

Membership Sites are HOT

Cash In On This 21st Century Gold Rush

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Introduction

Hi and welcome to my report on membership sites. It is my desire to awaken and educate you on this awesome opportunity that is quietly but surely sweeping the Internet by storm. Further more, I want to inspire you into action so that you too can create the lifestyle you've been dreaming of all these years.

Not often in our lives does something come along that requires so little investment but has the ability to change our lives so profoundly. Such is the case with membership sites.

It wasn't long ago, when assigned a task of finding information on a certain topic, you had to make a trip to the library to gather the information from books, magazines, tapes and CD's. Times have changed dramatically.

Fast forward to the 21st Century.

The Internet has become the information highway and you can find information on every topic or subject you want to study right from the comfort of your home.

For the most part, this information was provided for free. But, there were a few sites, such as Consumer Reports that saw the value of the information they were providing and only allowed access to enough of it to wet your appetite...to get you wanting more. If you wanted to access the remainder of the information you were after, you would have to pay a fee and join their membership site.

It wasn't long before Internet entrepreneurs realized the value of the information they were giving away and membership sites starting cropping up in every topic/niche imaginable. They became a very hot trend and remain so.

Daily, more and more individuals realize that they have the knowledge or skills or passion for a topic that is valuable to someone else...that someone else is looking for and willing to pay for.

Membership sites are the gold rush of the 21st Century and anyone who starts one now in their field of interest or expertise will be one of the first to tap into their world of potential members. The advantages of that are obvious...be one of the first, and the field is wide open for picking.

How many times have you been “denied access” when surfing on the net? You've just landed on a membership site and the owner of that membership site is generating loads of money for themselves by organizing and sharing information.

This could be you.

Discover what Internet entrepreneurs everywhere have discovered and that is...**Membership Sites are a goldmine of opportunity.**

- you get to work at home (or any where *you* choose)
- **you get to schedule yourself**
- you develop a community of friends
- you have the perfect platform for Affiliate Marketing products
- you become recognized as an expert in your field
- you have the ideal recurring income machine
- you have the opportunity to make huge amounts of money with no caps on your earnings

After I discovered this awesome Internet opportunity, I set out to learn everything I could about what was being touted as the ideal Internet business model for stable, recurring income.

I wasn't disappointed. Everything I read gave the crown to membership sites when it came to creating a reliable, residual, recurring income.

Not only do membership sites create reliable, recurring income streams you can count on month after month, they are the perfect platform to monetize your site into **multiple streams of income.**

But, the best part about it is the freedom it provides the owner. The overhead and start up fees are minimal and all you need is a desk, chair and good Internet connection. Work where you want, when you want. Now that's the kind of freedom worth striving for!

What are Membership Sites?

A membership website is an information website that offers content and products related to one niche or topic to a community of like minded individuals that share, learn and teach. Membership sites are one of the most profitable and successful business models around today.

Whatever title you choose to give them...membership, subscription, or members only sites, they all have one thing in common. They are bringing in a steady, reliable income for their owners. Membership sites are simply the best Internet business model available and a very, very hot trend in the world of information.

People join membership sites because they offer something they want. As long as they feel they are getting value for the dollar they are spending, they will remain a loyal subscriber.

Most likely, you have come across many membership sites online without really taking notice.

There are two basic types of membership sites.

- Free membership sites
- Paid/subscription membership sites

Free membership sites:

The goal of free sites is to collect your personal information such as your name and email address and use these to build an 'opt in list.' They use this list to send out future informative emails or newsletters offering their products for purchase.

Additionally, free membership sites rely on making money with back-end sales of affiliate products, Google adsense or Clickbank ads, and any ad space they sell.

Paid Membership sites:

Paid sites require payment before a member is allowed immediate or continued access to the material on the site.

There are many different ways for a paid membership site to set up payment structure. They may offer limited access with an upgrade to paid membership that allows access to videos and additional valuable content. Additionally, they can offer levels such as free, silver, gold and platinum...all offering different levels of membership.

The choices are really only limited by your imagination, your software and the needs of your particular membership model.

With a paid membership site, your revenue is created by subscriptions to your site and back end sales of affiliate products (digital or otherwise,) any ad space you sell, and rotating Google adsense ads (you can also use Clickbank ads.)

Some sites charge a registration fee just to sign up. The purpose of this fee is to eliminate unworthy buyers who join for a short period of time in order to download everything and then cancel. You will have to decide if a registration fee is to your benefit or would scare prospective members away.

A lot of paid membership sites are vehicles used to teach a certain curriculum. These sites are set up within a definite time frame allowing access to paying members while the course is being taught. Other sites are continually providing unique, valuable information to their members.

Since the advent of Web 2.0 people are no longer satisfied to be fed one way...they want to interact and be part of the action. Membership sites provide this platform with forums and blogs for its members.

People love to feel part of something special or limited in size...and, membership sites provide this.

Remember, the key is to keep your members interested. It's easier to keep an existing member than to find a new one.

Whatever model you choose, there is financial freedom hidden within.

Value of Owning a Membership Site

As people's lives grow busier, they simply don't have time to sift through all the information on the Internet trying to find that one gem they are looking for. And, even if they do find it, they can't be sure that the information they gather is true and reliable. After all, anyone can post anything on the Internet...there simply was no quality control...until membership sites surfaced.

People are more than willing to pay to have quality, reliable information they seek sorted and delivered to them in an organized manner saving them time and energy.

This frees them up to pursue their own passions and interests.

Additionally, fears started to surface about plugging any kind of personal information into the Internet and membership sites provided the safety factor and made people feel more secure.

It has been proven that members spend 10 to 20 times as much or more on products offered within paid membership sites than non paid sites. Think about it, if they are paying to read your content and share in your membership site experience, then they most likely will be interested in the products you offer as long as they are relevant to the content of your site.

Furthermore, paid membership sites create recurring income streams. Income that comes in on a steady reliable basis...month after month. They are simply the ideal recurring income platform for the 21st Century.

What do recurring, residual income streams provide? Freedom! When you have a membership site set up, you can tend to the tasks that your membership site requires and it won't matter where in the world you do it from. You can live where you want and work life around your schedule. In short, membership sites provide freedom!

Remember this, your reach extends around the world and your hours are infinite. As an Internet business owner, you are no longer limited by the size of the community or city you live in.

How many brick and mortar business' can afford to pay enough employees to stay open 24/7? Even if they can, their traffic is still pretty much limited by their geographic location.

The possibilities for a successful membership site are endless. If you work hard at keeping the content fresh, unique and satisfying to your members, the rewards can be huge.

I am not saying that membership sites are not hard work, especially in the beginning, but **YOU BENEFIT FROM YOUR OWN HARD WORK** and the rewards can be huge!

Don't be left behind, discover your own possibilities in [Crazy Cash Membership Sites](#).

Topic and Demand

Choosing Your Topic

There are really no hard core rules in regards to choosing a topic for your membership site. The most successful membership sites combine demand and passion.

Membership sites are being created in every niche/topic imaginable.

If you want to start a membership site but you're unsure about the topic, make a list of things that you are passionate about. What are your hobbies and interests? What business are you in? What do you love doing?

What **excites** you? What gets your adrenaline going?

Tapping into your own passion will keep your excitement and enthusiasm alive. Having great content is only half the battle, your site must have heart in order to keep it alive and vibrant and heart is a natural offspring when you work within your passion.

Your passion is the element that your members will bond with.

Additionally, the more on target you are with your niche, the more focused it is on a topic, the better chance you have of attracting the right customer...one who is interested in becoming a member.

Put yourself in your prospective customers shoes. What are they looking for? What are they typing into Google?

As an example: people do not go to Google and type in "gardening"...they type in what type of gardening they are looking for such as "growing a vegetable garden in South Florida" (which can be a challenge.) That would be a much better niche...a narrower more focused niche than "gardening."

Narrow your niche down to a target market and your members will find you.

Additionally, the explosion of video on the Internet has made Membership sites the perfect vehicle to reach all types of individuals...anyone who desires to learn at home:

- Stay-at-home moms: This is a huge market. Just think of how many moms would love to learn the hobby of their dreams via video right from the comfort of their homes while the little ones are sleeping or at school.
- Retired seniors: There are a lot of retired seniors that would welcome learning a new skill or the ability to gather reliable information without having to leave their homes. I know senior citizens who do not like to drive but their minds are sharp and ready to learn.
- Handicapped individuals: Membership sites are the perfect vehicle for these valuable citizens who may have to rely on others for transportation.
- Any person, of any age who desires to learn something new...or fine tune the skills they already have.

For example, recently I came across a membership site that used video to teach drawing lessons to it's members. The great thing about teaching this way is these videos or reports are available to your members any time of day or night.... whenever the mood strikes them...or whenever they have the available time. And, these videos can be viewed as often as the need arises.

What hobby are you passionate about and have the desire/ability to teach?

There are simple programs available for download that make video easy to use on your membership site. One of the most popular is Camtasia Studio. There is a fee associated with it, but they offer a free fully functional month long trial version for you to get acquainted with it first.

Membership sites are cropping up in every topic...from fishing stories (yes, there really is a membership site dedicated to "fishing stories) to care for the elderly. Any specialized knowledge, profession or personal hobby can translate into a successful membership site.

To see the possibilities and to stir your imagination, I've included an extensive list of active sites in my book, check out [Crazy Cash Membership Sites](#).

After creating this list with active links, (you would definitely be surprised at some of these!) I realized the diversity and uniqueness of membership sites.

Remember, ideally you want to be one of the first to corner your market...giving you an obvious advantage to those who come after.

Choosing your topic is probably the most important element of your membership site. You want to get off on the right foot. So, do your homework and take your time when selecting your topic. Getting it right the first time will save you weeks of anxiety and frustration...not to mention the cost.

Discovering the Demand

Equally important to the success of your membership site is the demand for the niche/topic you have chosen. Starting a membership site on a topic that is not in demand will draw few members and translate to little or no sales for you.

Not only must you have demand for your project/product, but you must have access to plenty of information products that you can offer as gifts and incentives for your members. If you have chosen a popular topic this should not present a problem.

Some things to check out that will help you discover demand is:

- the latest trends,
- the top news makers
- current events and recent hot selling magazines
- books on the best seller list

Equally important, are sites on the Internet that will help you to define how much interest is in your topic or to help you select a topic:

- Google Zeitgeist
- Yahoo Buzz
- eBay Pulse

Additionally, a good keyword search tool can help you to narrow your niche down to the most popular sub niches within your subject. Type in the keywords you are interested in and pay close attention to the results. Plug in your results several times as this will help to identify the hottest sub niches within your niche.

There are many keyword tools available online that you can purchase but there are also excellent keyword tools that you can use for free. Two of the most popular are:

- Google Adwords
- WordTracker Keywords

All of these sites are aides that will help you discover the most popular trends and keyword searches within your niche. The hotter your niche topic, the more chance you will have of drawing traffic and converting that traffic to paying members. And, isn't that why you started it in the first place?

The key here is research. Go where your audience is and research. Become one of them and find out what they want or as the Guru's say:

"The Key is to find a market first that spends money, then find out what they want and give it to them."

Construction and Content

Software and Scripts

There are a few basic things that have to be accomplished before deciding on a Membership script or software to use. These tasks need to be completed whether you have a regular website or membership site.

First, you must decide on a domain name that reflects your product or niche. It is always best to keep these as short and memorable as possible. Once you've chosen a name, check to see if it is available and register it in your name. Once you have it registered, your next step is to find hosting (unless hosting comes with your membership site set-up.)

There are plenty of great hosting sites such as D9 hosting that can accommodate all your needs...domain purchases as well as hosting. The best thing about using D9 is that the owners are and were previous Internet marketers, so they know the needs of online marketers and are always on top of things.

Now it's time to decide on software or a script for your site.

Creating your own software is not a good choice for most people unless you are a programmer or you know someone who is. Even if you have the money to create your own script, creating your own software could set you back months and is not using your time wisely.

For those with little techie knowledge there are "turn-key" solutions that will keep things simple and easy to navigate keeping the process pleasurable for you.

- MemberGate: provides hosting, content and subscription management solutions in one package. You can pay the total fee upfront or pay over time. Simplifying things will leave you free to create great, intriguing content for your members.
- MemberSpeed: is another fully automated membership site option for you. You can either pay monthly or yearly, leasing the software, or you can make a one time payment and own it.

Another very popular option is to integrate a Content Management Solution with a good Subscription Management Solution. Your CMS will take care of storing and delivering your content (most include a "drip-feed" function) and your subscription software takes care of all the tasks having to do with your subscriptions such as level of payments, subscriptions and cancellations.

There are many, many choices for Content Management Solutions with more entering the market every day. A couple of the more popular ones are:

- WordPress: a great blogging platform that has also tuned into a great membership site Content Management Solution. Just add plug-ins as needed.
- Joomla: another very popular choice

There are just too many choices to list. In fact, I saw a site not long ago that had 50 of the best listed. So, if there were 50 listed, you can imagine how many exist! Make sure you do your homework and check any out that seem like a good fit.

You will also need to decide upon a great subscription management solution to integrate with your CMS. Two of the most popular are:

- aMember: aMember provides additional plug-ins that you can purchase as your site grows and your needs change.
- DLGuard: supports a huge list of payment processors (a lot of scripts only support Paypal) and is a popular choice to manage subscriptions.

Once again, just Google for choices, there are plenty of them.

Whatever program or script you decide on, it will be dictated by your needs, both financial and technical as well as the needs of your website.

To avoid spending needlessly or having to start over, take time to do your homework and study the options available to you. The last thing you want to present on your site is confusion...the quickest way to loose members.

Creating Great Content

Creating content for your membership site should start with your own knowledge base. Content is where your creativity comes alive.

This content can be presented through audio and video as well as the written word although written content continues to be the favored avenue.

Finding content for your site can be as easy as going to the Library and scanning through magazines and books. Remember, your content must not be something that is easily found on the web. It must be unique and valuable to your subscriber or they will lose interest and leave.

Content can be presented through:

- articles
- pictures
- video files
- audio files
- CD's and DVD's as well as digital downloads.

Your membership site could contain course material, reviews, spreadsheets, surveys or the results of tests and studies.

Should you be providing the content, having a backlog of existing articles to use can help you keep your site fresh and inviting without over stressing your ability to create weekly articles....especially in the beginning.

Try and stay ahead of the game...make things as easy as possible for you so that you maintain your excitement and continue to enjoy the process. The last thing you want to do is kill your enthusiasm.

Bear in mind that reading on the Internet is slightly different than reading a regular book and most people simply skim through. Remember to provide enough white space so that their eyes do not get tired.

Article sites are some of the best sites to use for *ideas*. And there is no shortage of these. Just Google for choices.

Make sure you are only using these sites to **gather ideas and inspire yourself**. You do not want to use content that has already been published. The more valuable and unique your content, the better chance you have of retaining your member.

Here are some areas to tap into for ideas for content:

- Public Domain works
- Article sites
- PLR Material

Many people don't realize that written articles, books, music and art become Public Domain once the patent or copyright expires. This material is then freely available to use legally without any obligation what so ever.

Private Label Rights are another excellent source of content. Make sure if you go this route that these packages have been limited in distribution. Also, the content must be added to and changed up dramatically to provide unique value to your paying subscriber. Take the time to make it your own first.

Most of this type content will be filler content. Make sure you combine it with original, well written, unique content. This is what keeps your members coming back for more.

Another avenue for great content is to provide expert interviews. Tap into family and friends first (think of all the teachers you know)...you may just have an expert in your own backyard. Next check out book authors. They are always looking for good publicity and would most likely be happy to help you.

Outsourcing

There will come a time with your Internet business that the tasks you need to accomplish outweigh the time you have to accomplish these tasks. This is when you must look into outsourcing.

In fact, it is at this critical moment in your business that if you do not tend to the growth needs of your site, the only thing that will suffer is your site. Outsourcing is your key.

There are numerous outsourcing sources on the Internet covering everything from creating a script to writing your content and providing customer service to your members.

There are bidding sites such as Elance where you post your project and people bid on it as well as comprehensive Ghostwriting services like ExquisiteWriting.

Ghostwriters have been around forever. Do your homework, check out their reputation and some of their work. Finding a qualified writer to help with your content can take a lot of the pressure off of you. They can be your "ace" when you're up against the wall...or have a time frame that's rushing you.

Most likely, if you have a membership site for any length of time, you will have to outsource some of your content at one time or another. This is perfectly acceptable.

Your job is to make sure the content is of high quality, offers value to your members, is relevant to your site, is presented in the right format and is something your readers are interested in...*before* you place it on your site.

Remember, you're going to put your name on this work...you don't want to taint your reputation by using inferior quality content. The only thing that will get you is membership cancellations.

Bottom line is there is plenty of great content to be found if you do your research. And, don't forget your public library. They contain a wealth of magazines and books for you to tap into. Browse through the books and check out the table of contents for ideas.

Traffic and Profits

Driving Traffic to Your Site

Driving traffic to your membership website is probably the single most important element to a successful site. Converting that traffic to paid members comes in a close second.

Your marketing program is your life line. Without good marketing, no one will know you exist. Successfully marketing your site will get it seen, heard and read...and all the traffic you need to create that recurring income stream.

You can start your marketing campaign before you launch your site, in fact, it is wise to do so. If you have an email list, use it. Announce your plans ahead of time, get them curious and hungry to know more.

Some of the marketing tactics used to drive traffic are:

- **PPC:** Pay per Click...one of the easiest ways to drive traffic quickly.
- **Keywords and SEO:** Carefully selecting keywords and phrases to use within your membership sites content, title and subtitle can help you with SEO (Search Engine Optimization)
- **Link Building:** The best way to build link traffic to your site is to be one yourself first. Choose sites that you want to work with and a make valuable comments on their site.
- **Joint Ventures:** Joint venture with those who already have a long list of customers. But, before you can ask for their help, make yourself known...be of assistance to them first and then approach them with a JV.
- **Social Networking:** Is there anyone who hasn't heard about FaceBook or Twitter by now? Make sure your signature links back to your site on everything you sign.
- **Blog:** Your blog is another great platform to use to point people to your site. Use it as a springboard to getting visitors to your membership site. Make sure your blog's content is similar or complimentary to your site.

- **Chat rooms and forums:** Go where the people hang out. Become a trusted, contributing member and then introduce them to your site.
- **Article Marketing:** Distribute quality, interesting articles about your membership sites content to the article sites. Make use of their signature box provided at the end to promote your site.
- **Newsletters:** Establish trust and build relationships with your newsletter. This is a great platform to offer valuable freebies to your list.
- **Affiliate Program:** This is probably your most powerful tool. Essentially you use the efforts of other to make your product visible. Whatever software you choose, make sure it includes a strong affiliate program that you can implement.
And, **pay them well.** If marketing is the life line of your business, they your affiliates are the life blood of your subscriptions. Run contests and reward them for their efforts.

Once you have generated traffic to your site, use squeeze pages or opt-in pages to entice them to sign up for your newsletter or email campaign. Offer them something of value for free in exchange for their address.

Creating Multiple Streams of Income

There are many ways to profit from your membership site. The most obvious is the money you generate from your subscriptions. This can be huge. If you have a site that costs \$20 a month and you multiply that by 100 members, you have generated \$2000 a month from just one site.

With the world as your market gaining 100 members should not be that difficult. Charge them \$30 a month and you've generated \$3000. You see how easy it is to build on that number.

I've seen membership sites subscriptions run from \$4.00 a month to a whopping \$1,800 a month (that's a true number!) Everything in between is possible.

The beauty of membership sites is the back end sales they can generate for you...creating multiple streams of income within your one site.

- **Selling Clickbank or PayDot.com digital products.** Browse through their marketplace for products that would be of value to your members and complement your site.
- **Cross-selling** is a time tested tactic that has been used successfully for years. Basically when someone buys a product from you, take the opportunity to introduce them to other products that will compliment their purchase.
- **Upselling** is similar to cross-selling except you are trying to move them up the scale price wise.
- **Make use of Google** adsense and Clickbank rotating ads.

All these are excellent ways of generating money for you...all within your membership site. Just make sure you don't distract them by cluttering your site with non related products.

Closing Thoughts

When you think about it, we have always paid for great information. We pay for newspapers, magazines (think of all those subscriptions), books, manuals, and video.

Millions of people pay for cable television or Satellite T.V. just to get expanded choices. We pay for private education in schools, colleges and universities...all providing information and instruction. People expect to pay for any kind of hobby instruction and lessons and don't think twice about it.

Membership sites are no different. If you have a special skill or hobby, are an expert in a certain field or you're just plain passionate about a topic and want to share what you know, then membership sites are your ticket.

Not only can they provide you an excellent recurring income stream (this can be substantial) they are the ideal way to showcase your talents. Additionally, they provide personal freedom at a level seldom seen before the advent of the Internet. Very few jobs allow you to work when you want and live where you want.

Creating a membership site can be both rewarding and fulfilling. With all the easy to use scripts entering the market daily, membership sites are here to stay.

There's no time like now. Be one of the first to create a membership site in your chosen field and grab all those hot prospects while the field is full.

Remember, nothing will happen unless you take Action!

I hope this short report has inspired you enough to want to learn more about this exciting opportunity available to anyone with a vision and computer. For an expanded list of must have modules for your membership site and a list of active membership sites to inspire you (some will surprise you!) as well as more tips, ideas and resources, check out [Crazy Cash Membership Sites](#).

Remember, if its **freedom** you're after, then membership sites are your ticket.

Good luck to you!

Kathy Dobson

Dedicated to Freedom

<http://www.kathydobson.com>

