

AN INNER SUCCESS CIRCLE SPECIAL REPORT

Membership Site SUCCESS TIPS



Membership Site



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Membership Site Success Tips

Welcome

So, you’ve decided to add a Membership Site to your current business offerings. Great decision!

Running your own Membership Site will add an extra layer of authority to your web presence and help you create loyal, regular customers (as well as giving you a fixed, regular stream of income that will grow with you). But there are some practical facts and factors you need to know now, at the planning stage before you actually get started.

Let’s look at the pros and cons of running a Membership Site...

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Subscription-based (regular recurring income)	Need to provide regular, ongoing content – maintaining the flow is crucial
Members invest in a long-term relationship and commitment	Members will also come and go – with the current average stay sometimes as short as only a two or three month term
Members can be set up and encouraged to help each other, doing much of the day-to-day maintenance work for you	You need to be vigilant, to ensure no one is getting the wrong advice – or being sent unnecessarily to competitor links!
You can choose the format that works best for you and your communication style, lifestyle and preferences	You do need to make sure that style is also in sync with what <i>your members prefer and are comfortable with</i>
Increases your authority status and helps ingrain the habit of treating you as your members’ “go-to” person	Requires active <i>consistency</i>

What Format Should Your Membership Site Take?

Fortunately, there are many Membership Site models to choose from — and you can “mix and match” formats. If the idea of starting a Membership Site overwhelms you, consider starting with the easiest form — a **paid subscription to a monthly newsletter**, with minimal or even no interaction between you and your members.

On the other hand, if you feel confident in running an elite forum — the most interactive and high-maintenance type of Membership Site — go for it straight away. It’s benefits outweigh the work you’ll put into it.

Some other Membership Site models to consider:

PLR Membership Site — Where you supply your members with monthly private label rights content.

Forum — Where you interact, brainstorm, assist and facilitate feedback among niche members around a tightly-focused subject

Content Membership Site — Where you supply monthly information they can learn from and make use of.

Coaching Membership Site — Where you mentor those in your niche and help them achieve a goal

Teaching Membership Site — Where you provide actual lessons in a focused niche subject, with assignments and feedback included for each member

You can combine more than one type of membership model to suit your subscribers. For example, you could have a monthly \$9.95 newsletter, packed with high-value tips and insider information about your niche for people who either can’t afford a more expensive option or who are well past the learning stage and just need a little extra “sauce”. Then you could combine that with one-on-one lessons or mentoring, for those who are ready to commit to a more focused approach.

You could supply your members with a PLR membership; then add an elite forum, where they can ask questions, seek feedback and bounce business ideas around.

You can provide more than one type of membership model to suit your subscriber’s needs. Your options are virtually endless. Know your members and give them what they want.

Essentials to Membership Site Success

Whichever model you choose, you will need to observe some crucial basics. Your Membership Site will need:

1. Thorough market research
2. A Master Plan, with short-term “goal posts” along the way, to help you measure and evaluate your success
3. At least 3 months content ready to go (and all content completed, if you’re planning to offer a “Lifetime Membership” option)
4. Information that is more specific and more valuable than facts people could uncover online by themselves
5. A strong, tested “help” system (even if that’s just you, answering emails or comments on your closed blog!)
6. A properly set up, tested, technical format (e.g. membership script, Member Access Only WordPress blog, BBS board, etc.) that is **well-suited to the way your members like to interact**
7. A payment processor that integrates well with your content delivery format (don’t let that scare you — it can be as simple as providing a PayPal option)
8. Ongoing, planned promotion
9. A simple but well-tested affiliate system and resources
10. A subject that energizes you

It is essential to start with a master plan for your membership site. You need to know, in advance, as much as you can about what you will be offering, when, and how.

It goes without saying; Number One on the list will be your market research, followed closely by your planning. The more heavily you invest in these two areas, the better your chances of success — it’s as simple as that!

Dealing with the Techie Stuff...

Don’t let the thought of having to handle scripts or help desks overwhelm you. There is more than one option for content management and delivery, and you are free to make the process as complicated or as easy as you’re comfortable with!

In other words, the real beauty of the Membership Site model lies in the fact that you can customize and tailor it to your own abilities and strengths.

For example, if you’ve absolutely no interest in installing a Help Desk script, you can both outsource support and email response to a competent VA (virtual assis-

tant) who specializes in that area... or you can simply choose to be available to answer questions personally, at first.

If you choose the latter option, you can set parameters on it to prevent burnout: For example, you could let your members know up front (or with a sticky note posted somewhere within your site) that you only answer questions posted in the “Comments” section of your blog-format Membership Site and that you will be checking those comments once per day.

How to Make your Membership Site “Sticky” and Keep Your Members Happy

And, speaking of “stickiness”, that’s something you’ll also need to plan for. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. If I was one of my members, what would keep me excited about my membership?
2. Why would I be loyal to the Membership Site owner? What does s/he provide that is essential to my well-being, confidence and success?
3. What’s the greatest single “buried treasure” a member will discover about my Membership Site?
4. Am I enthusiastic and passionate about this niche?
5. Am I setting up my Membership site to create habitual interaction my Members can’t live without?

Outsource any work where you don’t excel. Find people who share your values and your spirit and let them do the parts you don’t want to do.

Planning for Growth

Remember also that you don’t have to do it all alone... even if your Members think you do! You can outsource those behind-the-scenes, day-to-day tasks (especially further down the road, when your Membership Site really takes off). You can also hire ghostwriters to help supplement your content, or use PLR to trigger new content ideas or provide a “skeleton” for your content research.

Outsourcing can help you make even more money, by freeing up your time and focus to keep you active only in the areas where you excel — the ones that help you excite your Members and keep them hooked and coming back for more.

This short report can’t cover every single aspect of setting up a site, but it can provide you with proven keys for success, as cited by many successful Membership Site owners.

Here are the **TOP SEVEN ESSENTIAL TIPS** from the above fraternity, to help set you up for **Membership Site success**:

1. **Keep your niche focus highly specific and “narrow”** — specializing in one aspect of a niche allows for organic, natural growth and high quality, whereas it’s easy to become lost in the competition (and impossible to satisfy everyone) if your focus is too broad
2. **Produce a newsletter** — whether or not your Membership Site is newsletter-based, putting out a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly newsletter helps to:
 - a) Connect your members to you
 - b) Increase your member’s “habit” of accessing her Membership services (even if only by reading the newsletter)
 - c) Increase your authority and importance to your members
 - d) Increase their loyalty and trust
 - e) Keep you always in their minds, in a positive, dynamic way

A newsletter can also be used in a variety of ways to help cement relationships or draw in new members.

A free newsletter can be used as part of your promotion strategy. You can encourage members to pass it around or forwarded it, which will help create a highly natural, organic “buzz” and provide a strong draw to pre-qualified new Members.

A low-cost monthly “insider” newsletter subscription can provide incentive for those who are cautious or starting out on a small budget to take the next step of joining your higher-ticket mentoring “inner circle”.

Your weekly newsletter will constantly remind your current Members of your value and importance in their lives.

3. **Brand your Membership Site with personality** — Remember that it’s what makes you and your site unique that will attract and keep your Members. They may think they’re joining because you can tell them how to make 1/6 scale Civil War uniform buttons, but what keeps them coming back, month after month, is their liking for and trust in you.
4. **Don’t be reactive** — Listening to every single suggestion and scrambling to add an unplanned element to your site leads to the fatal mis-

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take of trying to be all things to all people... and that never works (and will burn you out quickly)! Instead, be proactive. Do your planning.

Listening to requests and suggestions is a “must”... but do build a process to help you determine how to integrate new suggestions without destroying the flow. (If you’ve planned and prepared for this type of feedback, you’ve also set yourself up to see opportunities for new, related Membership Sites or additional offers.)

And if someone is far too “high maintenance”, give them the most basic answer to their endless questions or only answer the most important point contained in their fifteen page letter... then point them to your “Lifetime Membership” or high-ticket “Platinum Inner Circle” for more in-depth help. (This will speedily quiet those who are just habitually “needy”, and make sure you’re well-remunerated for that percentage that really do demand or need heavier interaction.)

- 5. Do be responsive** — Especially to unsubscribe or refund requests. They will happen, even to the best Membership Sites. It’s just a natural part of the cycle. Respond promptly. Reassure your customer there’s no problem refunding or canceling — and have a backend upsell, downsell or cross-sell ready, to help you make some money (and please your exiting member) on her way out the door.

And if someone has a complaint or question, make sure it gets answered competently well within the time frame you promise.

- 6. Ask simple questions, learn to read between the lines and provide options.** A percentage of your cancellations will be caused by frustration: People aren’t learning as quickly they’d like, or they’re way ahead of their peers, chomping at the bit for more content. This can lead to cancellation requests such as “there’s not enough meat in this, I need to progress more quickly, and I know all that stuff about...” Instead of saying, “Oh. Okay,” consider offering them a Lifetime Membership so they can instantly access all modules of your Site. And many a Membership has been saved because a technical glitch was acknowledged and instantly corrected, or simple, one-on-one reassurance was provided.
- 7. Provide extra bonuses and rich resources.** Surprise your members with extra, high value webinars, mp3 interviews with niche “gurus” or free eBooks. Give them access to everyday resources vital to their niche success (E.G.: Software, apps, checklists, patterns, printouts). The more you can keep them dependent on your Membership Site for their day-to-day fun or success, the “stickier” your site will be!

Even if you're not yet ready to run a Membership Site yet, start thinking about it now. You are already an expert in your field — probably more than you give yourself credit for. People already ask you questions or enjoy sharing a hobby with you, right?

And remember: The best Membership Sites start off slowly and grow with you, so you don't need to worry about being overwhelmed with huge numbers, straight away.

It's possible, even desirable, to set up your Membership Site even if you're only two or three steps ahead of your niche peers. Just be ready to show them what they need to know next, and plan for growth and success.

The good news is: Even at the slowest pace, you ought to see really tangible, dollar-figure rewards in as little as six months... if you've done your homework and planned your site "right".

Finally. The more work you put into this initial planning stage, the greater rewards you'll reap, once your Membership Site gets going — and growing!

The best membership sites start off slowly and grow with you, so you don't need to worry about being overwhelmed with huge numbers and huge responsibilities right away.

“Motivation follows action!”

Robert Ringer



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