



MEMBERSHIP SITES THAT SELL THEMSELVES

*The best time to create a membership program was 10 years ago.
The second best time is now.*

Now, I don't know about you but I love passive income. And for an entrepreneur, having many sources of income is the smart way to build your business.

Membership plans, or subscriptions to your online community provides passive income and another source of income. While they take some time to set up, the amount of effort involved drops off once they're up and running.

A membership site is a place where free or paying members can login to access their content, courses, and community.

You can charge a one-time fee for access or build in a recurring revenue stream with monthly or yearly payments.

With a membership site that's built around the topics you love, you'll be:

- Waking up every morning to new members, aka, new sales (Hooray!) while only doing one or two promotions per year to fill your membership
- Building a loyal community who adore you and support each other. Also, if you provide quality content, many of your loyal members will refer new members (tip: you can even offer an affiliate program), and they'll buy new products or services you offer.
- Receiving letters of appreciation from your members about how much your membership site is helping them
- Gaining more stability in your business because you have this source of passive revenue!
- Building credibility as an expert and be seen as the go-to authority in your niche
- Creating other income opportunities such as coaching, consulting, or speaking.
- Building your brand anytime as you can run a membership site anytime and anywhere, as long as you have internet access.

Excited? Great! Let's get to the good stuff.

Understanding Membership Sites

Like gym memberships that require monthly fees, membership sites are places where people can join to get whatever it is you offer. Many membership sites offer articles or reports, video tutorials, webinars, checklists, templates, apps or software, and more.

Generally, people join membership sites because they help simplify their lives, speed up learning curves, and/or give them greater detail on how to do something than general content offered online.

For example, there are many online marketing membership sites that delve into specific topics, such as how to maintain a successful Facebook Group, how to get followers on Instagram, and/or how to repurpose content across marketing platforms.

Let's cover a few!

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP SITES

If you want to create a membership site, you'll want to decide on what type of membership site you plan to create.

What type of membership you decide to offer will affect several things, including the price, the design of the site, what to include in your membership, and which customers you'll attract.

The ideas for membership sites are endless. The key to success is to find an idea that can include lots of content that others would pay to access. There are personal membership sites and business (B2B) membership sites. Any of the following can be either.

Here are a few type of membership programs:

1 The Community Centered Membership

Social websites are becoming more and more popular, and are easy to create with the proliferation of membership, forum and social plugins out there.

The community centered membership site is all about connection. It's about facilitating strong relationship building among the members. Because of this, it might have a heavy focus on a member directory, a forum, masterminds, accountability, or other people-driven benefits.

This type of membership can also include mastermind groups, which helps members solve problems or work through issues with peer-to-peer mentoring.

You basically charge a monthly fee for access to private forums, messaging systems or online groups and people only have access for as long as they pay. If you build up a good community people will stick around for a long time.

Community sites generally work best when focused around a specific topic.

2 The Coaching and Accountability Membership

This type of membership is often called group coaching, and it packs a lot of value for the participants. There are different ways to offer coaching and accountability with this model.

Generally, you'd offer live office hours or coaching calls where members can show up, ask questions, get support, and accountability. You can also create opportunities for the coach or leader to keep track of participants' progress, encouraging them if they get stuck along the way.

3 The Done For You Resources and Swipefiles Membership

This type of membership offers huge time savings for your members by eliminating time-consuming work and offering resources that can be used as-is or with minor tweaks. Offering templates, lesson plans, and other “done for you” downloads is a powerful way to scale and provide items of value to members.

The benefit of these sites is that members don’t need to start from scratch or re-invent the wheel. Instead, they can work with an existing set of content and make it their own.

#4 The Content Drip Membership

One of the most popular membership site models you’ll come across is the content drip model. As the name suggests, content is released at regular intervals which makes it easy for members to consume and keeps them coming back for more.

Members pay a monthly subscription fee in exchange for access to the gated membership site from where they can view or download premium content.

Membership site owners following this model create a schedule for delivering content to members. In this way, members don’t get all of the content at once – instead, the content is released at specific intervals.

The key benefit of drip feeding content in smaller chunks is that it gives members enough time to thoroughly consume content without feeling overwhelmed. This also improves member engagement which helps increase retention rates.

With this membership model there is usually a set structure whereby no matter when you join you go through the same delivery of information – so Month 1 info can be accessed initially, Month 2 is released 30 days later etc whether you join in February or July.

As a result you will have members at all different stages of the process – unless you only let people in during certain periods so that everyone is on the same page (so to speak).

The great thing about this membership site model is that you can have members joining all year round. Whenever a new member signs up, their start date begins. Assuming you’ve

scheduled to release content every 15 days, members will be able to access Content 1 immediately, Content 2 will be released 15 days later, Content 3 will be released 15 days after Content 2, etc.

This way, you don't have to worry about filling up seats before you launch your membership program. With the Content Drip membership site model, you can drip feed content to members based on when they sign up for a membership, specific calendar dates, on their activities, or manually.

#5 The 'All-In' Membership

Unlike the Content Drip Membership, this type of membership site gives access to everything straight away, which is great for members who don't like to wait for the next piece in the puzzle. This could be access to all of a course, all of a product, or even access to all of your products, as soon as you sign up.

This model can work either on a fixed fee upfront or a monthly payment basis – in order for the monthly payment to work however it's a good idea to be providing something (i.e a forum or bonus material each month) to keep people from just downloading all your product in the first month and then cancelling.

#6 The Fixed Membership

This kind of membership site has a fixed membership period (anywhere from 7 days to 12 months), and at the end of that period of time your commitment and membership is over. I.e., a 31-day exercise program may use this fixed term model, as would a 12 month mastermind program.

It can include a course structure to the information provided, or not.

Payment will usually be monthly for the length of the membership, or upfront if the fixed period is only short, after which you may or may not have lifetime access to the information.

The main difference between this and other membership models is that you know exactly how much time you are committing to.

7 The Smorgasbord Membership

As you may have guessed, this membership model is a mix of different membership models, set up in a way that suits you and your members best – an individual model based on combining the other models that you like.

For example a site that combines a course with a community plus core information interspersed with new content each month, and maybe even some products thrown in there for good luck too.

This one is great if you like to mix and match and want to create a membership site that is perfect for you.

HOW TO START A MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Setting up a membership can be a little time-consuming but in the long run, it will definitely be worth it! In a nutshell, here's what you need to do:

Brainstorm membership business ideas

Make a list of your talents, skills, interests, and experiences. Review the type of membership sites above for help in determining how what you know, love, or do can fit into a membership model. For example, what can you teach? Have you created a great online tool you can sell as a subscription?

Research your favorite idea to determine if its a profitable option

There are many ideas that the market will say they love, but they might not like it enough to *pay* for it, or what they're willing to pay might not be profitable for you.

Plan your membership program

Decide what you're going to offer, how and when you'll offer it, and membership term length.

For example, what content will you offer and will it be delivered in PDF, video, or some other method?

Many membership sites offer a variety of content delivery methods to make sure they hit all learning styles. Also consider if you'll deliver your content weekly through email or will you have an online membership? If it's online, will new content be added monthly or will all the content be available at the time of joining?

Finally, how long will memberships last? Depending on the content you offer, an end-date might be evident, such as a course. Other membership sites may go on indefinitely until your member decides to leave. Just remember, indefinite month-to-month memberships will require you to offer new content on a regular basis to retain existing members. That means you'll need to have a topic to which you can add content indefinitely and be willing to commit to long-term content creation.

Research your tools

If you're going to run your membership through email, you'll need a website through which members can join and an email service provider that can deliver the content.

If you want to run an online course, there are several services—such as Kajabi, Udemy, ClickFunnels, and Teachable—that offer platforms. I highly recommend this as it makes building a membership so much easier.

If you'd like 100% control, you can build your own membership site. Other tools you may need include audio or video creation and hosting, and webinar services.

Price your membership program

When you have your tools, you'll know the upfront and recurring expenses to run your membership. You'll also want to consider the cost of your time.

Finally, what is your content worth? Part of the worth comes in the quality of the information, and part from the quality of the delivery of the information.

The final step is deciding if you'll run your membership month-to-month, for longer terms, or indefinitely. You can offer a variety of both. For example, the month-to-month price can be \$29, but a six-month subscription can be \$99. This gives you more money up front and a longer time to build trust and loyalty.

Create your content

Once you have your membership site outlined, it's time to create the content and tools you'll be delivering. This will probably be the most time-consuming part of your start-up, but again you can repurpose all your other information and content.

If you plan to deliver your content over time, you can create your content as you go. Just remember, people will be paying for this content, so there is an expectation that it will be more in-depth than what they'll find for free online.

Build your membership site

If you haven't already, you'll need to set up your tools and begin loading your content. This will take some time, so just be patient as you go through the process.

Advertise your membership site

This is where you'll now spend the majority of your time and money. A membership site can be extremely profitable—but only if people join. There are a variety of ways to market a membership site.

First, you need to know your ideal customers and where you can find them. Next, you need to find ways to entice them to your membership site. That can be through articles related to your topic, Facebook ads or other ads, social media, and more.

Consider using a lead magnet/Freebie and funnel system to capture potential members' emails since most people don't join on their first visit. Your lead magnet could be something that's already inside your membership site. Or, you can offer a free 7-day trial or a \$1 first-month trial.

Keep your membership site active

Make sure your content is up to date and providing value to your members. Always be working to increase membership and replace members who drop out. Consider having a community aspect to your membership to keep members engaged with you and others in the community.

And that's it! Bottom line is you'll want to create a membership site that you love, that members love, and that brings in passive income month after month.

HOW TO CREATE A MEMBERSHIP THAT SELLS!

If you do it right, Membership creation has 6 major phases.

1. Idea Creation Phase
2. The Detective Phase
3. Idea Testing Phase
4. Pre-Sell the Membership Phase
5. Editing and Creation
6. Selling (and reselling)

Let's jump right in!

1. Idea Creation Phase

The first phase is to create a Membership *Idea* that solves your Ideal Customers'/Clients' needs and gives them the benefit (need fulfillment) they are looking for. Remember, people don't buy products. They buy solutions or benefits, something that fulfills a need they have.

Let's say you are a life coach who wants to create a Membership to help someone gain confidence. This is a great idea! Many struggle with low self confidence and want to feel confident.

However, we have to dig deeper so your Ideal Client will *hear* you and not think twice about buying. But *why* do they want to feel confident? What *need* are they looking to fulfill? Here are a few reasons a potential customer/client might want to feel confident: "I want to feel more confident in dating." (Belongingness and Love Need) Or, "I want to feel more confident in my public speaking abilities because it will make me feel more looked up to." (Esteem Need).

When you discover your Ideal Customers'/Clients' "why," or which *need* they are trying to fulfill, you will have gained the knowledge necessary to communicate in such a clear way to your customer that they will join your membership site without a second thought. One thing to consider: you might have nailed down your client's need for now. However, that might change as you enter the gathering information phase. Just keep an open mind!

On the next few pages you'll be brainstorming your Membership Idea. We'll be brainstorming on names, benefit (which need they will have fulfilled), packaging, appearance, warranty, quality, etc.

Now, think about a Membership Idea that you would like to offer

What is the Membership and what is the benefit or which of the 8 *Needs* does it fulfill? Remember, it can fulfill more than one need!

Now, think of a specific idea for your Membership that you feel will solve your customers'/clients' *Needs* and that will give them the benefit they want.

Make sure to think of a need or problem that your Membership is the solution to, or that it gives the benefit that the client/customer wants.

Write down a Membership you would like to offer:

Benefit/What Need Does it Fulfill?: What will the benefit of your Membership be? Which of the 8 Needs are you trying to fulfill (Survival, Safety, Social, Status, Schooling, Spirituality, Self-Actualization, or Self-Transcendence)?

Appearance/Design: What will be your Membership appearance or design? Colors? Font?

Warranty: Will you have a warranty? Guarantee?

Quality/Brand: What will your Membership's quality or brand be? Upscale? Relaxed? Scientific? Spiritual? How will you want your client/customer to feel when they buy it?

Packaging: Will your Membership come in specific packaging? Paper? Plastic? (If it's a product)

PRICE

Price refers to the pricing strategy for your Membership and how it will affect customers. Pricing doesn't just include the selling price. It also includes discounts, payment arrangements, credit/payment terms, or any other price-matching services offered. When you decide on pricing, it's important to consider the business's position in the current marketplace. For example, if your business is advertised as a high-end coaching, your pricing should reflect that.

Selling Price: What will be the *regular* price of your Membership?

Discount: Will you offer discounts? If so, what is the discount and when will you offer it? Will there be early-bird discounts? Special promotions? VIP discounts? Will you offer previous customers referral bonuses?

Payment Arrangements: Where will people pay you? PayPal? Venmo? Stipe? By check? Through Facebook? Bank transfer? Cash? Will they pay up front? After?

Price-Matching: Will you price-match?

Will you offer month-to-month payment plans? Yearly payment plans? All up front payment with a discount?

Once you have come up with a great idea for your Membership, the next phase is detective work!

1. The Detective Phase.

In the detectie phase, it's time to find Memberships that are similar to yours and compare them. Make sure to keep an organized record of what you learn. This will come in handy later. Many think comparing and competing is bad. Entrepreneurs who are set on succeeding, however, know that comparing and competing is a *great* thing. Why? Because you have the advantage of learning if there's a viable market for your specific Membership, and also learning what can be done better.

Make note of how popular it is and jot down what people are saying about it. Also write down what people like and don't like about it. What do they want more of or feel is missing? Ask, "What is the title? The price? The branding? Who bought this membership? Men? Women? Can you tell their ages?"

Also, try and read between the lines, their psychographics. Can you tell people's personalities? If they have certain values or aspirations? What their desires/fears are? Which need are they trying to fulfill? Make sure to pay attention to EVERYTHING you can. These comparisons will help you to create a better membership than what's already out there.

DETECTIVE FINDINGS

Where: Where did you find similar Memberships? What are the price points?

What are some competitor brandings?

What are some of your competitor prices?

Who bought the Membership? Men? Women? Age range? Moms? Be as specific as you can.

What are the customer's/client's psychographics? Can you tell people's personalities? Character? Do they have certain values or aspirations? What are their desires/fears? Can you tell which need they are trying to fulfill?

Did members leave comments/reviews? Good? Bad? What would they like to see more of? Less of? Was the program too long? Too short?

Is there anything else noteworthy about the member?

After you have compared a few Memberships to your idea, it's time to go back to the drawing board, and tighten up your Membership Idea. Go back to your initial notes and compare. Tweak it, edit it, make it better, more targeted toward specific needs.

Then complete the following:

PLACE

Place refers to where your Membership is seen, made, sold, or distributed. In essence, place decisions are associated with distribution channels and ways of getting the Membership to customers.

It's important to consider how accessible the Membership is and ensure that customers can easily find you. For example, you may want to provide your Membership over an e-commerce site/website, or through a third-party distributor.

A few great places to sell online Memberships

Kajabi
Udemy
Teachable
Clickfunnels

Thinkific
Learnwords
Podia
Your Website

A few great places to sell Subscription Memberships (for products):

Shopify
Wix
Big Commerce
Square Online Store
Your Website
Etsy

Pick one distribution channel: Website? Facebook group? Kajabi? Shopify? On 3rd party sites such as Amazon?

Logistics: What is the physical place of your Membership? Will they each have their own page? How will you get your Membership to your customer?

Location: If you are in the service industry, will you utilize Facetime? Phone? Zoom? Where will your Membership be provided? If you have physical products, will you ship to their home?

Market/Niche Coverage: Which market/niche are you focusing on? There are two basic markets you can sell to: consumer and business. Is your niche a specific gender? Have a specific income? Are they world-wide or in a specific country? Are they dog-owners? Spiritual? (You can pick several, but how you market to them will be different)

PROMOTION

Promotion refers to the activities that make the Membership more known to your ideal customers. It includes items such as sponsorships, advertising, and public relations activities. Since promotion costs can be substantial, it is important to perform a break-even analysis when making promotion decisions. It is important to understand the value of a customer and whether it is worth conducting promotions to acquire them.

Sponsorship/Partnership: Will you look for sponsors? Will you have partners?

Advertising: Where will you advertise? How will you get your Membership seen? (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.)

Public Relations Activities: Public relations describes the actions a business or organization takes to shape perceptions of its brand and develop relationships with its customer base, target audience, partners, and other important stakeholders. By using public relations tools and activities, you can convert potential customers/clients into buyers of your Membership by earning trust, establishing valuable relationships, and building brand awareness. PR tools are cost-effective, and can give you a greater degree of control than advertising campaigns. Consider using PR tools like to build your business's reputation and to sell Memberships.

Media/News: Are you looking to get media coverage? If so, how can you make this happen?

You don't need to solidify anything yet. That will come as we test and get feedback. The next phase is Membership Testing!

2. Membership Testing

Once you have done your stealthy detective work and have tightened up your Membership, it's time to test it to see if there is a viable market for it. Trust me, you don't

want to spend weeks, months, or even years on creating a Membership that doesn't sell. This is why *testing your Membership idea* is so important.

As you start sharing your Membership idea, remember that you can continue to refine it, tweak it, and edit it.

In fact, speaking of editing, you can liken the process of Membership creation to writing a book. First, the book is written. Next, it gets in the hands of a content editor. Then the author goes back to the drawing board, revamps the book, then sends it back for more editing. In fact, when you write a book, the book goes through many rounds of editing and tweaking. Every word is carefully selected, and there are hundreds of moving parts that have to come together seamlessly to create one story.

Just as authors need editors to help them improve on their books, business owners need a similar editing/refining/improvement process. It's important to go through several stages of "editing" your Membership Idea before it's ready for your customers/clients and before it's ready to sell.

This process will help you 1. Create a Membership your people will want to buy, 2. Make your sales so much easier, and 3. Result in an amazing Membership. This starts with testing and getting feedback.

A tested Membership Idea is a much more mature idea. In the process of testing it out, you'll quickly get feedback, honest feedback—sometimes harsh feedback. Some will give you a guttural response (especially complete strangers) and say something like, "That's the stupidest idea I ever heard." I know it's hard, but don't take it personally. Plus don't worry, most will be much kinder than that. Most will either give positive feedback or will say something like, "that's a nice idea... but have you thought about...?"

But, what if people steal my Membership idea? Seriously, don't worry about that. This idea, if you create your membership like I've coached you to, it will be a creation of your heart, your core values, your message, your mission statement, YOUR BRANDING. No one on the entire planet has your heart. This Membership creation is uniquely YOU.

Plus, consider this: the difference between you (amazing entrepreneur) and the next wanna be entrepreneur is that you are 100 % committed to your Membership and you will actually see it to completion.

Here's the thing, the more you *share* your Membership idea, a) either the *better* that idea becomes (because you are tweaking as you go), or b) the more it becomes apparent to you that the idea is not a good one.

So share your Membership Idea with friends, family, people in your mastermind group, people in your community and even complete strangers!

Here are a few ways you can test your Membership Idea:

1. Ask trusted friends/family to fill out surveys
2. Ask people in targeted Facebook Groups to give you feedback on your Membership idea.
3. Ask other entrepreneurs for honest feedback
4. Go to groups like Reddit and ask for feedback

Questions to consider: What is the ideal price point? What is the best name for my Membership? Is it best to sell as a high-end Membership or an affordable budget-friendly one?

After you have done some detective work and have tested and tweaked and tested and tweaked, you will have accomplished the following: 1. You will have discovered whether your Membership is sellable, and 2. You will have a very clear vision of what your Membership is and what the right market is for it.

Let's assume there's a huge interest for your Membership. Most would go ahead and start the Creation Phase at this point.

But not so fast...

You won't truly know whether your Membership is sellable until you... well, sell it!

Which leads us to the next phase: Pre-Selling.

3. Pre-Sell Your Membership Phase

As entrepreneurs, we have to think about ourselves first sometimes. It's vital for the sustainability and growth of your business to use your time wisely. This is why it's a good idea to pre-sell your Membership. So you don't lose days, weeks, months, years on creating a product that bombs.

A lot of times people say they will want a Membership, but when it comes to pay, they don't. True validation comes from people actually paying you for that idea. And yes, even before you have created it.

A good way to pre-sell your Membership is to ask for payments from your client/customer upfront (again, before the Membership is even created).

For those who take you up on the offer and pre-buy, you can give them a special reduced "VIP" price for doing so.

But how do I pre-sell anything if I don't have a large following, an email list, or other? This is where paid advertising comes in handy. You're going to have to invest a little money to find out whether or not a targeted audience on a social media platform like Facebook, for example, would be willing to pay you for your Membership.

Just a heads up. By this point in the process, you'll want to have almost fully developed your Membership, to truly understand the ins and outs of what this Membership will become so you can set up a sales page as you would if it really existed.

You could drive traffic directly to that page from Facebook, or you could try something like collecting registrants to pre-sell a webinar, which could convert even higher for you since you'd be building a relationship with those prospects at the same time before your pitch.

Either way, you'll want to be up front with your clients/customers and tell them the Membership is not yet fully created, but you give them something for buying early, like a Freebie or a special VIP price.

Once you know you have a Membership that sells, the next phase is to Create Your Membership!

4. Creating Membership!

The next step is to create the Actual Membership! If you feel you have a viable Membership idea, and you have received good feedback from trusted sources, and you have buyers, this is the time to start building the actual Membership.

5. Selling Your Membership!

I'm not going to cover this process here because in the following weeks, we will be going over how to market and advertise your Membership, which is phase 6 of your Membership development! So stay tuned!