The 5-Minute Guide To Starting a Membership Site

- SPECIAL REPORT -

Starting and running a successful membership site is hard work. One of the biggest mistakes that too many people make when they set out to begin their first membership site is approaching the process too casually. They think, "I'll put up this site and see what happens." Generally, this turns out to be a disaster because they are never able to get it up off the ground. Or, if they do manage to launch it, they never gain enough members to make it worth their time. Just as dangerous are those membership sites that do very well at the beginning, but quickly lose momentum because they lack content, service, and aren't able to retain their members.

Before you head into a potential disaster, you'll need to know how to make all of the necessary decisions up front, before you invest all of your time and energy and money into starting your first membership site. The following guide will show you exactly what you'll need to do to make your membership site a success. Before you can even get started with creating your first membership site, you need to have some fundamental decisions already decided.

Making the Basic Decisions

For you to start a membership site and make it successful, you need to have a few necessary decisions made. The first of which is who your target audience is. One of the biggest mistakes that you can make as a new membership site owner is to start out thinking that your site will appeal to everyone. You need to have a

clear understanding of the target audience for your membership site. You need to ask yourself the following questions:

* Who are you building the site for?
* How old are they?
* What do they do for a living?
* Do they have money to spend on your membership site?

Next, you'll need to decide on your topic of focus. Take some time to consider why someone in your target audience would want to join your membership site. Is there a specific problem that you are able to solve? What can you teach them to do? What kind of services will you provide?

When you can answer these questions, the task of marketing your site becomes much easier. Finding the answers to these questions will also make the process of planning your site easier because you are clearer on your goals.

Next, you'll need to decide on the kind of content you plan to deliver. Will you provide a series of lessons that teach a process? Will you offer your target audience with a service, like providing content each month? Will you have a reference library of content that they can consult with as they need? For now, this is a general, based on what you think your target audience wants in this topic area.

Once you've covered these basic decisions, and are confident in your choices, you can move on to the steps you need to take to start your first membership website.

Step 1) Choosing Your Payment Model

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

- Free Memberships Generally you would set up a free membership when you want to segregate a group of subscribers from the general public. Those who sign up for the free membership have acknowledged that they are willing to take a few steps beyond just being a subscriber. They've indicated they want to get close to you.

- One-Time Fee This model is often used to sell a product which allows customers access to the materials for a limited time. You can turn off access to the material easily at the end of the specified period. This model is also good if you want to provide lifetime access to the initial content in the

site with possible membership add-ons.

- Fixed Period Recurring Ð This payment model offers a fixed period recurring membership with payments over a specified period. This is often used for high-ticket items. This model is appropriate for limited term courses and coaching programs.

- Unlimited Recurring Ð The traditional membership sites use this kind of payment model. This is similar to your cell phone bill, electricity bill, and cable TV bill. Your members will pay you for as long as they use the site. This is typically chosen with sites that are posting regular content or for services that are being offered.

Step 2) Choosing Your Delivery Model

The second step for setting up your first membership site is deciding on how you will deliver your content. You can either provide it through a website or through email.

Email Delivery Model

Delivering membership content through email is an interesting perspective. As you set up your content, you load email messages into the autoresponder system then schedule the messages to be delivered over a certain number of days. The best part of delivering your content via email is that you can send out emails daily or weekly, or at any other scheduled time. For your members to enroll in your email membership, all they have to do is sign up on your opt-in form. Then they can start receiving your content on the schedule you have set up.

One of the main advantages of setting up an email membership is that you only need to have an enrollment form. You don't need to build a specific website or purchase expensive membership software. Once you set the autoresponder, it doesn't matter when someone enrolls; they will still receive the content through the autoresponder.

Website Delivery Model

Over the last several years, WordPress has become the popular choice for setting up and operating websites. While WordPress itself is free and built into most hosting platforms, there are numerous plugins and themes that you can get to make your Word-

Press-based site look and act as you want it to. Whether you use WordPress or HTML for your membership site, you will still need to get membership software.

Membership software protects your content, so only those members who are current on their payments will have access to the content. Membership software tracks members and passwords for you. The membership software will also trigger your recurring charges or can work with your payment processor to do so.
If you have members that are getting charged on a monthly basis, you don't have to remember when to bill them. Instead, it happens automatically with the membership software.

Step 3) Create Your Content

The third step in your journey to creating your first membership site is to create the content that you will be providing your members. With your site, there will be content added at different times, depending on the way your site is set up. You'll want to consider each of the following content types in order to decide what you want to offer your members.

Initial Content

When a member first signs up with your membership site, they will see your initial content. Generally, you will want to make a big deal about what will be there, waiting for them when they log in. Your initial content will be discussed in your sales letter. Your initial content could be the completed product that you are selling, or bonus reports that you've created, or even a new members course that they will receive right after they join your site.

Permanent Content

Your permanent content will be the content that stays on your site. This is content that is added over time to the library portion of your site. For example, you may provide a video library with 30 how-to videos. While these have been recorded over time, once you add them to your site, they become permanent. Early members receive the videos as they are recorded and posted, while new members will find them as part of the permanent collection.

Incremental Content

Most membership sites will have additional content. The incremental content is added over time, and it may or may not disappear. You may offer your members a bonus for longevity. The longer they are a member, the larger the gift becomes. These bonuses are delivered at preset times to appear automatically. This is incremental content.

Step 4) Making Money Decisions

This is the step where a lot of new membership site owners fail. While they have great ideas and have produced great content, they are unable to wade through all of the money decisions.

Charging an Initial Fee

If you have a lot of content on your site when members log in for the first time, you may want to charge an initial fee. There are people out there that will come in and join your site, download everything they can get their hands on and then cancel within 72 hours. To avoid this situation, you may want to consider charging an initial fee. An initial price could be a barrier to entry, so think carefully if this will be worth it for your site.

Trial Members

You also may want to consider a trial membership. Trial memberships are a good way for people to find out if your site is a good match for them. A trial removed the risk from the buyer. It lets them see what they will receive in your members area. It may help to encourage people who are hesitant to join your site to try it out.

Typical Price Points

The price points for products and membership sites change over time. As far as the average price points you'll find in membership sites, anything under $40/ month is considered an impulse buy. Lower prices will encourage the "set it and forget it" aspect. People often ignore the smaller recurring charges on their credit card bills because they think that it is easy to pay it than try to cancel.

If you want to charge higher prices, then you will have to provide stronger sales copy. This is why new membership site owners start their site at a lower rate because they aren't as proficient at writing sales letters, so they feel that they can sell a $9.95/month membership, by aren't good enough to sell a $99.95/month membership.

There is no magic number when it comes to how much to charge for your membership site. It's a matter of what is customary in your topic area. Based on the content you deliver. If you offer content that helps people make more money, you can generally charge more.

Conclusion

Starting or adding a membership site to your business can provide you with massive rewards. In order for your site to become successful, you need to have taken the time to properly plan your site and spend the time to implement that plan. With these four simple steps, you will find you can have your membership site up and running in 90 days or less.

Membership sites have become extremely popular over the years, and for a good reason. With just a bit of upfront work and continued maintenance, you can create a steady stream of passive income that will continue for as long as you continue to run your site. Just about anything these days can be set up to run automatically, so what are you waiting for? Now is the best time for you to set up your first membership site and enjoy the perks of getting recurring monthly income.