

YOUR FIRST MEMBERSHIP SITE

How To Start Your First Membership Site
That Generates Recurring Income



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Introduction



For more than a decade, the Internet has been called “the great equalizer.” Anyone who has access to a computer and a connection to the Internet now has the entire world at their fingertips. It bridges continents and oceans and brings people together. Since the mid-90s, when the Internet became available for use by consumers, websites containing useful information and entertainment have drawn the most views.

The rapid explosion of online presence has also brought about the phenomenon of social networking. Social networking is both advanced and human. It’s advanced because it transmits information at lightning speed and it’s human because it can harness the human potential to connect, communicate, and share.

Many enterprising people have also started sites that require paid membership. These sites contain information that is otherwise inaccessible to others. Discussion forums are another form of network that allows the sharing of ideas and concepts with people who have similar passions and interests.



Despite the popularity of social networks, paid membership sites aren't going away any time soon. In fact, they are expanding at an unprecedented rate with more members-only websites being started. Membership websites capitalize on the fact that people are willing to pay for any information that they find useful, and that by associating and communicating with other people who share their passions, they add to the general wealth of information and knowledge that the Internet plays host.

Membership only sites charge a minimal fee, however, with membership numbers in the hundreds or thousands, they provide a steady stream of revenue for owners, advertisers, and content generators. They have also spawned an entire industry of web developers who look to create the next big thing in content and payments management.

Membership sites offer a distinct advantage over those sites that offer free content. Blog entries and other content are strictly moderated, as well as the interactions between members, which helps to lessen the risk of conflict. Plus, each member feels an exclusivity that is otherwise missing in similar, more open sites.

For owners of membership sites, the advantages can be summarized in two words: Cash Flow. Compared to the brick-and-mortar business, membership websites take relatively little effort to establish and have low overhead, while having almost nonexistent physical limitations. The only thing that they are limited by is the imagination of the owner and the members of the website.

Owners of membership sites will find that every new member brings in not just money, but the possibility of more members coming in due to referrals. This means that the most successful membership websites find ways to constantly re-invent themselves, by introducing new content whenever they feel a change is needed.

To start a successful membership website, you will need to learn how to set up the site, manage the content and membership, and learn how to get revenue from it. The chapters that follow will show you how to do this as well as provide you with tips about how to make people aware that your website exists and how to draw more visitors to it. Finally, you'll learn how to let go of the site in the rare occasion that you feel it has outlived its useful life.

Chapter 1 – Why Membership Sites are So Lucrative



Everything, nowadays, is practically accessible on the Internet. It has replaced printed matter as the first choice for information on just about anything. With a click of the mouse, the entire wealth of human knowledge is at your disposal. Most of all, you can access it from anywhere.

It is for this very reason that membership sites have come into fashion over the last decade. You may be wondering what, exactly a membership site is. Simply put, a membership site is a personal page where you can post exclusive articles, knowledge, and data about a field that strikes your fancy. With the site, you charge members a certain amount to access this exclusive data, and this, in turn, drives profit and sales.

The best part of owning a membership site is that you're the boss, you continually make money, and you get to manage a business that focuses on something that has captured your passion.

Membership sites are extremely lucrative because people will always be willing to pay to get their hands on the information that they need. Rather than visiting the local library or bookstore, they can simply get on the Internet. It's fast and convenient and it is making its way through cyberspace.

Everyone has their own passion, and there are other people who share their obsession. These people are the ones that will be willing to part with their money to know more about the things that they like and love. This is the reason why membership sites rake in the profits.

Membership sites that charge for content have become an exciting industry that continues to grow more profitable every day. If your website has 500 members paying a monthly fee of \$15 each, you will get \$7,500 every month, and that's just for a single membership site.

Since these kinds of sites run on residual income, the money comes in every month as the membership fees come in. This

steady stream of money will continue to grow with every new member that registers. What's more, with each site that you set up, you can add even more income to your growing business.

For example, imagine you are the owner and manager of three membership sites that charge \$20 per member each month. One site has 500 registered members, the second site has 200 registered members, and the third site has 100 registered members. You would make a total of \$16,000 per month, or \$200,000 every year. The nice part of starting and managing a membership site is that you get paid to do what you love.

A lot of people manage more than 10 websites, with membership totals running in the hundreds for each. With 500 members for every site, that are paying \$20 every month, the owner bring in an annual income in excess of one million dollars.

Even if you are just starting out, and your first membership site has just launched, you may not have a huge membership roster yet. However, even with just a few members to start, the residual income will continue to come in. If you are charging \$25 per month for each membership and you only have 50 members to start, you're still making \$1,250 every month, and that's not counting your day job. That is just the income that you get for maintaining a site about the things that you are passionate about. Plus, if you continue to provide updated and value added content to your site, the number of members that you gain will continue to

grow, increasing your monthly residual income. All of this can be done with a single click of the mouse.

Whatever it is that you are planning to do with your membership site, the following tips, tools, and techniques will help you establish your site and make the most of the latest phenomenon of paid membership websites.

Chapter 2 – How Membership Sites Work



Unlike websites that don't charge a fee for its members to access the valuable information contained within, membership sites don't usually accept any advertising. Without the money from advertisers, the bulk of a site's income comes from the members. This is an indication that a successful membership site needs to put its efforts into providing a user experience that each member will enjoy.

When starting your first membership site, you need to figure out how you can develop the skills you need to convince new members to join your online community. There are several ways that you can do this.

Find Ways to Connect with Your Members

One of the primary reasons that people will join a membership site is to build relationships with other people who have similar interests. For example, match-making and dating websites are big business because members share information through their profiles, pictures, forum posts, and other members are able to connect with them, either through comments they leave or through private messages they send. On the other end of the spectrum are jobs database websites where companies and job seekers can reach out to each other and trade their curricula vitae.

To connect with your members, you will need provide them a way to introduce themselves and communicate with the other members of your site. Many of the membership sites on the Internet today provide multiple channels for communications that can appeal to almost any kind of member. Determining the kind of platform you will use for communication on your site will bring you half way to completing the job of connecting with your members.

Let Members Post Content, Moderate, and Enjoy

Membership websites tend to be a bit more expensive to start and maintain as opposed to other types of websites. Establishing a competent system for content management will enable you to better enjoy the many excellent income opportunities available.

The most successful membership sites have learned how to integrate pages upon pages of useful and value added content with user forums that allow the burgeoning membership base to get together online. These forums allow people with similar interests to communicate with each other, share new discoveries, and participate in constructive discussions on matters that are close to their hearts.

In the early stages of your membership site's life, you will need to be the one who starts and suggests topics, and invite your current member list to join in on the discussion. As soon as the conversation heats up, you can afford to be more loose with your participation and become more hands-off in the process.

If your members are already comfortable with contacting and speaking with each other, they will be much more likely to participate in the existing discussions. If you establish a forum section on your website, you will need to moderate the discussions taking place and deal with any so-called "trolls" who like nothing better than to disrupt discussion and make fun of other members. If you have issues with "trolls" it is important that you take care of the problem immediately, and remove them from your site. If they are allowed to continue to disrupt discussions and make fun of your other members, you will begin to see a quick exodus of your membership base.

If You Don't Have Any Activity on Your Membership Site

If you don't have any activity on your membership site, you might as well not have a website at all. If your site fails to keep its membership base, then you will be less likely to be able to draw new people into registering for your services.

Some of the more popular dating websites will offer potential members free weekends, while others will offer free weeks. If you need to offer a free trial membership to attract new members, don't be afraid to do just that. If you want your website to survive and grow, you will need to attract new members. With a free trial, potential new paying members will get to see that your membership website in fact focuses on the user experience, and will allow them to see that the information you are providing will add value to their lives.

How to Sell Your Membership Site for Big Money

Over the last several years, internet marketing has become a booming industry, with a yearly turnover in the millions of dollars. If you are looking to get into the internet marketing business and set up your own membership site, here are a few ways that you can get the money to come in.

Selling One's Own Products

Sometimes, those who have mastered the business of Internet marketing get sick and tired of working at physical businesses and want to just sell their products online. It's not wholly inconceivable that a successful business person with a tried and tested Internet marketing system would be able to introduce products that replicate their success.

In fact, the Internet is populated by those who want to be online marketers, so there is always a market that will jump on anything that promises success on their marketing efforts. There are many options available, such as blogging and WordPress, search engine optimization, pay-per-click, Google AdSense, and others.

As long as the Internet marketing guru is telling the truth about the products that they are trying to sell to new marketers, the smart money is on the person who is selling their own products to ensure that they can keep the money coming in.

Affiliate Marketing

Many of today's Internet marketers owe their initial success to affiliate marketing. As with anyone that is new to the scene, they haven't been around long enough to establish their credibility and develop skills that would distinguish them from amateurs. As a result, they turned to selling third-party products to gain the exposure they need and to learn the ins and outs of the trade.

While they were doing business, they were already building their networks and assembling contact lists that they could use to keep the money coming in. This is the origin of the Internet saying, “This list makes the money.” It is a technique that took several years to develop, but is now being portrayed as a royal road to Internet riches that is easy to master.

The successful Internet marketers continue to use affiliate marketing techniques as their bread and butter. If you consider that their enormous list of new and existing clients is a major selling point to potential partners and joint ventures and can be used to negotiate for discounts and deals for subscribers, affiliate marketing is one of the major ways internet marketing gurus use to make even more money.

Consulting Services

Online marketing is an ever-changing environment that is always eager to try the next big thing. It is also driven by changes in technology, people’s preferences, and shifts in marketing strategies. Those who are successful in Internet marketing claim to be good in these areas, so much that they can earn six-digit figure incomes. However, with all of their skills, they should take the next step to becoming full-time consultants and start earning millions.

It is the need to stay abreast of these changes that drives these consultants to offer their services to businesses who need to navigate the online world. Search engine optimization is one example of this. With every change that Google makes to its search algorithms, many proven ways of getting high search ranks for sites have become almost obsolete overnight. This is one area where a consultant can shift their focus to help them generate unlimited income streams.

Chapter 3 – How to Research for the Right Niche



In planning a business, no matter what that business is, one of the first steps that you have to take is to determine if there is a market for your idea and the target audience that you are going to try to reach.

This may sound like a very simple and easy process, but do you have an actual idea about the product you want to sell and the market you're going to sell it to? Have you considered whether your target market is ready for your product? Is your business plan aligned with what your target clients really want? If you aren't sure about the answers to these questions, then you might need to take a step back and re-think your business plan.

Here are some helpful tips to help you determine what your business can offer, who your target market really is for your product, and how to carve out a niche for your business.



Be Sure About Your Product

While this may sound like the most obvious thing in the world, it is important that deep down you know exactly what you are selling. Take the time to really think this through. You can compare the market to a town with a number of restaurants. Some of them are

selling pizza baked in a wood-fire oven, one might serve fast food, and another might be a successful seafood restaurant with a fine-dining setting. While all of them sell food, they also all have a different target market that has a demand for any of the distinguishing factors that they have to offer. More than the food itself, all of these restaurants sell a combination of brand experience, value, and ambience.

When you are about to start a business, it is imperative that you are sure you know how and why people will want your product. You need to have a clear understanding of what the needs are that your product will fulfil and what unique factors will make you stand out from the competition.

Don't Try to Be Everything to Everyone



One of the biggest mistakes that many new businesses commit when starting their first membership sites is spreading themselves too thin rather than focusing on one specific product. Doing this can negatively affect your business.

You want to put yourself in your customer's shoes. You may often see leaflets and brochures advertising the services of a do-it-all handyman who claims that he is good at a variety of different things, from installing drywall to repairing busted pipes. While that handyman may be able to get a bit of business for all of his efforts, he would be able to earn more money if he focused on

one or two specialties, making a name for himself in those fields, and adjusting his marketing strategy accordingly. This is why it is especially important to strategize so that you can focus the limelight on your business.

Identify Your Market

Another big mistake that new membership site owners often make is starting a site that they believe will be good for everyone. This will do nothing more than lead to disaster. You want to be sure that you have a clear understanding of your market.

The opposite of being a do-it-all handyman is finding one's niche and focusing on the strengths. It is crucial to your business success to carve out a niche for your business. For instance, let's say that you would like to resign from your regular job and take up freelance writing. You are already aware that there is a market for a consistent, reliable, and dependable technical writer, and that people are ready to pay a set amount for that value and quality.

One way you could make a business out of freelance writing is to post your profile and portfolio in an online freelancer website, like many writers end up doing, and hope that a client will choose your profile from among the hundreds, if not thousands of writers like you. However, if you take the time to identify what you are really good at and try to attract clients who will pay top dollar for your

skills and expertise, you will be able to make a name for yourself in your chosen field and start down the road to success.

Adjust Your Marketing Strategy

After you've identified your target audience and narrowed the focus of your niche, you will need to start to send out a message that will reach your audience and one that identifies with that market. This needs to be done while still contributing to the unique identity of your brand. In your messaging, you want to make clear exactly what it is that you can give to your customer, what's unique about your product and how you stand out from the rest, and why they should give your services a try.

Determining Your Primary Content

As you get started setting up your first membership site, you need to determine what content it is that you plan to deliver to your members. Will you provide them with a series of lessons that help to teach a process? Will you provide a service, such as delivering new content to them every month? Or will you provide a reference library of materials that they can consult when they need it? For now, this is a general question to consider, based on what you think your target audience wants in the topic area.

For example, if you want to start a membership site with digital products you can find websites that will provide you with high

quality content on weekly basis. One of them is indigitalworks.com where you can find thousands of ebooks, video courses and other digital products that you can use for your own business.

Developing an Exit Strategy

When it comes to online businesses, this is something that is rarely discussed, but it is critical when you are planning a membership site. Assuming that everything goes well and you are able to build a profitable membership site, you need to consider how long you plan on operating the site. It is important to consider how you will end your membership site. Will you merely stop the delivery of content and cancel all the recurring payments? Will you sell your site to someone else to operate? Will you hire a team to operate it for you?

These decisions will not only impact how you operate the site, but also what you name the site. For example, it will be much harder to sell Your Name's Member Site, to someone that doesn't have the same name.

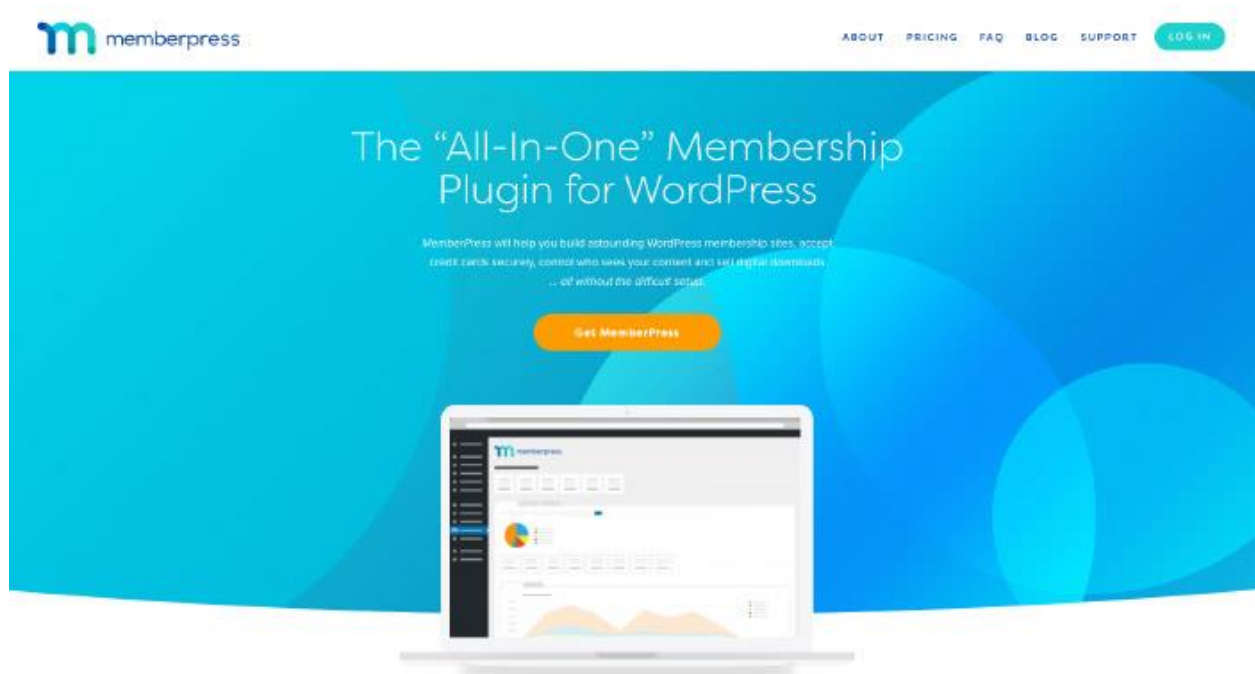
When considering your exit strategy, you want to determine whether or not you plan to end it at a specific date or when it achieves a certain level of profitability. You want to know what will trigger your exit strategy, then shoot for that goal.

Chapter 4 – Top Membership Platforms to Use



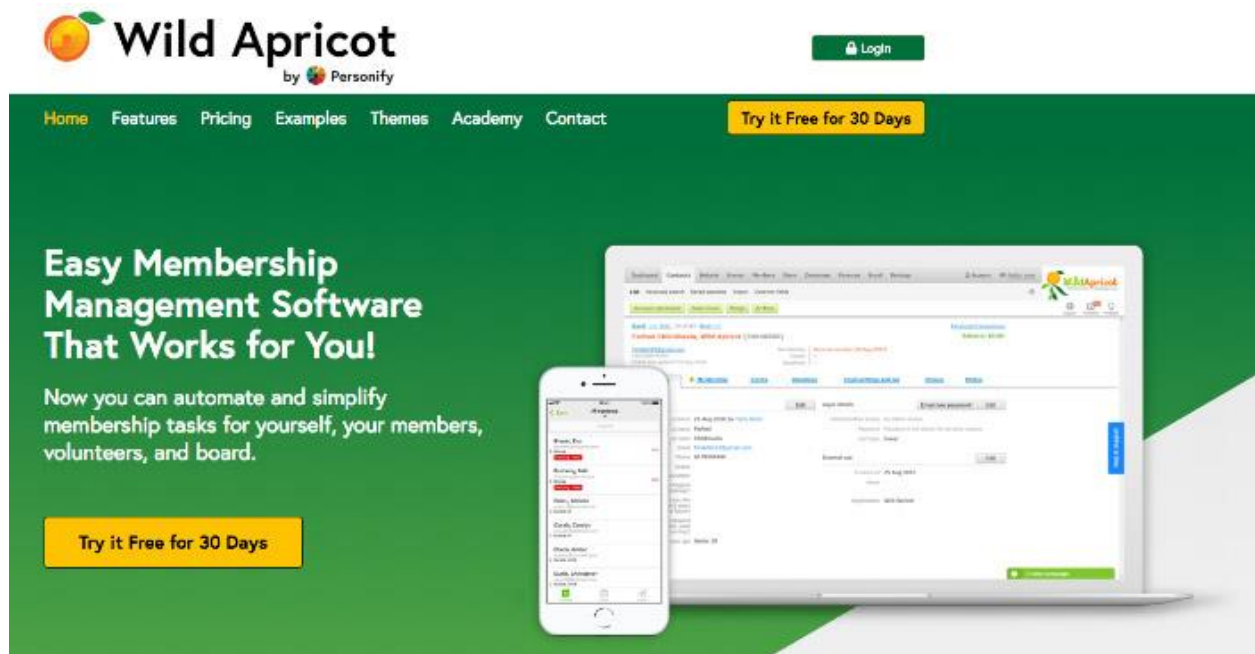
Before you can start setting up your first membership site and determining the payment method that you are going to use, you need to know which membership platform you are going to use. Here are the top membership platforms that can help you build and run your first membership site.

MemberPress



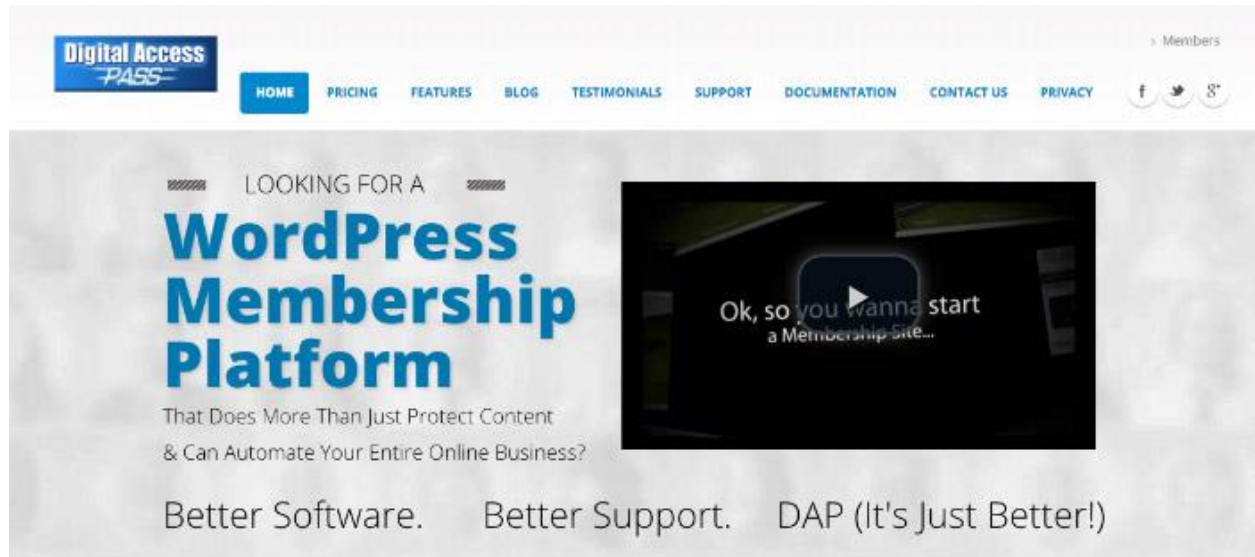
MemberPress (<https://memberpress.com>) is an easy to use membership plugin from WordPress. The powerful software is simple to install on your site and help you to start charging for access instantly. MemberPress lets you create an unlimited number of product pages, membership levels, and has unique features like coupon module, access rules that allow you to create sophisticated membership levels, product groups that will give you an option for creating a large scale membership site. The reports feature will provide you with reports about the latest insight into your business and how you can optimize it.

Wild Apricot



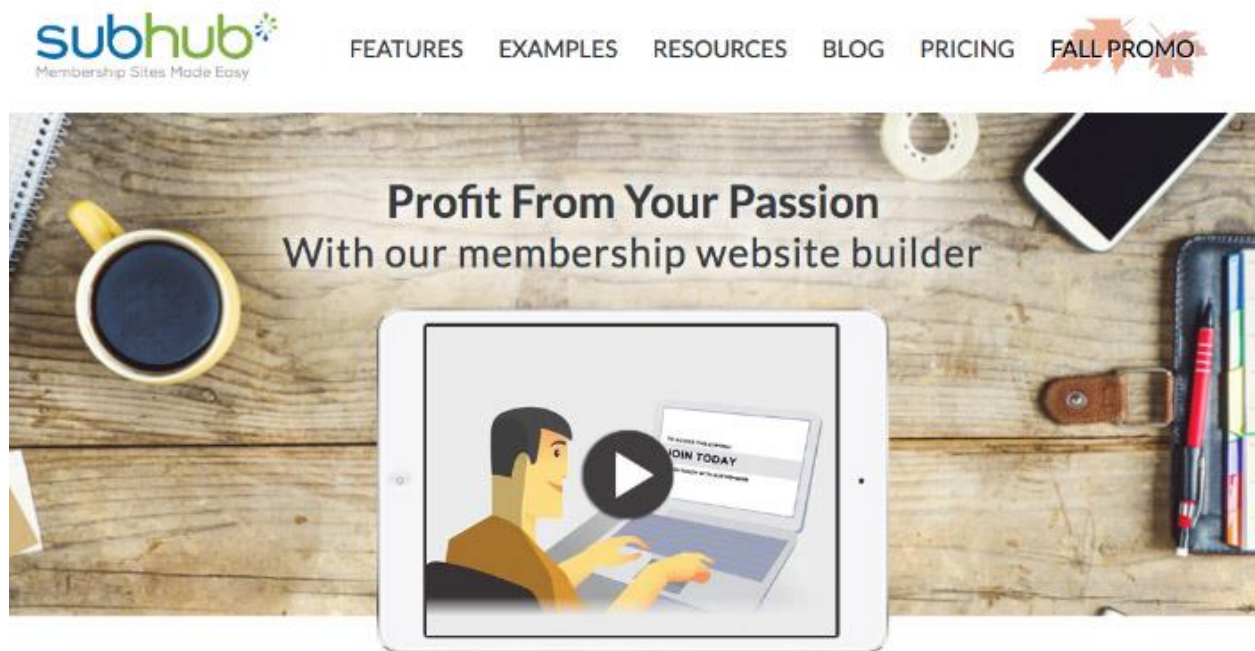
The membership software, Wild Apricot (<https://wildapricot.com>), is extremely popular amongst non-profits, small business hubs, small yacht clubs, and other small-scale organizations that need a easy to use membership management platform that delivers on its promise. Wild Apricot allows you to create a mobile friendly application form on the web, complete with workflow and payments, automatic renewals, and active member self-service features to update information. It also allows you to manage your member and contact records securely while enabling members-only content and membership directories.

DigitalAccessPass



WordPress has become the most sought after blogging platform, and it comes as no surprise that many people want to build their membership site directly around their WordPress installation. WordPress offers its members, by default, a number of different features, however there is still a need to integrate a payment system and other features that make a membership website. The great thing about DigitalAccessPass (<https://digitalaccesspass.com>) is that it will also work for non-WordPress sites.

SubHub



All-in-One Membership Website Builder

SubHub (<https://subhub.com>) has grown in popularity over the years with sites and businesses that want to establish membership features for their premium content, online courses, and other things like research studies and the educational field. It provides features like Pay to View, which have made SubHub popular with users who provide a range of content, but understand that not everyone needs the full subscription to get what they want. This will allow you to attract more customers and sales. They have a variety of desktop and mobile templates to create the kind of membership site that reflects your vision and mission.

WishList Member



This membership site software is known to have broken some barriers in creating a membership site on the fly, instead of having to spend days, or even weeks, to build a site that fully resembles the end goal. You can create any number of subscription models with WishList Member (<https://member.wishlistproducts.com>), as well as give your premium members timely updates from one membership to the next. WishList Member can also be easily integrated into your existing WordPress installation.

aMember

The image shows the aMember Professional website and its dashboard. The website header includes links for HOME, DEMO, SUPPORT, and ORDER, along with a 'Have an account? Log In' link. The main banner for aMember Professional describes it as 'Flexible, user-friendly membership software' and lists features like accepting subscription payments, managing customer profiles, and integrating with various platforms. Below the banner are buttons for 'View a Demo' and 'Explore Features'.

The dashboard screenshot shows a sidebar with navigation links: Dashboard, Users, Reports, Products, Protect Content, Configuration, and Setup/Configuration. The main content area displays 'Last 10 Payments' with a table of transaction details. Other sections include 'Total' revenue, 'New Users (Last 30 Days)', and 'Revenue Report' with a bar chart.

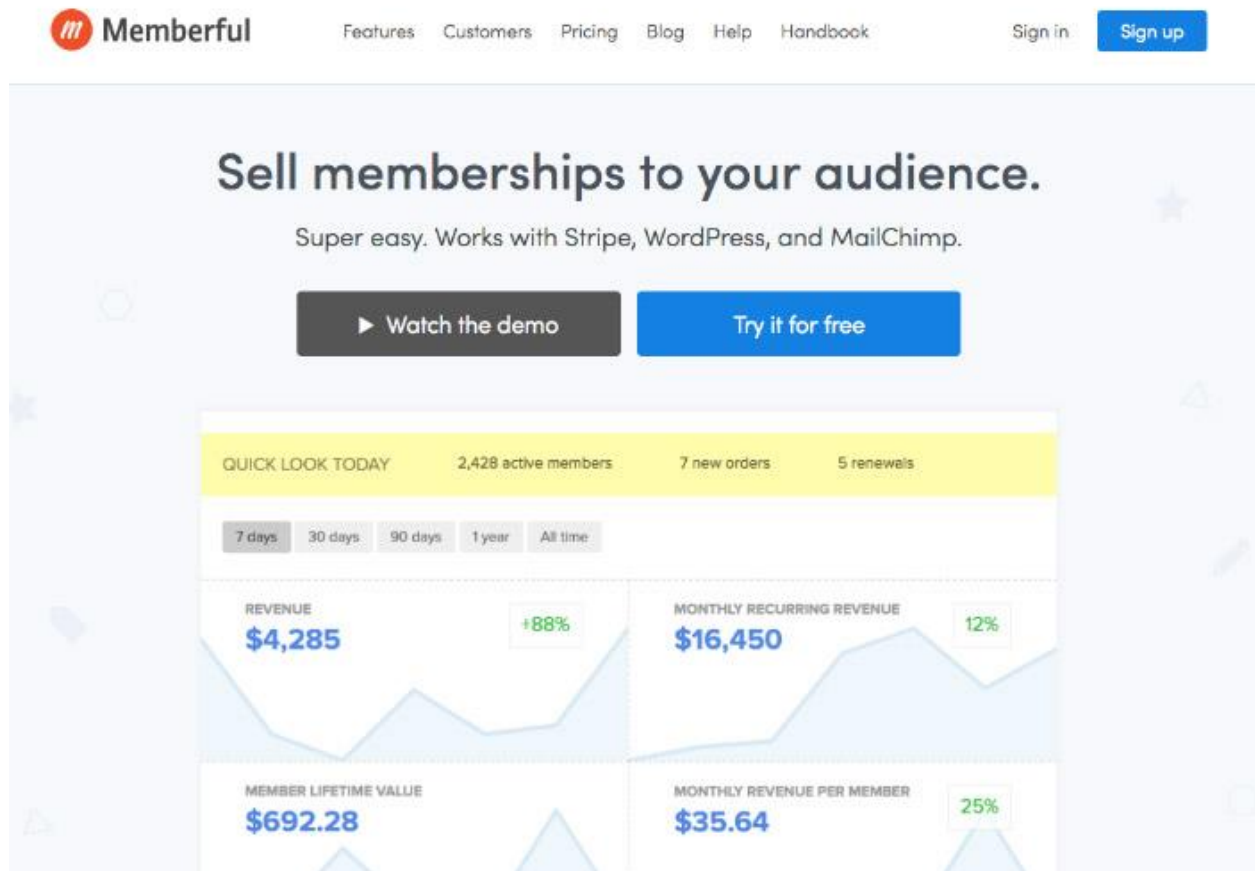
Below the dashboard, a section titled 'Packed full of features' lists several key capabilities:

- Easy web-based administration:** Quick access to the most useful functions, and advanced settings for professionals.
- Numerous payment systems:** PayPal, CCBill, ClickBank, JVZoo, 2Checkout, Stripe, Authorize.Net, and 200+ more.
- Translated into 6 languages:** German, Spanish, French, Greek, Russian and Chinese translations are available.
- Free installation included:** Professionals will install aMember to your website and help you with the first steps.
- Full-featured affiliate module:** Thanks to subscription system integration, you can precisely track recurring commissions.
- Integrated Helpdesk:** This module helps you keep customer requests and responses organized.


Out of all the others in this list, aMember (<https://amember.com>), is perhaps the oldest and most popular membership site platform. It stands out as being an independent membership platform that works much like WordPress in terms of styling and functionality. The most popular feature of the membership platform is its ability to create content. This encourages your members to stay subscribed for longer so they can access content that you have of yet released. Other features include integrated modules that allow you to integrate separate modules to extend your site beyond the normal functionality. The extensive affiliate program that comes

with aMember is attractive enough for people to start promoting your products to their friends and family.

Memberful



Memberful (<https://memberful.com>) is a membership site platform that is easy to use, reliable, fast, and perfect for WordPress users. It is the same platform that experienced bloggers and writers, like Leo Babauta, use to serve their thousands of customers. The platform's high profile users encourage anyone who enjoys simplicity to use Memberful to power their sites. Users of the site




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The powerful turn-key membership platform that sets up in minutes.

TRY IT FREE TODAY: 14-Day Free Trial.

Get Started





MemberMouse™ is an easy to use **WordPress membership plugin** that allows you to sell products, subscriptions and memberships, setup a password protected member's area, offer 1-click upsells and downsells, manage customers, automate customer service, track critical retention metrics and more. No matter where you're starting from, MemberMouse has the power you need to maximize revenue and get your business running like a well-oiled machine.

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These membership platforms are the best around. Take some time to explore each of their sites so you can determine which one will work best for your specific needs.

Chapter 5 – Setting Up Your First Membership Site and Determining Your Payment Method



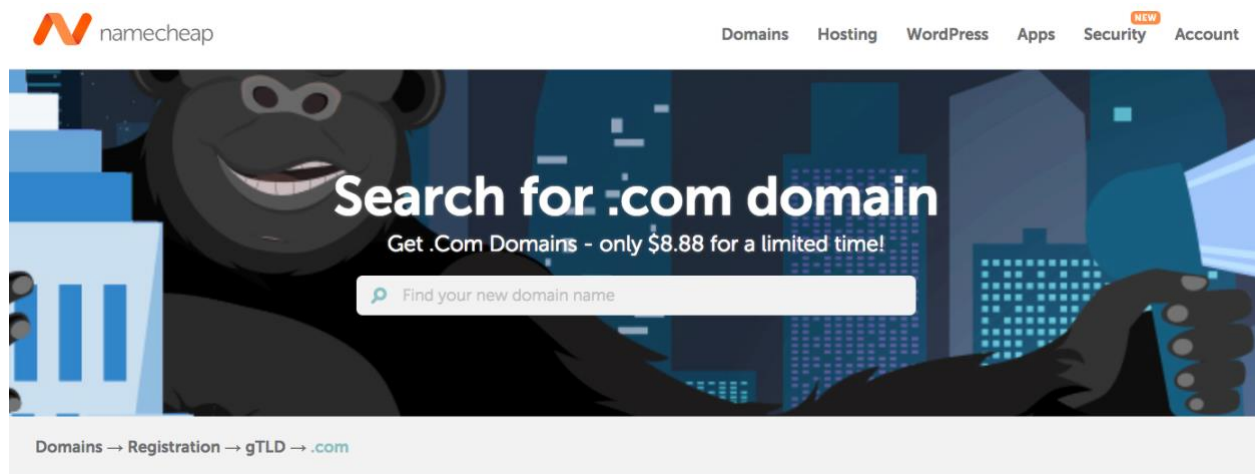
There are many paid and free website creation programs available on the market. One of the most popular and easy to use sites is WordPress. Not only is it a popular content management system, but the website creation software is free. It is the content management system of choice for most internet marketers.

Whether you use WordPress or another site to create your membership site, there are a few steps that you will need to take first, before you can get started with building your site.

Get a Domain Name for Your Membership Site

The first thing that you need to start a membership website is a domain name. This is a fairly easy feat to accomplish and it isn't all that expensive. There are plenty of sites where you can obtain a domain name and it should cost you no more than \$15 for a year.

Namecheap.com price its .com's for just \$8.88 at the current time of writing.



Instantly recognizable, the .com extension is the gold standard for domain names. One of the original and most popular top level domains (TLDs) on the web, a .com domain shows you mean business.

The .com domain extension was created back in 1985 as one of the first six TLDs when the domain name system (DNS) was first implemented. From the beginning, .com was considered a trusted TLD before the Internet as we know it even existed.

The very first website to claim the .com domain name was Symbolics.com, a computer manufacturer. Since then, over 130 million .com domains have been registered, greatly outpacing every other popular TLD.

Start your business online with the gold standard for TLDs. For a limited time, you can get a **.com domain for just \$8.88, with WhoisGuard** privacy protection included FREE for life! You'll also get **two months of Private Email FREE**, plus **PositiveSSL** for just \$1.99.

And as with all Namecheap **domain name purchases**, you'll also get reliable DNS service and 24/7 assistance from our outstanding customer support team.

When it comes to choosing your domain name, you want to register a “.com” name, if possible, because they are generally taken more seriously and are deemed as more international. If you have a global target market, then this is essential.

Also, if possible, you want to try and include a keyword in your domain name that is relevant to your niche. For example, if you are creating a membership site that is related to training cats, then you want to include the keyword ‘cat’ as a part of the domain name.

Once you decide on a name, head to one of the many registration sites and get it registered. If the name you want is already taken, you may have to try some modified variations.

Get Hosting for Your Site

In order to get your membership website up and running, you will need to register for a hosting account. Hosting is also fairly inexpensive and can generally be obtained for \$10 or less per month. There are literally hundreds of companies that you can choose to host your site. There’s BlueHost, GoDaddy, Bitreveal, LiquidWeb and many more.

The most important thing that you need to look for is a company that is reliable because the last thing that you want to have happen is your membership site crashing every other week that results in your receiving emails from angry customers who are unable to access your site.

Once you've set up your hosting account, you will need to setup your domain name on the hosting account. If you don't know how to do this, you can refer to your hosting company for instructions on how to accomplish this.

Get Membership Software

A good membership script or software can make your task of managing your membership site a lot easier. The main benefits that you receive from membership site software are that you will be able to easily:

- Set up multiple membership levels and periods
- Automatically block access to non-members or existing members when their time is up
- Set up drip feeds for your content
- Auto-renew memberships
- Manage members
- Control viewable content
- Easily integrate your payment shopping cart

- Easily integrate with the most popular autoresponder software for building lists

There are plenty of membership software packages as discussed in Chapter Four. Take some time to research the various options and choose the one that has the features you require and in a price range that fits your budget.

Installing Your Membership Site Software

Once you have chosen the membership site software that will best meet your needs, you will need to install it onto your website. Since, membership software varies widely, you'll need to refer to the instructions that are provided with the software.

Installing membership software is usually a pretty easy process. However, if you get stuck, in most cases, you can get support from the creators of the software. If you would rather not do this task yourself, you can always outsource the job to a freelancer.

Once everything has been installed and setup, you need to test that everything is working. You can do this by creating a test account. It is absolutely critical that you test your site prior to launching it so that you can address any issues that your potential members might have in signing up or logging on.

When you have the membership software installed and have insured that it is properly working, then you need to work on putting together your content and payment methods, as well as customizing your site.

Customizing will include adding custom graphics, like your logo, site images, and info graphics. It is critical that your site impresses your members the moment that they first log in. You want them to be amazed at the member's area content to confirm in their mind that joining your site was a good decision for them to make.

Choose Your Payment Method

There are four major types of payment models that you can choose from: free, one-time fee, fixed period recurring, and unlimited recurring. Each has its own unique advantages and disadvantages and is appropriate for one or more kinds of membership sites.

Free Memberships

Free memberships offer several benefits. Generally you will set up a free membership when you want to segregate a group of subscribers from the general public. This is particularly valuable in

a market where there is a lot of email abuse. Those who sign up for the free membership have indicated that they want to take a few steps beyond just being a subscriber. They want to get closer to you.

Free memberships are a good way to reward your better subscribers. You can provide them with free download that others don't receive or ones that they must purchase. You can also offer your free members discounts that you don't give to the general public. In short, it's a way to create a group of super subscribers.

One-Time Fee

A membership with a one-time fee is exactly that, a single payment. It looks like a single payment product. This model is often used to sell a product that allows the customer to access the material for a limited period. Using this membership model, you can turn off access easily at the end of the specified period.

Fixed Period Recurring

A fixed period recurring membership site offers payments over a specified period. This model is appropriate when you are selling high-ticket items, limited term courses, or when you are offering coaching programs over a limited period.

As with any membership site, if something happens after the first month and they decide to discontinue using your site, you will be able to turn off those resources. You want to make sure that you have the ability to turn off access on anything that will be ongoing content. That is the primary reason for using a fixed period recurring payment on your membership site.

This payment model has become more popular in recent years. Members like knowing that there is an end to the payments they are making. You may find this will increase the number of members you can recruit.

Unlimited Recurring

The “traditional” membership site uses the unlimited recurring payment model. This is the payment model that you are most likely thinking of when you see “membership site.” You pay as long as you use the site.

You will typically use an unlimited recurring payment model for services and for sites where you are posting content on a regular basis. This is the kind of recurring revenue that most people think about when they first consider starting a membership site.

With unlimited recurring, there is no end date for the payments. If people are paying on a monthly basis, you don’t say it is a six-

month membership site. Instead, they will continue paying you as long as they want to remain a member.

Chapter 6 – Putting Together Content



One of the first and most important things that you will need for your membership site is a way to manage your content. You might want to consider choosing a basic content management system, like WordPress (<https://wordpress.com>) or Blogger (<https://blogger.com>), if you are planning on showcasing your own content, or something more complex like Socious (<http://www.socious.com/>), with its advanced HTML editor feature. Both kinds of content management systems have their own advantages and disadvantages.

Content Management

Content management primarily focuses on two things: content and protection. You can choose to use either plugins or standalone software for your site. Your content should be composed of images, text, audio, video, or downloadable executable files, or any combination of the five formats. With your membership site, you will need to add content at different times depending on the way you set up your membership site. You'll want to consider each of the following content types, so you can decide what you want to offer to your members.

Initial Content

When your potential members first come to your membership site, they will come across your initial content. Generally, you would make a big deal about what will be there, waiting for them when they login. The initial content can, in some ways, be compared to a sales letter.

If you are selling a completed product, your initial content will be the product itself. If the product is not ready, your initial content may be the bonuses you're offering. If your site has a library of resources, part of them may be visible in the initial content, while additional resources will appear over time.

As an example, your initial content may be five bonus reports or a new member's course they would receive immediately after registering for your site. This will be the initial content they receive when they first come into the membership site, even if they core content is not yet ready.

Permanent Content

Permanent content is what stays on the site. It is usually added over time to the library portion of the site. For example, you may provide a video library with 30 how-to videos. While you may have recorded these over time, once added to the site, they remain there. Early members receive the videos as they are recorded and posted. Later members to your site will find them as part of the permanent content in the site.

Incremental Content

Many membership sites will also have incremental content. The incremental content is added over time and it may or may not disappear. For example, if you are offering a three-month coaching course, you will add content in Month One, Month Two, and Month Three. Each month's content will be different. Generally, you will pre-schedule the content to appear at a particular time.

You may decide to offer your members a bonus of longevity, for those members who remain a paying subscriber for a period of

time. The longer they are a member, the bigger their bonus becomes. These bonuses are delivered at preset times, again pre-scheduled to appear automatically. You can also provide bonuses for all members based on a date. Only those members who are currently active on that day will receive that particular content.

Knowing whether or not you are going to have incremental content is one of the decision you need to think through as you are planning your site. It will impact your choice of membership site software and dictate how to schedule your content.

Rotating Content

Like incremental content, rotating content is turned on at a different time. It is not part of the permanent content for the site. But, unlike the incremental content, rotating content is turned off so that it disappears from the site. Rotating content turns on at a predetermined time, then on a particular date, or after a certain number of days, it's turned off. You can create a schedule that applies to the entire site or on a member-by-member basis.

There are several advantages to rotating content on and off your site. First, you may have to create less content. If the average member stays six to eight months, it would be easy for you to come back next January and turn on the January model you've already created. While it is the same content as January of the

previous year, you may have very few, if any, of the same members.

A second reason for rotating content is to protect your current members' investment. When members have been paying for content as it is developed they will have paid for six months to receive six months of content. If someone new comes in and gets the same content their first month, it seems a bit unfair to those who have been paying for months. However, when you rotate content off of the site, new members do not have access to any more than other members who are paying the same amount every month.

Monthly Content

The other type of content that you may want to consider providing is monthly content. This is the content that you promise your members for each month they belong to the site. It is recommended that you load this content over a full month rather than having it appear all at once. When it appears all at once, you run the risk of it being consumed in a short period of time, leaving your members to wonder why they continue to belong to your site.

With a monthly content plan, you want to provide teasers for upcoming content. For example, you have an audio you upload in Week One, an article in Week Two, a video in Week Three, and another article in Week Four. In Weeks three and four, you are

going to post and email members' updates discussing next month's topic and which audios will be loaded next month.

When you provide attractive teasers, members will tend to stick around because the next month will feature something that they want to know. Providing teasers and updates is important for member retention. Loading content throughout the month encourages members to log in and feel a part of the site more frequently.

Match Content to Your Members

It is essential that you know exactly what you are offering your members, both when planning your site and when writing the sales letter. You don't want to promise something that you can't or don't want to deliver. On the other hand, if you don't provide what they are looking for, they will not join your site.

If they signed up because they want to get videos from you, then you need to give them videos. Maybe they want content about a particular topic, if so you want to answer their questions and provide exactly the content they want. This is one of the reasons you want to do polls, surveys, and generally ask your members what they want.

Content Ideas

When you think about what you can offer in terms of content, there is an unending supply of ideas that you can use. Here are some of the more popular types of content that you can provide your members. Keep in mind that people consume information differently, so plan to provide content in print, audio, and video formats. Not all content needs to be in all formats, but you want to make sure to provide content for each learning style.

Advice

Your members generally join your site because of your knowledge. Provide them with advice on the issues that concern them. It may be in the form of an article, an audio, a video, or a live online event. Regardless of the format, do not hesitate to offer your opinion and perspective on their questions.

Answers

You can do an entire membership site that does nothing but answer people's questions.

Articles

These don't need to be unique to your membership site. Even if you have published them elsewhere, provide relevant articles to your members. Articles don't have to be written by you. It is

perfectly acceptable to have PLR prewritten articles from other authors inside a paid membership site.

Audio Interviews

We learn from other people. That's why people enjoy interviews, both from people who have already achieved a level of success in the niche, as well as from fellow members. If you are in a position to interview well-known figures in your niche, use the interviews as content in your membership site. If you don't have a lot of connections yet, interview your members. You will be pleased with how much they have to share.

Bonuses

Members love bonuses. You can offer bonuses as part of the initial content for the site and you can provide bonuses over time. They can be unannounced bonuses or planned bonuses. The important thing is to offer bonuses from time to time. Your competitors are giving away bonuses all the time.

Case Studies

Like interviews and critiques, case studies provide a way for members to learn from others going through the same proves. The member who is the subject of the case study is usually flattered that they are featured. At the same time, they are getting more attention through your focus on their achievements and

challenges. In a case study you can point to what is working, what is not working and how you might approach it differently.

Instructional Videos

One of the most popular kinds of content is video. If your topic needs instructions on how to use a product, a screen capture video is perfect. If your topic needs a demonstration “in person” you can use a video camera or smart phone camera to capture the task. The important thing is to record it slowly enough that it shows the details that your members need.

Tips

There are things that you do automatically that may not be as easy for your members. Become conscious of these tips and offer them. These are great additions to the site and can be sent out via email, as well as posted on the site. They don’t need to be scheduled in advance, nor do they need to rotate off the site. Over time, they will become part of the permanent content in your membership site.

It all comes down to thinking through your content plan ahead of time. You need to ask yourself, what you are willing to do month after month until you exit the site. This is what you want to commit yourself to. You can always add more content later, but it is much more difficult to withdraw content from your offer after you’ve already had members pay for it.

Chapter 7 – How to Get a High Page Rank For Search Traffic



The page ranking system that Google uses is a bit of a mystery to website owners. In truth, most people have no understanding of its inner workings, and nobody can give a definite answer about how it calculates page rank. There are a few things that you can do, however, that will get your website near the top of the first search page.

Produce Original Content

Whether it's text, audio, video, or downloadable files, original content is the one thing that keeps your viewers coming back for more. Many websites that started out as news aggregators, such as the Huffington Post, are now producing original articles for niche markets like the LGBT and African-American communities.

This might be quite tricky if you have a day job, but there is no harm in planning content in advance and in anticipation of major holidays. You may even drop hints that you are coming out with a particular article on a specified date, this will keep you audience hooked and looking out for your next entry.

Perform SEO

Original content benefits from search engine optimization or SEO, a time-tested way to get those clicks. However, many content writers find this concept difficult and end up stuffing their articles with keywords to the point that nobody understands the article anymore. Your readers want original, engaging content, not an entry that sounds like a hard sell. Your page may end up on Google's first page, but it will be useless if your readers get frustrated after reading it.

WordPress has numerous plugins that you can utilize to help you with SEO. Their SEOPresser will go in and analyze your website and tell you where to place your keywords, what size to use for titles, and even the type of graphics that will affect your page rank. The makers of SEOPresser claim that the plugin uses the same algorithm that Google uses for ranking pages. It is no wonder, therefore, that membership site owners swear by SEOPresser.

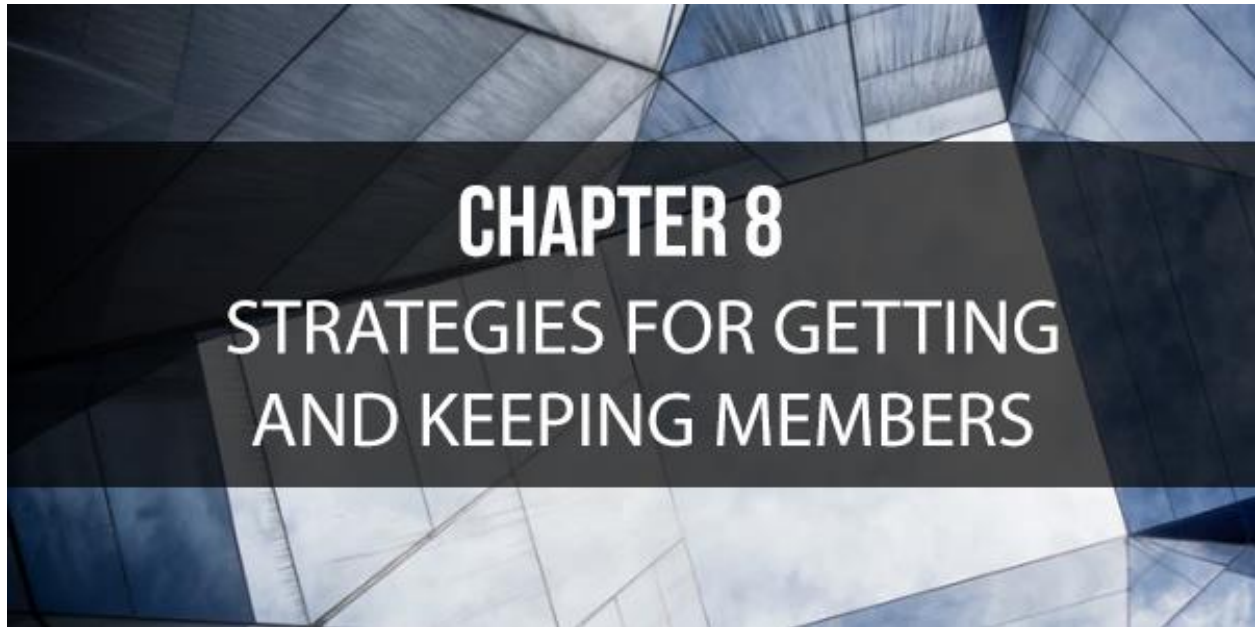
Link Up

Getting inbound links is as easy as posting comments on other websites and leaving your website's URL on the comment. If you have friends who already have their own websites, perhaps you could ask them to allow you to plug your website there. On the other hand, you can start out anonymously and follow certain bloggers and forums that enjoy positive credibility. Leave a few insightful comments here and there, develop a solid relationship with them, and you will see your page rank gradually rise.

However, it is important for you to be a bit picky about where you leave your links. Google doesn't account for the quantity of the links you leave on other sites, but rather looks at the quality of links that you post. Many startup website owners are tempted to take a link wherever they can get it, but it is more important that you post on websites that have some relevance to your passion, and where you are more likely to get curious viewers.

Remember, you have to write for the reader, not for Google. Producing original content is the way to go, and if you have good, original content, readers will be more than willing to come back for more.

Chapter 8 – Strategies for Getting and Keeping Members



You may have the greatest membership site, but if nobody knows it exists, then you aren't going to make any money. To draw potential members to your site, you're going to need to create a sales page to sell and promote your membership site. You need to create a killer sales letter that sells the benefits they will receive when they join your membership site.

To learn how to write a killer sales letter, visit other membership sites and look at theirs. You can also outsource this task to a freelance writer if you want. When hiring a sales letter writer, keep in mind you are paying for the written content of the sales letter and not the graphical design. Graphics can often make or break a sales page. So, it is usually worth it to get a professional graphics

designer to create some professional looking graphics for your site, because if your site looks ‘shady’ or unprofessional in any way, people won’t be jumping in to join.

Generating Traffic

Creating the sales page is half the battle, but once done, you will need to drive traffic to it. This is where traffic generation comes into play. You want the people that visit your membership site to have an interest in the niche that you are promoting.

Getting targeted traffic to your site doesn’t revolve around one particular strategy, but rather uses multiple strategies that when correctly identified, will consistently attract them.

Promote on Social Media

Promote your membership site through your social media networks. Wherever your target audience resides on social media that is where you should be too. So find out where your target market goes, and be there.

Article Marketing

Write original keyword rich articles related to your membership niche that gives basic information designed to make the reader

curious about clicking on your bio. Your bio should contain a link back to your membership sales page. Some of the top marketing directories are:

- Ezine Articles
- ContentXpress
- Article City
- Article Biz

Guest Blogging

Offer to contribute guest blog posts for others who market complementary products to your target audience. Include a compelling bio to be placed either at the beginning or end of each blog. Again, be sure to include a link to your membership site in the bio.

Forum Discussion

Find out what forums your target market participates in, and go participate in them as well. When someone on the forum asks a question that you know the answer to, answer it. Be generous with your help on the forum, and include a link to your sales page in the signature line.

Conduct or Give Interviews

Start your own internet radio show and interview other people who are subject matter experts in your niche or create a show directed at your target market.

You might also want to consider being a guest on others' radio show in which you can plug your website. Becoming a guest on other people's blogs and radio shows is one of the most powerful ways to not only increase your branding, but generate more traffic to your site.

YouTube

YouTube carries significant power when it comes to improving your visibility. Millions of people hang out at YouTube. Create a weekly YouTube video blog that is geared toward your target market that leads viewers to visit your membership site sales page.

How to Keep Your Members

One of the major challenges with running a membership site is getting people to stay on as a member for the long term. For your membership site to be successful, you need to maintain your membership. If you don't want your revenue to decrease then you will need to keep your site interesting so that you members sign in on a regular basis.

Over-Deliver

The number one way to keep your membership base is to over-deliver. You should always be striving to exceed your members' expectations. You can accomplish this by providing them with valuable content that greatly exceeds in value what they are paying for their monthly fee.

One way to over-deliver is to offer special, unannounced bonuses every month that your members can download. Members will appreciate this because you are providing them with even greater value than what they expected.

Tease Upcoming Content

Another popular strategy is to tease people with what is coming up the next month. For example, you can include something along the lines of "Coming up next month . . . " and then add a brief description of the following month's content. The overall goal is to get your members excited about what's coming next and leave them with the feeling that they can't cancel their membership without seeing the upcoming content.

Keep Your Site Enjoyable

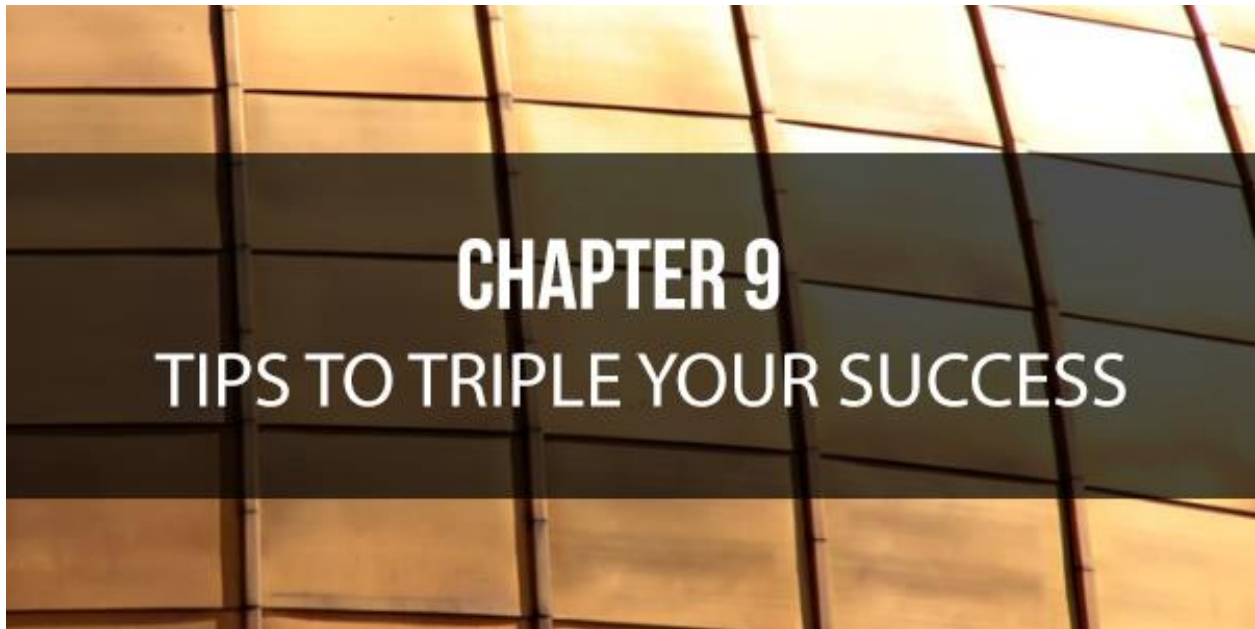
The tone of your website can play a vital role when it comes to attracting and keeping your members. It is vital that you keep your

site fun and interesting. This can be accomplished by having contests or competitions. What you offer will depend on what type of membership site you have. For example, if you run a membership site for scrapbook lovers, then you might have a contest for the best “Valentine’s Day” scrapbook page.

Reward Your Members or Offer Incentives

When you reward your members, they will feel more appreciated and have a sense of belonging. There are little things that you can do that will have a significant impact on making your members feel appreciated. For example, celebrate their birthdays, have a member appreciation day where you offer something for free, or have contests in which winners receive free months of memberships.

Chapter 9 – Tips to Triple Your Success



Now that you've determined your niche, set up your membership site, and started attracting new members, you're well on your way to running a successful membership site and earning monthly income. Here are six tips that the top membership site owners incorporate into their membership site. Implementing these six tips into your own membership site can triple your success rate.

Tip #1 – Use an Introduction Video on Your Sales Page

By creating an introduction video and placing it on your sales page you can create a sense of urgency. The world changes quickly and while there might be thousands of claimed solutions floating around, if your membership site offers real solutions to a very real problem, then you are far more likely to enjoy success. However, it is important that you explain how and why your

membership site will benefit the user, and this will need to be done in two minutes or less.

Tip #2 – Offer Various Membership Levels

Offering several different membership levels will help to broaden your reach. Create different content for the different memberships or you can block content for some levels. Make sure that you create an upsell page that members see automatically when they try to access something they don't have the rights to.

Tip #3 – Build a Stylish Welcome Area

Strategically build a stylish 'Welcome' area that is enticing to both paying members and free members. The welcome area is the best place to upsell and convert free members into paying members. Giving them a 'taste' of what you have to offer is the best way to get them to upgrade.

Tip #4 – Provide a Sense of Direction

Provide your members with a sense of direction. New members may not know what to do with their membership, what to access, or what to watch first. Make sure that you give your members some guidance on the order of material to view and break it down so that they are able to digest the information without becoming overwhelmed.

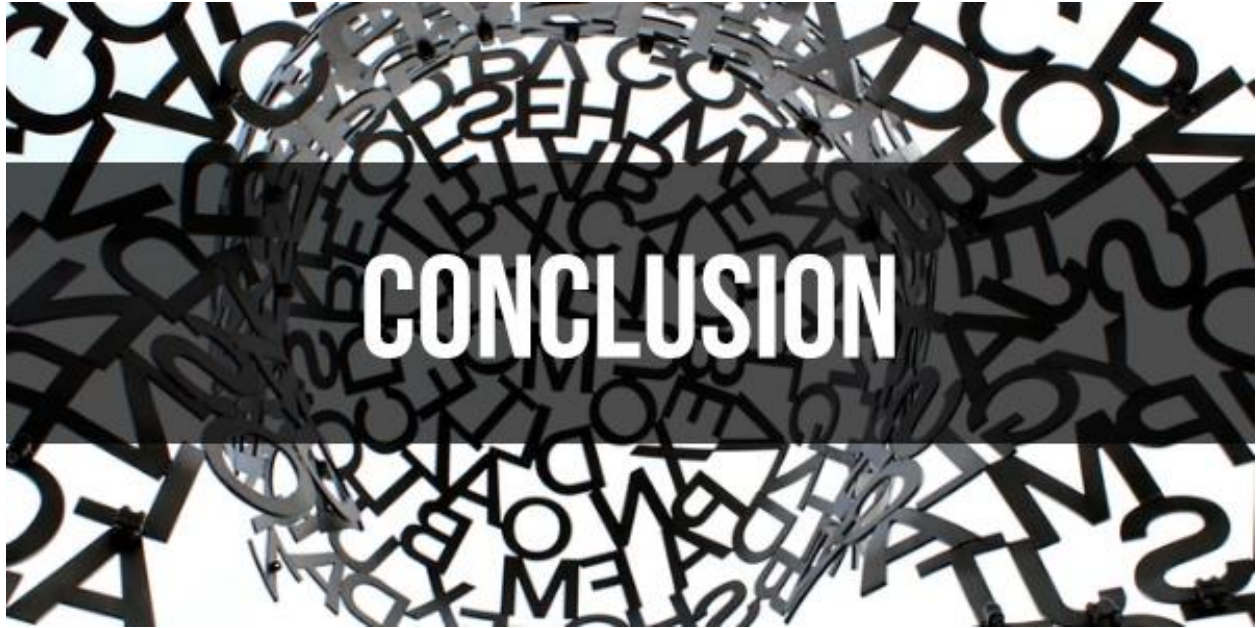
Tip #5 – Have Your Subscribe Now Button Appear Three Times on the Sales Page

Three is considered the ideal number of times for your subscribe, or join, button to appear to maximize sales. One of the most common mistakes is to just place this button at the bottom of the sales page. It should be placed near the top, in the middle, and the bottom of the page.

Tip #6 – Add a Discussion Forum

Adding a forum will eliminate a significant amount of work for you because you will have plenty of fresh content on your site which is generated by users. Having a forum will also add to the social value of your site. However, it's important to remember that you still need to ensure that you're also adding value to your site.

Conclusion



Membership sites might seem easy to setup, and they are indeed easier to set up than any other regular, real-life business. They draw upon the referrals from other members and search engines to keep the growth and revenue coming in.

Creating a successful membership site will require you to put a lot of thought and investment into your business. While these sites are driven by a passion for a particular theme or topic, the owners of these sites are also passionate about attracting new members and generating income.

The best membership websites run on a content management system that allows for restrictions, news aggregation, moderation of posts and content dripping. This process doesn't need to be

complicated. In fact, some of the most successful membership websites run on basic platforms like WordPress, and are supplemented by plugins that allow for better security and convenience. Then there are those who prefer platforms that are categorized by their robustness, ease of use, and added features. It all comes down to choosing the right plugin or software that suits the size and scope of your membership site.

When done the right way, you can start an online membership website that will generate continuous stable income. A successful membership site can provide you with the security of a regular income and leave you with more free time to spend with your family or delving into another business venture. The roadmap to having a successful membership site is to always give your members what they want up front and continue to provide them with a reason to stay for the long run.