for maintenance purposes, be sure to send out an email, instant message, social media post, and/or audio/video message well in advance to let your members know why access to the site will not be possible and exactly when and for how long access to the site will be offline. Most members will likely be understanding if they are given enough notice and if the maintenance periods are not that frequent. Advise them that if they wish to access any part of the site or wish to download anything to do so beforehand. Be sure to thank them for their understanding and patience, and be sure to alert them via any and all of the aforementioned methods when the site is fully operational again, as well as if any unknown and unexpected issue arises.

Excellent customer service means that members should get immediate replies to their questions and/or concerns. This can be via your own efforts, the efforts of your outsourcers and/or support desk, or a combination of the two. Members should be able to reach you via any or all of the following methods:

Support email address

Contact form within the membership site

Support desk platform (such as ZenDesk.com, Desk.com, etc.)

Social media profiles

Skype

Facebook Live

Etc.

The main point is that if a member has a question or issue, that question or issue must be resolved quickly (within an hour or less if possible). The longer it takes to resolve a question or issue, the more concern and doubt that member will experience, and the more likely it will be that the member will want to cancel his/her membership, thereby reducing your reputation and income.

Keep in mind that prospects interested in your membership site, but that are not ready to purchase a membership or even trial membership offer may have questions as well. Be sure they have a way to contact you as well, possibly at a different email address, social media profile, or other contact method than from members to keep the two groups (prospects and current membership site members) separate.

Conclusion

In this book, you've learned why membership sites are a popular business model for many Internet marketers. You learned how membership sites can provide a recurring income without having to create new product after new product and without having to promote other people's products constantly.

You learned the various types of membership sites that can be created, including those based on content, on software programs, and on products/content where members can use them according to the terms of the membership (such as PLR to create articles, blog posts, ebooks, etc.). You learned about the various pricing levels of membership sites based on the level of content or resources members can access, often referred to as "basic," "silver," "gold," and "platinum." You also learned how one-dollar and low-priced membership trials can allow people to experience your membership site and see if it will provide the value they are looking for before purchasing and committing to your membership site for the long term.

You learned about several membership platforms that you can use to create and maintain your membership site, including those that work with WordPress sites and those that work with HTML sites. You also learned about several WordPress plugins that can give your membership site various useful features, including content dripping ("dripping" out your content a little at a time), notification of new content published to your membership, and membership pausing that enables you to pause and resume access for specific members for any reason.

You learned about the balance that you need to maintain when it comes to serving your current membership site members and attaining new members. You cannot overlook your current members in favor of acquiring new members, as current members already have a relationship with you and know you provide quality. Still, you do need to acquire new members to build your business to greater heights in terms of reputation and profitability, so you cannot ignore the task of adding new members to your site. Providing outsourcers with the ability to maintain your membership site, add content and resources to your site, and

answering questions and issues from current members may enable you to still provide value to your current members while enabling you to recruit new members to your site.

You learned that providing general maintenance and excellent customer support is key to keeping current members happy and satisfied with your site. You need to ensure that your membership site is functioning well at all times, ensuring that members can access the levels and sections of the site they are supposed to be able to and download the resources they are allowed to without any errors of any kind. Utilizing outsourcers and/or support desk platforms like ZenDesk.com and/or Desk.com can help you to provide excellent customer support to any issues or questions your current members have.

Creating and maintaining a valuable membership site is key to creating residual income streams that can enable you to build up your income without having to create product after product and/or promote other people's products repeatedly. This book has shown you what you need to do to create and maintain your own valuable membership site so you can build up your residual income, quit your 9-5 job, and truly enjoy the Internet lifestyle.

Good luck!