

MEMBERSHIP MOGUL

THE EASY WAY TO BUILD A PROFITABLE MEMBERSHIP WEBSITE



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Introduction: Why Membership Sites Are Perfect For Passive Income



If you're interested in making money online, then it's probably because you like the idea of having more freedom to live and work wherever and however you want. The benefits of working online are many and varied and extend into every aspect of your life.

But in order for you to make the very most from this way of working, you also need to make sure you choose the perfect business model. Working online on its own does not necessarily equate to an ideal lifestyle; rather the benefits come when you work online in the *right way*. And let me tell you: creating a membership site is *definitely* the right way.

Working online is easy. If you are in a job that's fairly flexible, then you should be able to ask your employer if you can work from home and simply log into the company's network whenever you start working. And sure, this will bring some benefits: you'll be able to stay in bed longer and stop

commuting and you'll have the luxury of being able to drink tea, listen to music and generally create a comfortable environment.

But you're still ultimately a slave to your job. You're still trading 'time for hours' and you'll still need to be available for the hours between 9am-5pm. You'll probably also need to be near the phone and you'll be expected to output a certain amount of work every day. That means you probably can't leave the house and work outdoors in case you lose your internet connection. And it means you can decide to stop working for the day and visit a friend instead. Worst of all, you can still be 'told off' by your boss – reprimanded like a child!

The same goes for creating your own online business. If you're a web designer for example, then you have the freedom to decide when you work on projects. But you probably still have deadlines and to all extents and purposes your clients *are* your bosses. If you fail to complete

This is why so many people find the idea of blogging desirable. All you have to do is to create and manage a website that you *hopefully* find fascinating and really enjoy writing about. You'll get to experience a lot of the satisfaction that comes from running your own business. And you get *passive* income, meaning that you'll earn money while you sleep.

But even this isn't perfect. Because one day, you might earn \$200 and the next day you might earn \$10.

It only takes a change to Google's search algorithm and you can lose *all* of your progress. What's more, is that it takes actually a huge amount of time to build up the amount of traffic that you need to make a big profit from a blog. This is especially true if you are planning to use pay-per-click advertising but it's equally the case if you are selling your own product.

Think about it: how often do you click ads on other websites? This is why it typically takes 1K visitors for you to generate just one or two clicks and the same goes for sales of products. It's a huge amount of work before you start earning *anything* and there's no guarantee it will ever get to the point where it can provide a liveable salary.

Enter: Recurring, Passive Income

This is where subscription sites come in and offer an incredibly appealing alternative. Essentially, a subscription site is a site that users pay to subscribe to. This normally works by first enticing the reader with some free content and showing them the kind of entertainment/information/value that you're capable of providing. Once they're hooked, you then make sure they know that they need to subscribe in order to gain access to your very best content and to get frequently updated.

So what's so different about this? Well for starters, it means that you can much more easily convert visitors to paying customers seeing as they're not having to put down a large amount of money and seeing as they know what they're getting right away.

More importantly though, it means that the money is recurring and much more predictable. Unlike a regular blog that can very much fluctuate, having subscribers means you probably have some kind of agreement or standing order set up. This means that you can practically guarantee that you'll be able to earn a set amount of money each week, month or quarter.

And that very quickly starts to add up...

So say you currently have people subscribing for \$5 a month. If your content is good, then you could realistically convince one in every 1-10,000 people to sign up. But it's very possible the very first person who visits might sign up! There's an element of luck but as soon as you get that first subscription you're in business – and \$5 a month quickly adds up to \$60 a year.

Eventually, you can work whenever you like and add as much content as you like (we'll look at how later on) and still know for *sure* that you'll be able to earn X amount of money per month and per year. This is very much living the dream – all the freedom of passive incomes but with all the security of a well-paid job!

Can people unsubscribe? Sure they can! But the likelihood of everyone unsubscribing all at once is incredibly slim and in most cases you'll have more new visitors signing up than old visitors leaving.

What You Will Learn

This book is going to explain in great detail exactly how you go about creating your own subscription service.

We'll see how to build a website, how to make sure that people want to subscribe, how to implement a recurring fee and how to thrive in this market space.

What we'll also see is that there are multiple subscription business models that can work online when you know how.

We'll look at a selection so that you can decide on the perfect type of subscription site/content for you.

Ultimately, we're going to give you the tools to take the subjects that you love and then turn them into a stable source of income that will pay out even while you're sleeping.

Specifically, you will learn:

- How to create a website or blog
- How to turn your site into a subscription site
- How to make content that will make people want to subscribe
- How to promote your site
- How to price your subscription site
- How to add extra monetization to your offering
- How to create a subscription app
- How to create subscription video
- The importance of building a community
- How to use quizzes and other forms of media
- What you can learn from the best membership sites

Membership Mogul

- The strategies and tools you can learn to succeed even beyond those...
- And much more!

Chapter 1: An Explanation of the Membership Business Model



So now you have a good idea of what a membership site is, let's look a little deeper into the nitty gritty of how all this works.

No doubt you're probably already familiar with the idea of a blog. Chances are that you have several blogs that you already read regularly and enjoy. Maybe you like reading *IGN* to get news about games, films and comics.

Perhaps you prefer the more highbrow content over at *Forbes*. Perhaps you love learning about passive income at *Smart Passive Income* or maybe you have an Android phone and like to stay up to date with news and apps from *Android Authority*.

Tim Ferriss has an excellent blog about lifestyle design (which is very much relevant to this topic!) and *The Art of Manliness* and *Brain Pickings* are great if you want some thoughtful posts that go really in-depth. For fitness, be sure to check out *Breaking Muscle* or *Bodybuilding.com*.

Whatever your chosen blog is, chances are that you love getting news from it or reading the latest feature/entertainment piece. You probably read it with your morning coffee.

But now imagine that this site stopped being free and you suddenly had to pay in order to access it. That would be a pain but if you really loved the site enough or if you relied on it, then you would probably be willing to part with some cash.

This is precisely how a subscription site works – it gets you hooked and then charges you in order to gain fuller access. In some cases, that means that you can't read anything until you have membership. In other cases, it means that you can read some stories but need to pay in order to gain unbridled access to the most 'exclusive' content.

Either way, the objective is that you have something very desirable behind a pay wall.

How to Get There

So how do we build ourselves to this point? Firstly, you of course need to have a website and this needs to be something that people want to read and that has a desirable value proposition.

You'll build this up just as you would any other blog. So that means you need to pick your niche, being careful to choose something that is a popular niche but not a completely saturated market.

At the same time, you need to think about the kind of niche that people are willing to spend money on.

Put it this way: people will pay \$1,000 for a course on how to make money online, how to get better at dating or how to become fit and healthy. But they won't pay that for a course on sewing... Keep this in mind but also try to be original so that you have a USP and so that you can find markets that haven't already been swamped with content.

More than ever, it is important here to focus on providing value for your visitors and creating content that people will want to read. So that means not trying to sell anything and not just trying to rank with generic content. It means thinking about the long term by building that trust and that loyalty.

That means thinking about what your visitors take from the content and making sure that each time they read anything you publish, they come away feeling inspired or entertained and with lots of good ideas and/or useful information that they can employ.

You have to find new angles and interesting ideas and make sure that your audience are consistently excited to see what comes next. If you can manage that, then you'll steadily build an audience that relies on your content.

Now you need to promote that blog like you would any other. That means building links, posting to social media and ideally building a mailing list as well. Build that following on the strength of the content and make sure you have a strong brand to push it.

Now you have two options:

1. Suddenly introduce a pay wall so that *all* your content is off-limits and they have to pay to access it.
2. Gradually create your pay wall and fill it with more and more enticing content – using your other content to promote the paid content. This is the easier (and recommended) of the two methods.

You can also use other things to entice your readers – which might mean offering an ebook, offering a community (in fact this is very important) or even introducing some kind of 'software as a service'.

Chapter 2: Types of Membership Site



Before you create your site though, let's rewind a moment and consider what your options are and what types of membership sites are out there for you to try and emulate. You might be surprised to find that there are multiple different types, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Membership Blogs/Content Sites

The first option is to create a blog or maybe a news site and to make this into a membership site. The general idea here is that you're creating lots of fresh content that people will very much want to read.

You're then charging people for the privilege of gaining access to all your new content as you create it and in that way it will work a little like a magazine subscription or a newspaper subscription.

You can even turn this into an 'ezine' which means you'll update all the content at once about once a month, often in an attractive format, saved as a PDF and with lots of attractive images and additional media.

Sometimes these kinds of membership sites are referred to as 'content mills' as you're constantly churning out more and more content. However, there are ways that you can make this more manageable – for example by hiring someone to create the content for you!

The Evergreen Membership Site

This is basically a site that is filled with tons of content and perhaps other types of media. You might have ebooks, blog posts, podcasts, videos and more – and all of this will together offer value to the reader.

The great thing about this, is that once you've reached a certain level, you won't actually have to update the content any more at all! That is to say that there's enough benefit to being a member here, enough content to sift through, that you won't need to keep creating more.

This can essentially be considered the 'end goal' for many membership sites, though in some cases you can come straight out of the gate with this type of offer – especially if you have lots of old content from previous businesses.

This is the truest type of 'passive income' that there is. That's because you're actually not going to have to do *any* work in order to keep getting new customers and to keep getting recurring revenue from those who have already signed up.

Sure, there may be a little maintenance and yes, you may want to advertise and promote your package more. But for the most part, this is can provide its own momentum and grow in revenue while you do very little!

Software as a Service

While this isn't traditionally considered a membership site, it is essentially the exact same thing. This basically means that you'll be offering some kind of service via a web app and sometimes this can straddle the line between content and service.

For example, let's say that you created a website that provided lots of markets in a particular niche. Maybe this is a website that, for example, found websites that were looking for writers.

If your blog collated these, then this would be a great service to provide for writers and that way you could charge people to use your site. This could easily straddle the line between a 'service' and content.

Slightly closer to the service side of things meanwhile might be a site that helped people to learn to meditate through guided meditation (just like the Headspace app) or maybe some kind of set of online calculators.

Courses

Another option is to create a set of courses and learning materials that people can subscribe to. This is an excellent option as you are providing a very clear and obvious 'value proposition' and you have a very obvious target audience to market your site to. At the same time, people are used to paying for education and in theory this should offer real value in return by helping them to get a certain job or acquire a certain skill.

In order to create a membership site with courses, you will need to fill it with raw materials like videos, textbooks and courses but this can then be fairly 'evergreen'. It's also possible to create this kind of content using a mailing list via an autoresponder.

The Community Site

One of the best things you can do to create a membership site that thrives is to build a community. In other words, have a central topic that people can discuss and then provide a 'members' only' area for people who have paid.

This is a brilliant strategy for numerous reasons:

- a) The social element is very compelling. People love feeling like a 'part' of something and they love having privileged access. If you speak about this in the right way, you can make it very desirable.
- b) Communities create their own content! This means that once you have built it up to be big enough, the rest will take care of itself. The site will climb the search engines because it will keep getting new content added and people will even promote and share the site for you. You have to moderate but again, this means making money while doing very little!

Combos

Of course in many cases, your membership site is not going to fall into just one of these categories. In all likelihood, a community site is still going to have a blog if only to bring in new visitors and to clearly define what your site is about.

Likewise, if you have an evergreen site then you can make the prospect of signing up a little sweeter by also introducing some additional free materials that make it closer to a service: that might mean that you have calculators or just the odd video.

What's more is that most types of membership site will at least *start out* as content mills. This is the easiest way to get people interested and to start building up your audience.

Alternatives to Websites

Note that there are also several alternative methods to creating membership content which we touched on briefly in the introduction. Some of the top examples include:

YouTube Channel

YouTube now has the option to create members-only content. This means that you can create a large list of free subscribers and then charge a little extra for your very best premium content. This works particularly well as videos give you the chance to create a real sense of rapport with your audience and YouTube can handle the route to market and even the payment processing for you.

Apps

Another great example is to create a mobile app that charges a subscription fee. This is something that's actually becoming increasingly popular and it's a great way to get around some of the challenges that face mobile app developers when trying to monetize their products through other means.

Mailing List

As briefly mentioned, a mailing list can also be a subscription service. This works particularly well if you are creating some kind of course that lends itself well to being split into 'lessons'.

Physical Products

Essentially, a membership site is simply the natural evolution of a magazine. It stands to reason then that you might combine the two by having a magazine with a website component.

Likewise, you can also create a subscription service that provides some kind of physical products from a website. This might mean a curated selection of items that will appear to a particular type of person, or it might mean supplies/consumables such as clothing, food or shaving products.

This is branching out from digital-only models that most people lean to but actually it's surprisingly not that much of a stretch to offer some kind of 'goodie bag' or physical incentive to make your subscription service more appealing.

You can do this by drop shipping or simply by buying items in bulk very cheaply. This can also be achieved through some kind of partnership, in which case you'll be promoting the product to a wider audience in exchange for getting some inventory to give away for free.

Prize Drawer

One last one: prize drawer! Simply enter all your members into a prize drawer and sell the opportunity to win money or some other kind of appealing prize.


And remember: you don't have to pick just one of these options. Think about the resources available to you and what you're good at and then include as many incentives as you can while having a clear value proposition and clear target audience.

Chapter 3: Examples of Successful Membership Sites




It's one thing to talk about how a membership site works but quite another to actually see one in action. Let's take a look now at some of the very most popular examples of membership sites so that you can see how they work and hopefully replicate some of their success...

The Times (www.thetimes.co.uk)



[Members Login](#) [Helpline: 0800 068 4965](#) [Live Chat](#)

[Membership Packs](#) [Membership Benefits](#) [Special Offers](#) [FAQ](#)



The Digital Pack


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- Smartphone app
- 7 days access to both websites
- Access to Times+

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a week for 12 weeks
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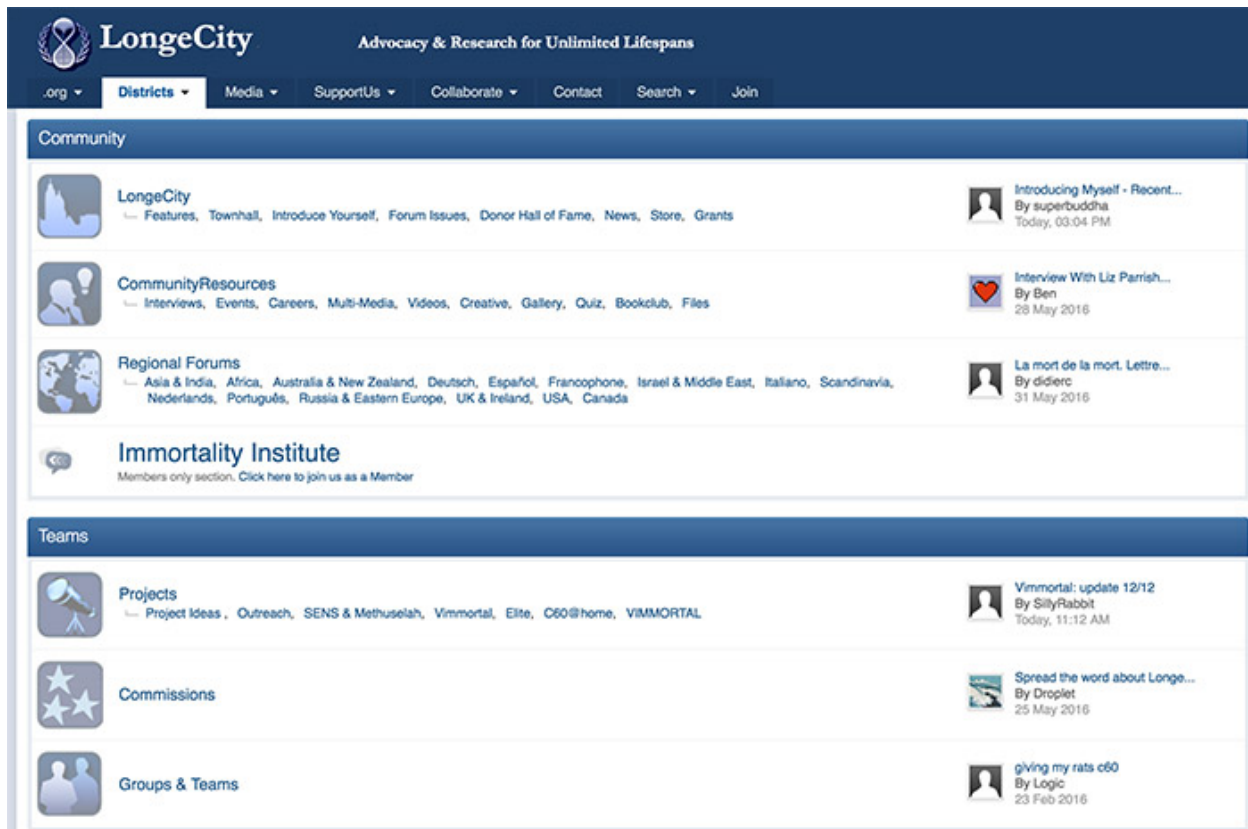
[View all membership options available](#)

The Times is a UK newspaper that also has a website. In order to read the headlines, you need to subscribe but you can read the first two paragraphs of each piece.

This works well because the brand is very well known and because the small snippet is often enough to get people wanting to read more. For someone who uses this paper as their main source of news, subscribing and being able to get it on their tablets and other devices is a very appealing option.

This is particularly true seeing as the first 12 weeks cost just £12 (about \$18). For just £1 for one week, the price is low enough that it's going to seem negligible and that reduces what is called 'buyers' guilt' over spending the money!

LongeCity Forums (www.longecity.org/forum)



This is an example of a community that only lets those members post in certain places and to become a 'virtual shareholder' in the website and 'determine future initiatives.

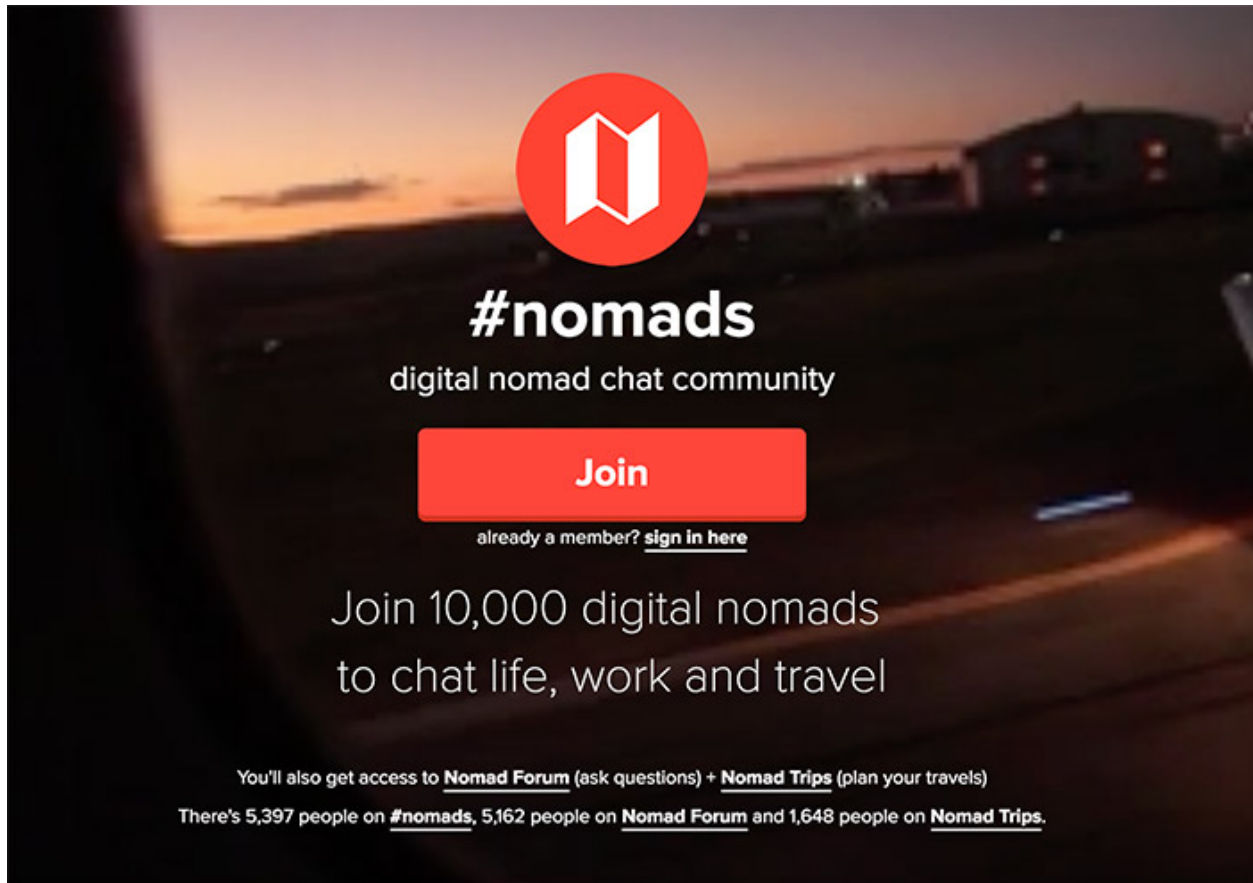
Truth be told, you can get a lot of what the site offers for free. So why do people sign up? There are a number of reasons but what makes this work is that it seems like an exciting underground movement for anyone who is interested in this kind of stuff.

LongeCity is a website that's all about 'life extension' (living longer) and nootropics. It looks at cutting edge science and applies it in a unique way. This makes it essentially a counter culture and an 'underground movement' and it's something that people want to feel part of. There's a similar appeal to being a member of a secret hacking group, or of a society of poets.

Members get to feel at once like they are at the cutting edge and that they are somewhat 'superior' to people who aren't part of the community.

This essentially has the same appeal as being a Free Mason – or of being a part of a secret club when you're a kid.

Hashtag Nomads (www.hashtagnomads.com)



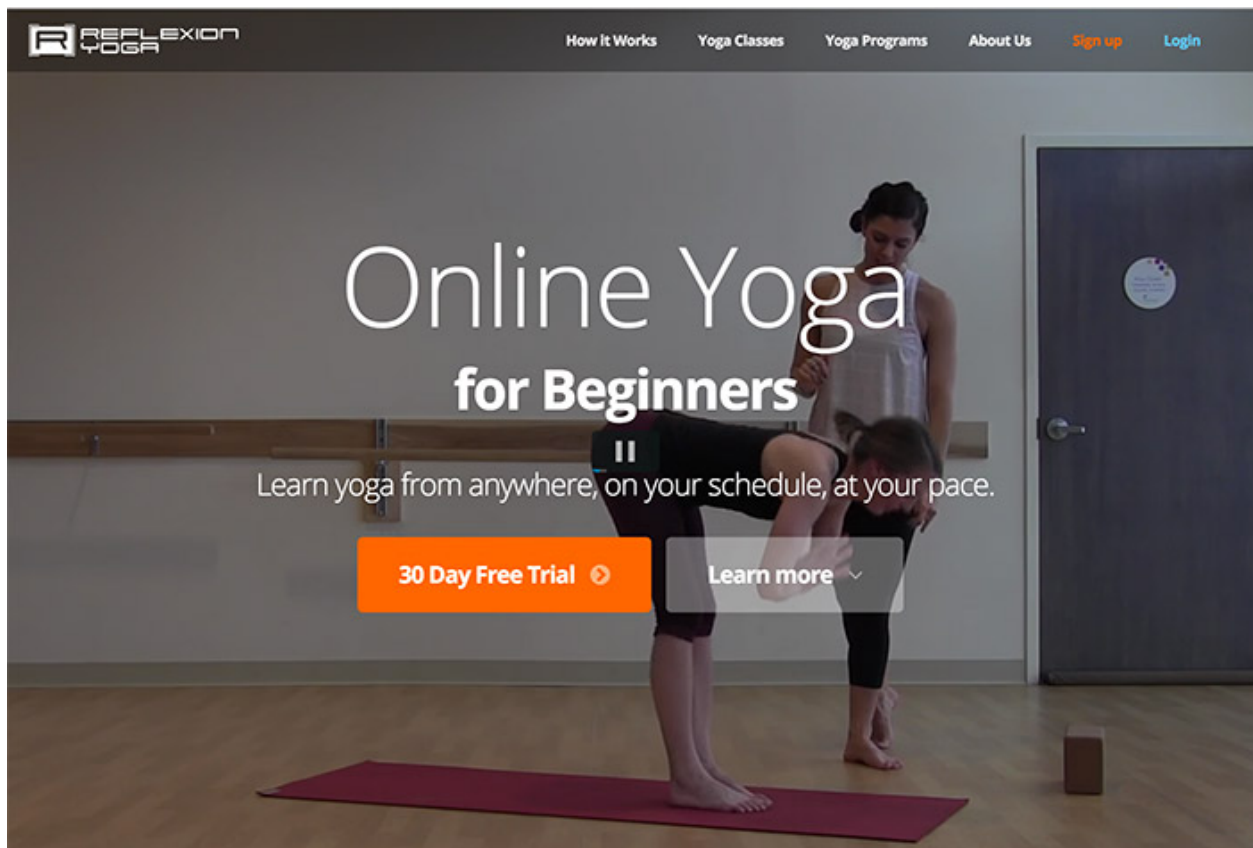
Hashtag Nomads is a similar offering to LongeCity except with even more to offer.

A 'digital nomad' is someone who works on the road and uses their laptop to travel the world while living online. This is exactly what *you'll* be able to do once you have your membership site set up if you are so inclined! This is who Hashtag Nomads is aimed at.

This then has the advantage of being a great community site and like LongeCity, people will get a kick out of feeling part of something exclusive and exciting. It's also a place for people with similar lifestyles to discuss their daily challenges and meet like-minded individuals.

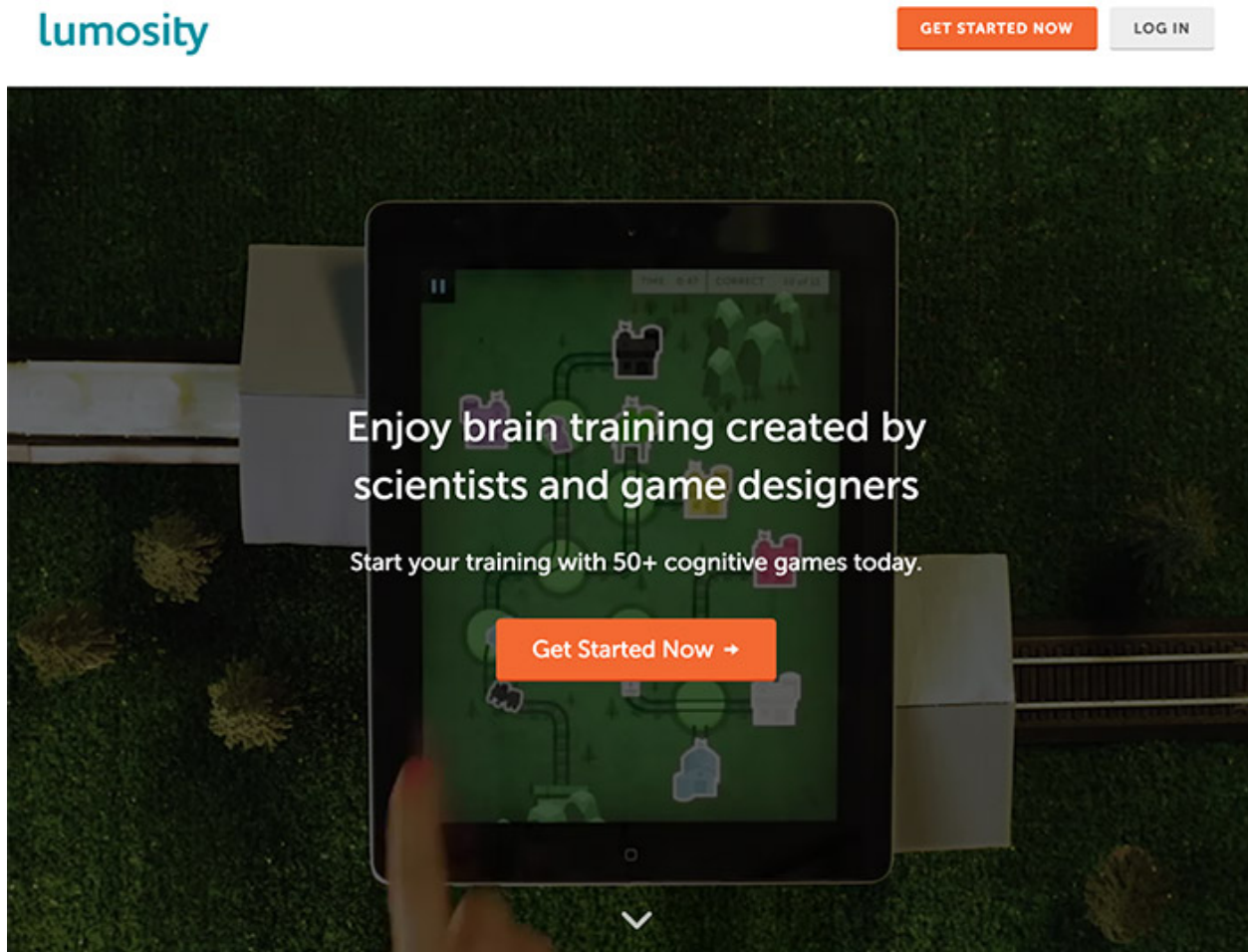
What's more though, is that Hashtag Nomads is *also* a place where people can find work. Job listings are posted here and people also network to find love and career opportunities. That means that this one portal can offer a *ton* of value to a specific kind of person in order to earn its price of entry.

Reflexion Yoga (www.reflexionyoga.com)



A great example of a membership site where people can learn a specific skill. Of course this one is all about yoga and provides a large amount of content for the money. This is a very polished and well put-together site that manages to appear more like a premium product than payment for a website. It also offers a '30 Day Free Trial' which we'll discuss in more detail later on.

Lumosity.com (www.lumosity.com)



This is a website that is as much a service as content. Sign up to Lumosity and you'll gain access to a number of online tests and games, each of which is aimed at increasing brain power and specifically things like memory, attention and creativity. Members gain access to the full selection of games and tests as well as being able to log their performance and see their progress over time.

Chapter 4: How to Build Your Membership Site



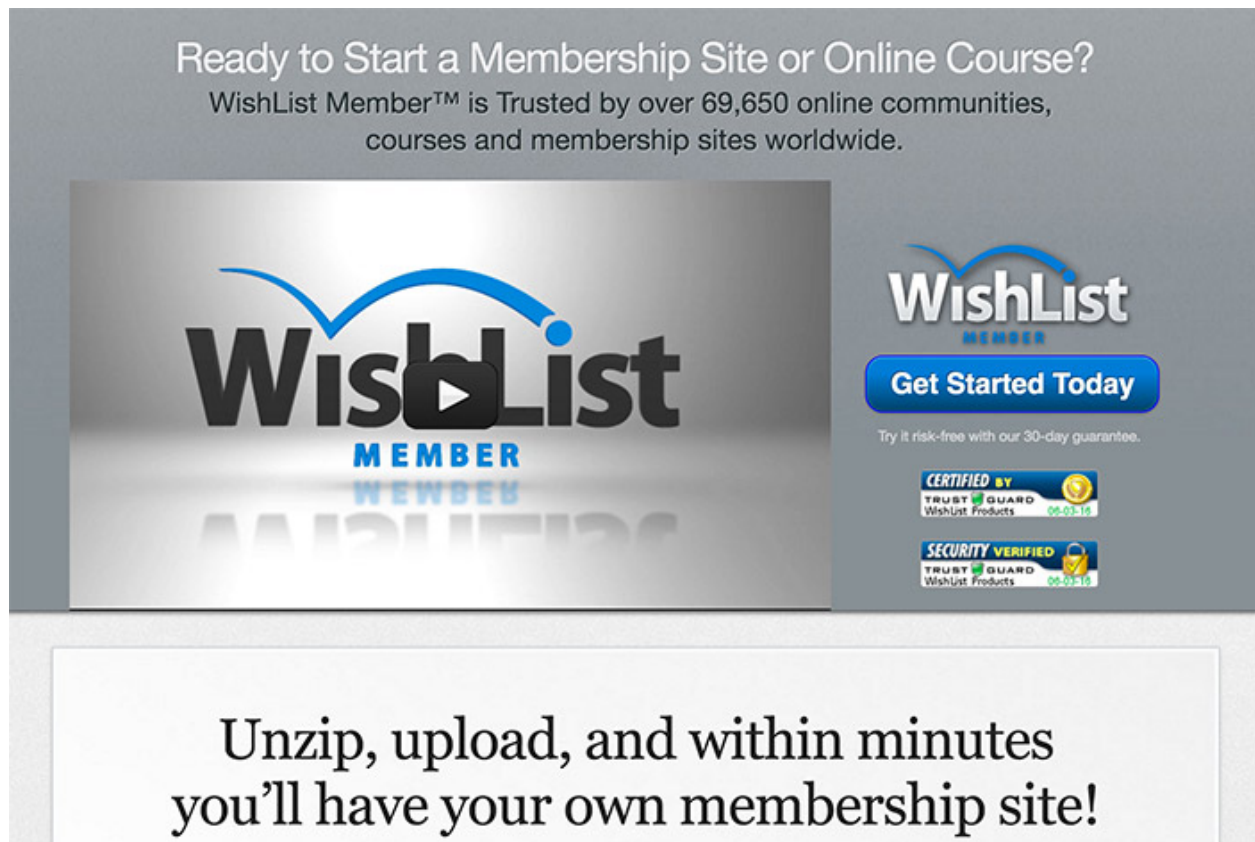
So with that all in mind, you first need to build yourself a blog that will serve as the lynchpin of your whole business model. This website will most often be a WordPress site, which makes it very easy to build. First, buy yourself some hosting and a domain name that will work with your chosen brand or niche.

Then create a WordPress site on top of this. Assuming that your hosting package comes with CPanel (a control panel that comes bundled with most web space these days), then you can do this through a 'one click install'.

The Best Membership Site Plugins

It's then pretty easy to go ahead and make your membership site: you just need to choose the right plugin that will automatically allow you to start accepting payment and controlling who can and cannot see your page.

Many different plugins exist but some to consider include 'WishList Member Plugin' or 'Memberful'.



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TRUST GUARD
WishList Products 00-01-10

Unzip, upload, and within minutes
you'll have your own membership site!

It really is that easy and these should then allow you to decide precisely which pages will be off-limits to most people and the best plugins will also let you set up multi-level access and more.

Another great option is 'MemberMouse'.

Compare the differences and see which option is the best for your specific type of membership site: how do you want to collect payment? Do you want to charge monthly or weekly? How much does each plugin cost?

Again, the best options are:

- MemberMouse (www.membermouse.com)
- Memberful (www.memberful.com)
- WishList Member (<http://member.wishlistproducts.com>)

You can also do this through a number of ecommerce platforms. For example, it's possible to do it through Shopify (www.shopify.com) by using a plugin like Charge-Rabbit.

To be honest though, it's easier, simpler and preferable to do it all through WordPress. Apart from anything else, this prevents you from having to send your visitor to some other website in order to enter their payment details!

Now create a sales page that will promote the benefits of your membership site and consider adding extra things here like an ebook, a video course or some other kind of incentive. Make sure to detail exactly what your membership offers and why your visitors should consider signing up and put it all here in a very persuasive way so that you can capture and convert as many people as possible through this one page.

In order to do this, you can use another Plugin called 'Optimize Press' (www.optimizepress.com). Optimize Press is a sales page creator that helps you to build highly optimized pages that convert visitors into customers. It *also* has a membership tool though, which allows you to build both aspects of your business model into a single solution. Volusion has a similar all-in-one option and can combine your mailing list with your membership site.

More Tools

Accepting Payment

Depending on the plugin you use, there are various options for accepting payment. However, one of the most popular methods is to get paid via PayPal, so a useful thing to do is to sign up for PayPal so you have an account.

This works well because it's a tool that most of your visitors will be familiar with, it's secure and it handles all of the payment processing for you. What's more, is that PayPal is something many users will already be signed up for. This means that they can choose to subscribe to your site without even having to enter any details – they just need their PayPal password.

This lets you do something very important, which is to overcome one of the key 'barriers to sale'. A barrier to sale is anything that normally prevents people from clicking buy even though they actually want the product – in this case, it's the worry that the payment might be unsecure and that they'll have to input all their details again. If you use PayPal, it's much easier to convince them to make an impulsive purchase and just enter their PayPal password.

Autoresponder

An autoresponder is a tool that allows you to build a mailing list and then manage that mailing list automatically. It also allows you to send messages out to everyone *on* said list and to stagger those messages. This means that you can create an email course for example and then message each member each instalment of course with just the right amount of time between each lesson.

There are a lot of different autoresponders to choose from but some of the best known are MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com) Aweber

(www.aweber.com) and GetResponse (www.getresponse.com). As mentioned, Volusion also can be used as a mailing list.

Creating Your Content

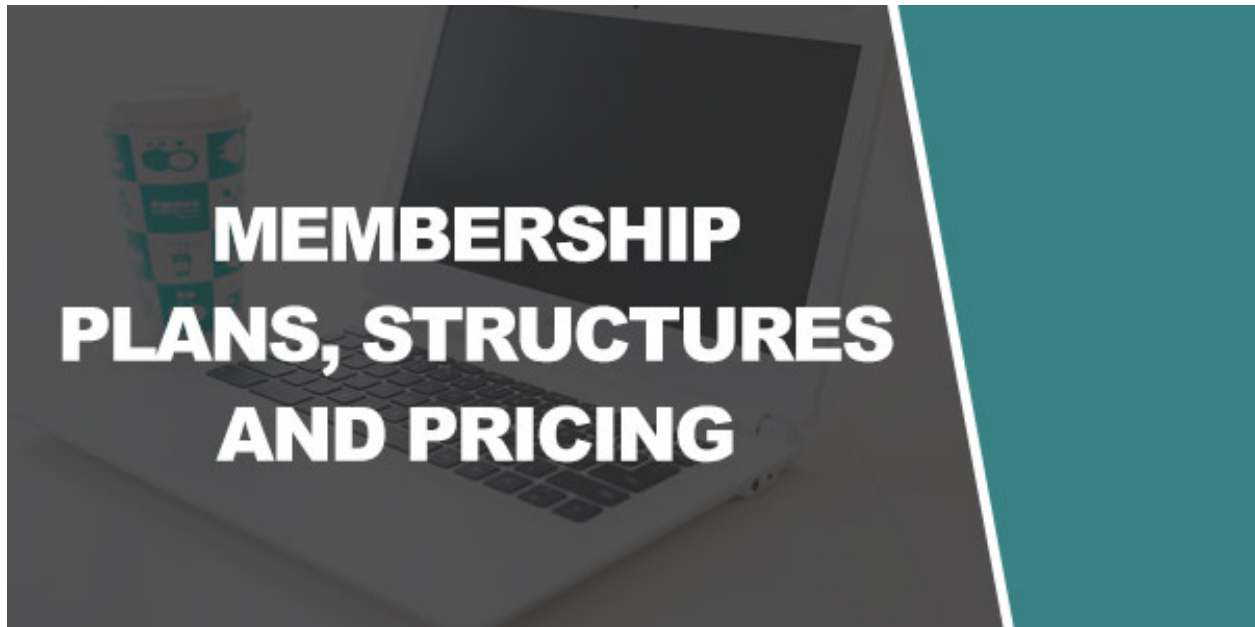
Before you do all this though, you first need to create the content that you're going to charge for, or at least you need to know *how* you're going to go about building it once you need to.

How you do this will depend on the type of content/service you are offering to your subscribers. So for example, if you're creating an evergreen site or a course, you might want to book some time off and simply spend a couple of weeks creating all the content that you're going to provide to your members.

If you do all of this in one go, then you will have your product ready to sell. This might also mean learning to use video editing software and investing in some good filming equipment if there will be a video element to your creations.

Likewise, if your site is going to include calculators, questionnaires or quizzes, then you may want to look into getting a piece of software that will allow you to do this – or perhaps even just learning the necessary coding skills. One plugin for example that will allow you to build questionnaires and calculators for example is 'Calculated Fields Form' which is a free plugin available through WordPress. Likewise, there are countless different plugins available for creating forums and community sites.

Chapter 5: Membership Plans, Structures and Pricing



The success of a membership site rests on multiple things but perhaps most important of all is the way that you pitch this deal to your visitors and potential customers. Ultimately, they are paying to sign up for access to a blog.

This is something that 99.999% of websites on the net offer for free. And this is something that the vast majority of web users have come to expect to be free. The question is: how are you going to make it sound like this is a great deal when you're competing with free?

And how are you going to entice someone to give your subscription a go so that they can find out for themselves that it is worth the money?

One option is to think about your membership plans, your price structure and whether you intend on offering some kind of free trial membership. These options can help you to get past any initial hesitation that your users might have and thereby allow you to demonstrate the value you're able to offer and make sure they're willing to pay for your subscription.

Membership Plans and Structures

The first thing to recognize here is that you don't only have to offer one membership plan. Rather, you can create different grades of membership and invite your members to upgrade to higher tiers by spending more money on their membership. You can also use multiple pricing plans and different offers to help make your deal more tempting.

If you have experience with digital marketing, then you might be familiar with the idea of a 'sales funnel'. This means that you use multiple different stages in your sales pitch in order to make your visitors more and more engaged with your brand until they're willing to part with more money.

A typical sales funnel for instance might introduce your visitors via a free blog post, convince them to sign up for a mailing list in order to receive a free ebook and then invite them to attend an online seminar. Finally, you might offer them the option to purchase a short course and then might sell a much bigger and more expensive course from that.

If you had approached your visitors and offered them that expensive course right away, then they probably would have had no interest. It's uncommon for people to buy products from creators that they don't know for a lot of money and especially as they'll have no evidence of your ability to provide value etc.

The sales funnel works differently by first showing them what you can do, then building trust and then offering them the opportunity to buy something cheap. By the time they see your expensive product, they now have experience of buying from you and know that you can be trusted to deliver value in exchange.

In the case of a membership site, you can set this up so that each stage of membership acts like a different stage in the funnel.

The first stage of course is a 'non-member'. This is someone who can read your free content and hear about what it's like to be a member and all the benefits that offers.

From there, you might create a 'non-paying member'. This is someone who has signed up to your mailing list and registered with your site but who isn't yet a full, paying member. They now get to feel a part of something and hopefully that feeling is something they will come to value – and something they will value enough to be willing to pay extra for. From here, you can make sure that they can clearly see the advantages of becoming a more lightweight 'basic member'.

This will cost a very small amount but involves the user inputting their payment details, thereby demonstrating their trust in your brand and thereby getting more used to the idea of paying for your content. Because it's such a small fee though, they will be much more likely to be willing to pay for it.

Finally, once they're a respected part of the community and once they've seen all the benefits that membership brings them, they might be encouraged to upgrade to the full membership for a higher fee and thereby pay more money than you could otherwise have encouraged them to part with.

In this case, you have used the following steps:

- Non member
- Non-paying member
- Basic paying member
- Premium member

Give these tiers different names to make them sound more appealing and make sure that there are always better and more exciting things just out of reach to keep your visitors wanting to progress to the next stage.

Pricing and Payment Models

The next thing to consider is your price. Here, your aim is to find a price that will bring in the maximum number of subscribers while also still giving you enough money to live off of.

So how much does a typical membership site cost? Unfortunately, there really isn't any one answer to this question and rather it depends greatly on the site. Membership sites can vary between anything from \$1 a month all the way up to \$97 – and it really depends how you want to market yourself.

Let's say you charge \$1 a month. That is *such* a small fee that many people won't even consider it and won't mind paying it. However, you're still going to find that people don't want to sign up because they can't be bothered or because they're worried about security – this is actually the bigger issue than the price itself. Thus you still won't get as many people as you might think for \$1 and you won't earn as much as you could do from each of those subscribers.

So it's worth charging at least \$3 per month up to \$5. At the same time, people often feel more comfortable with this slightly higher number as it feels more like a real subscription (\$1 a month can actually raise eyebrows and thereby put people *off* of buying from you!).

A better way to charge a very small amount of money is to make it a single payment for each year or for each quarter. This is what The Times (discussed earlier) does by offering its membership at '£12 for 12 weeks'. This simply sounds like better value than '3 months for £12' and it also sounds like less of a faff than '£4 a month'. Wording makes a big difference here (and fortunately, this is something you can experiment with over time).

Many sites will also offer discounted rates for people who are willing to pay up-front. Often it's possible to get a 'lifetime membership' for example at \$500, or to decide whether you want to pay monthly or yearly. This is a

great way to get a big injection of cash and this has the advantage of preventing people from leaving your service halfway through. In other words, you want to get people to sign up for the lifetime membership and it's the best deal for them – but it shouldn't be your only option as only very few people are going to be willing to pay that kind of amount up front in a single purchase.

Finally and most importantly: make sure that your membership program is worth the price of admission. This is the single most effective way to price your product and to ensure you get the best revenue. If your membership is worth what you're asking, then you'll get more subscribers and those members will stay for longer. That's why it's so important to add as much value as you possibly can up front and to keep on introducing new things as frequently as you can.

You'll probably also want to work out your pricing based on the amount of money you need to create a viable business. In other words: based on the number of subscribers you're likely to get, what do you need to charge in order to make enough profit to keep your business running?

Removing Risk

A moment ago we discussed charging \$1 per month for your membership and whether or not that would lead to a large number of subscribers and thereby the highest revenue. We concluded it wouldn't because people still wouldn't want to go through the process of signing up, even if they would be willing to pay that amount.

And one reason for this is risk. People are naturally highly risk-averse. No one wants to risk wasting money or losing money and as such, they will very often not buy things online in case it's a scam or in case the product isn't as good as it should be.

Going through PayPal removes the risk of this being a scam. But people still can't use your product before they buy, meaning there's a risk that they'll be wasting their money on something they don't want!

Except there *is* a way to allow people to try before they buy. All you have to do is to make sure that you offer a 'trial membership' that is free. This way, your visitors can try signing up for free and then if they like it, they stay members.

This is a great way to increase your number of subscribers because it means that you can make sure your users become reliant on your service/content and then feel the need to pay for it. The comparison that is often made is to a puppy: the best way to get someone to buy a puppy is to let them take it home for a week first. Your content needs to be as good as that puppy so that once your subscribers have tried it, they feel like they just *have* to sign up for the full membership.

Plus, if they *don't* decide to become full-paying members, then you will already have their email address and you can use this to market to them later. These are great leads because you know they've already shown an interest in what you're selling! In fact, you can even use these contact details to later on offer the subscription at a special discounted price!

On top of all this, you should also think about whether you're going to require payment details before the user signs up. This can be off-putting for some potential members but on the plus side, it means that you can automatically start charging once the free period is over.

It should be easy for your members to unsubscribe at any point but often they won't because it's actually *easier* to just let the subscription run. This is called 'inertia selling'. As long as you're offering a fair amount of value and you're not charging too much, a lot of people will let subscriptions carry on even when they're not using them!

Just think about your own Netflix subscription. How many times have you thought about unsubscribing because there's not been anything good on? Even though it's easy to do though, the small amount of effort involved probably made sure you didn't bother to cancel it.

Note though that the more details you are getting from your members, the more you have to offer in return. In this scenario, those card details and

email addresses *are* the payment and this is still worth quite a lot. In order for this to be a compelling deal for your visitors, you're going to have to offer a service or some content that they absolutely can't refuse.

You *want* people to think: 'they're silly to give this away for free'.

Have you ever used a tool online, whether it's a credit check or a piece of software and thought that you'll just use the free trial to get what you need and then cancel? This seems like a bad move on the part of the company but in fact it works more often than it doesn't. Mimic that strategy!

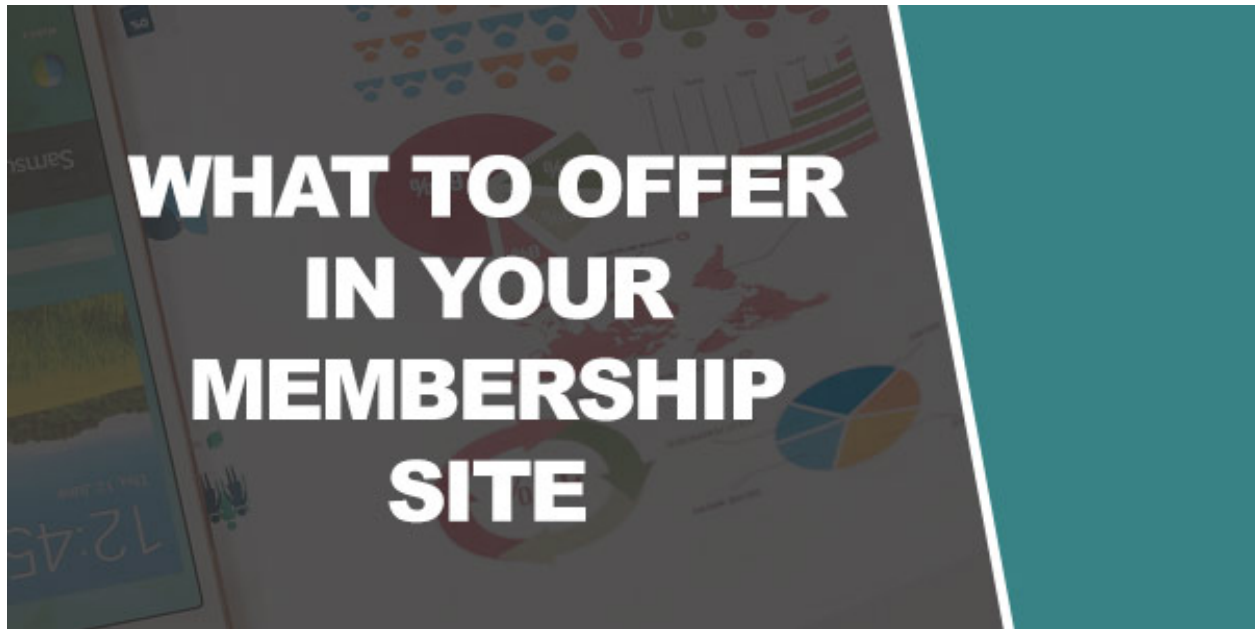
Special Deals and Offers

Finally, remember that it's also possible to run deals and special offers to bring in more visitors. And you can even make these deals limited time; meaning that they get discounted membership for the first year which is then automatically upgraded to the full price! This can be another great way to get people interested and then make sure you are providing enough value to make yourself worthwhile for that price.

Special offers and deals also help you to create scarcity and urgency – the fact that this deal is only temporary means that your members need to act quickly in order to make their decision. And people are more likely to buy when they buy quickly and impulsively: as most purchases are based more on emotion than on logic. This also helps to remove the buyers' remorse by allowing them to convince themselves that they made a good decision: 'I had to spend the money in order to get that great deal!'.

One more advantage of running special offers and deals is that it allows you to experiment with different price points and to see whether it brings in more customers and whether you should consider bringing down your usual price.

Chapter 6: What to Offer in Your Membership Site



One way to make sure that your membership site seems worthwhile is to make sure that you are offering a lot of value. That means that in order to increase the amount you charge for your membership site, you need to increase the value on offer. This in turn means offering more content, more features and more unique bonuses.

My recommendation is that you do this by thinking outside the box and by finding ways to offer things you don't see anywhere else. Try not to think only in terms of blog posts and to instead think of how you can create an impressive package with so many bells and whistles that it's very hard to refuse.

You want this to sound like the deal of a lifetime and you want to leverage all the things that make membership sites work so well: exclusivity, importance, privilege, community, status, value and convenience. Whatever your niche, it should feel as though becoming a member of your

site makes that person part of an elite community and gives them the very best chance of achieving their goals.

Here are some ways you do that...

Content and Resources

Yes, membership sites will almost always include content – but what's important is that this content be the most valuable and most fascinating you can possibly offer. This means:

- Exclusive interviews with industry leaders
- In-depth how-tos
- Resource sheets filled with useful information and tips
- Reports and strategies that aren't written about anywhere else

The word that keeps coming up here is exclusive. If your potential members can do a Google search for your content and find something very similar for free, then they won't be given any good reason to pay. This should be content that is a cut above everything else and that's highly in depth. And there should be enough of it that its potential value is very hard to ignore.

Calculators, glossaries, lists of contacts and more are also a great example of resources that people will want access to; as are learning materials.

Opportunities

The reason that Hashtag Nomads works so well is that it offers unique opportunities to its members. This is something that can't be understated - by signing up to your site for X amount of money, your members can now earn *more* money than that. This makes it an investment.

But opportunities don't have to just be monetary – you can also make sure that your customers gain opportunities by giving them the option to attend

special seminars that they wouldn't be able to attend, or by letting them buy products before the mass market. This ties into the next point...

Privilege, Priority and Exclusivity

As mentioned, people love to feel important and becoming members of something is a great way to do that. People also love to feel like they're a part of a movement and that they're *involved* in something important.

You can accomplish all this by letting people take part in your business and your brand and by giving them a sense of ownership over it. This is why Kickstarter worked so well. Why would people invest in Oculus, when they know that it's 99% likely to get made even if they don't? Simple: they want to be a part of something bigger themselves and they want to be able to tell people they had a hand in introducing the world's first commercially-successful virtual reality headset!

Likewise, you can make people feel like they're a part of your movement by describing your site in that language. At the same time, give them access to things you're working on. Let them vote on the names of your new products. Let them see a 'draft copy' of your ebook before you start selling it.

And likewise, treat them like VIPs in every other way you can too. If you do host an event, let them enter through the VIP line. This is something that the UK phone company O2 does incredibly well. It has a membership scheme for its customers called 'O2 Priority' and it helps them to get free drinks, cheaper cinema tickets and access to VIP lounges at concerts and other events. People feel important and they feel taken care of and that helps increase their loyalty to O2.

This is why the idea of including some kind of physical product or gift can be a good one. Talk in your blog post about how all your members should have received their exclusive, collectible booklet in the post and make all those non-members jealous!

Another way to make people feel important? Talk to them directly! That comes into the next point...

Contact

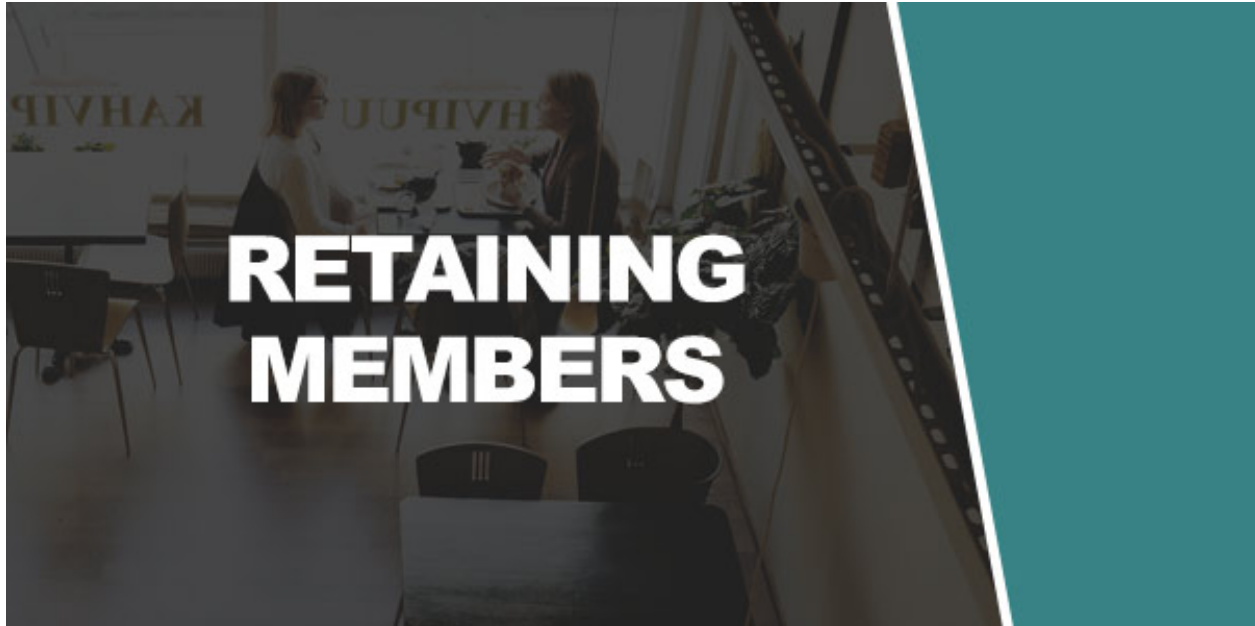
Another thing you can offer as part of a membership scheme is direct contact. This might take the form of customer support, or it might just mean that you pledge to quickly answer emails. Pat Flynn even recommends creating a short video to personally welcome members to your site by name.

This might sound like a lot of work but imagine how important and valued each of those customers would feel. And imagine how much good will and loyalty it could buy you in return!

Belonging

Finally, make sure that you offer some kind of sense of belonging with your membership. A forum will do this but there are other ways you can accomplish it too. Arrange meetups, have group chats and refer to your fans with a collective pronoun that groups them together. Got a website called 'DogAholi.com'? Then your followers are the 'DogAholics' and this can be a surprisingly powerful effect.

Chapter 7: Increasing the Value of Your Membership Site to Retain Members Longer



In terms of what *practically* to offer your visitors though, it's important to think in terms of what they're getting for their money. The more content, the more media and the more tools they receive, the better they will feel taken care of.

So how do you go about increasing the value of your site over time and growing it? This is particularly important if you hope to keep people involved and avoid them leaving because they've already read everything your site has to offer...

Things to Add

The most obvious thing to add is more content. Maintain a steady flow of posts and new articles and always make sure to tease what's coming up at

the end. This at the very least will act as a ‘drip feed’ to ensure people want to keep checking back.

One great way to do this is with a multi-part post or lesson. For example, make a post called ‘How to Build a WordPress Site Part 1’ and call it a 10-part series. People hate leaving things before the end and this is a good way to keep them checking back and looking forward to what’s next.

The objective here though is not just to maintain a steady drip-feed but also to use a strategy that’s called ‘under promising and over delivering’. What this basically means is that you’re going to set your members’ expectations and then *exceed* those expectations to ensure that they feel like they’re getting amazing value. People love to be surprised and if you can make your visitors positively surprised, then they’ll view what you’re offering as being even more valuable – and they’ll be much more likely to rave about it to others.

So instead of just drip feeding your site with content, why not occasionally provide a free ebook for people to download? Don’t warn them, just drop it out of the blue and you should find they’re overjoyed at it. Likewise, if you are going to send some kind of physical product such as a promotional gift (like a t-shirt or mug with your logo on it), consider sending this without warning as well.

Once again, people will feel like they’ve been given a free gift and will therefore feel indebted to you – a good position for you to be in! (The added bonus of using a free gift with a logo is that it allows them to display their membership proudly which helps to increase their loyalty while simultaneously offers you free marketing!)

Another way to do this is by constantly upgrading your membership by adding more types of media and more features. Speaking from experience, I own a Microsoft Band 2 and one of the best things about that product is the way that it is constantly being updated. Every now and then I check the Reddit to see if a new update has come through and when it has, it will excitedly rush to download it. That’s because there are whole new features regularly added that considerably extend the capabilities of the device. This

is one of the key reasons I've stayed loyal to the brand and it's a great way you can ensure customer satisfaction. So don't just drip feed content – surprise your visitors by giving them more than they bargained for.

Cool examples include:

- An online seminar or conference
- Live video chat
- Mobile app
- Second website
- PC software
- Online tool

By introducing these, you give your members much more value for money and in a way that's somewhat more exciting than just 'more of the same'.

Chapter 8: How to Promote Your Membership Site



So you have your membership site, you've created your content and you have some great packages and an excellent funnel-type system to bring in the punters.

Now all you have to do is to get them there in the first place. So the question is: how do you find new potential members and then convince them to sign up as paying members?

There's a few ways to do this and there are *plenty* of books that go into this subject in detail. Any digital marketing techniques that work for other blogs will work here. But let's just touch on some of the most powerful and important tips that will give you the most bang for your buck and help you to start growing your audience and increasing your readership.

PPC

PPC is 'Pay Per Click' and is a form of advertising where you only pay when someone actually clicks on the link (as the name implies). The great thing about this is that if your advert is entirely unsuccessful and no one pays it any attention, you don't pay anything!

The other good thing is that you can set how much you're willing to pay per click (your 'bid' which correlates with how often your ad gets seen) and you set how much you're willing to pay in total (your budget). What this means is that you can control exactly how much you're paying and how many people (minimum) will visit your website for that cost. That in turn means you can start working backwards in order to work out things like the price your product needs to be for you to make X profit and how much you need to convert in order to get your money back.

The best way to do this is to create a sales page which you will use to pitch your membership site to your visitors. If you make this convincing enough then you can sometimes get 10% of your visitors to at least leave an email address – and by working out how much this is worth to you, you can work out a spend on your PPC that will result in profit down the line.

One tip is to make sure your sales page is highly convincing and effective at converting traffic. Another is to create adverts that are highly targeted, meaning that they'll only be shown to people who are likely to buy already. You can also filter out people who aren't likely to buy through the nature of your advert.

This is also one more reason to choose a relatively small niche. The smaller the niche, the less you'll end up bidding for your ad to be shown and the more traffic you can get for a lower spend!

The top two PPC platforms to use are Facebook Ads and Google AdWords.

Content Marketing, SEO, Social Media

The other big way to market your site is through content marketing and SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Today these two terms are synonymous. That's because Google has become so good at filtering out low quality content, that you *need* to write highly engaging and compelling content just to get to the top of Google. This will also help you to build natural, organic links and generally to keep growing your traffic and your exposure.

At the same time, you're also using your high quality content to demonstrate the value you can offer and to bring people to your site through social media and other means. Post to your own site but also consider guest posting by creating content for other blogs as a guest. This way you can usually get a free link back to your own blog which is not only free exposure but also helps you to climb the ranks of Google (Google sees links almost like references).

Posting great content of your own and related to your niche will meanwhile help you to build a following for your social media channels and you can use this as another way to bring more people to your site and your brand. Make sure that your brand is strong across all your various social media channels so that people are constantly reminded where they are. This will also help you to build more trust by looking like a professional outfit with a good presence.

Finding Routes to Market

Actually though, in many ways choosing your niche is the most important step when it comes to building a presence online. The reason for this is that the right niche will define your audience as well as your 'routes to market' (meaning the places where you can communicate directly with your target audience). Think about the connections you already have and the opportunities and also think about how you can find ways to directly reach specific groups of people. If you can do this well, then you'll be able to

market yourself directly toward the right people and you'll have this in the bag before you even get started.

Chapter 9: How to Maintain Your Membership Site



We've seen various different ways to create a membership site and all of these will help to bring you recurring, passive income. This income is more reliable than many other online business models and it's more passive than the vast majority too.

But in many cases, there will still be things you're required to do on a regular basis. If you've created a content mill for example, then you will need to keep updating it with fresh content. And if you've created a forum or community then you're going to find yourself constantly having to settle disputes and deal with arguments. Likewise, you'll have to keep fighting spam.

And even if you have a website that is 'evergreen', you'll want to update it regularly just to keep it looking modern and to ensure that people keep coming back.

So the question is: how do you go about doing all that and without it becoming a full-time job that's just as stressful as any other online business model?

Outsource

The number one answer to this question is simple: outsource the process. You can easily hire a team of writers once your business is up and running and this is the brilliance of a recurring membership: you'll have enough guaranteed money to be able to pay writers and designers and to know what kind of money you can offer them.

Note that there are plenty of ways to hire writers relatively cheaply who are still likely to be skilled. For example, if you hire students who are looking for work experience then you'll be able to do them a favour while getting great content very affordably!

But better yet is to outsource without paying people and this is surprisingly easy too if you have a website that has built a community and that people are passionate about. For example, if you are having difficulty managing your forum, then just look for the most active participants in most of the conversations. Find someone who is generally well behaved on the forum and then simply offer for them to become a moderator. If you find the right kind of person who really loves your movement and your brand then you'll find they very often jump at this opportunity – meaning your site will be able to take care of itself!

Drip Feed

Another option is to create all of your content up-front and then simply drip feed it. This means that you could spend a year creating a website and all the content, or you could buy several PLR (private label rights) eBooks in order to get the content you need. Then all you do is to add it to your website slowly over time, so that maybe you're adding 1,000 words a

month from a 20,000 word ebook. This way you can work at times that are convenient for you and still know that you're always going to have the right amount of content for your readers to feel as though they're getting taken care of.

Getting Started

At first though, many of these options won't be available. Most of us do not have the luxury of being able to take a week off and you won't be earning enough money right away in order to pay writers. So what do you do? Take out a loan?

While that's one option, it's not at all what I recommend. Instead, I recommend starting out with the intention of supplementing, not replacing, your income. This is one of the biggest mistakes that most new marketers make when they first start building a website or blog: they think it's going to change their lives. Thus they set out with that intention and when it doesn't happen right away, they feel upset and they give up!

Instead, view this as a part time hobby that might bring in some extra income on the side if you're lucky. Let's be real here: in order for a blog to bring in a full time income, it needs to be treated as a full-time job at least to start with. But if you're happy to take things slower, you'll find that you can enjoy the experience more and you'll make better long-term decisions to build your audience. Instead of viewing it as a get-rich-quick scheme (which doesn't exist), try to view it as a passion project and something you want to nurture. Spend your evenings on it and enjoy working on it with no pressure. If you only make \$30 a month then that's fine – that's still enough to have a nice meal out without any guilt. And over the course of a year, \$30 quickly adds up to \$360 – enough for a small local holiday!

Moreover though, you'll find that your profits grow with time and pretty soon you'll be earning much more and you can start to dedicate more and more of your time to the project.

Chapter 10: Advanced Concepts and Strategies for Membership Sites



We've discussed a lot of different ideas over the course of this book but as you get experienced, you may find yourself wanting to try some more advanced strategies and options in order to grow your audience and gain more members and more revenue. This final chapter contains some of the more advanced strategies you can employ that don't belong anywhere else...

Earning Membership

While you see it less commonly today, another option some forums in particular use is to allow their members to 'earn' their membership rather than pay for it. For example, you might say that access to the VIP area of your forum can be bought for X amount of money, or by getting X amount of positive ratings.

This latter strategy might sound like it would lead to fewer paying members on your site but it often has the opposite result. For starters, this ensures that your forums are active and incentivizes active participation. At the

same time, the existence of a free option will often make people less irked by the idea that they have to pay to become members. This now feels more like a choice and perhaps even a smart move on their part to avoid some work. Finally, if you make the most basic level of membership the free type, that means that they might then still opt to pay to upgrade to the premium membership: especially as they'll have already invested a lot of time and effort in order to get to where they are and will thus feel very engaged with your brand!

More Monetization Options

Just because you have a subscription site, that doesn't mean it can't *also* make money for you in various other ways. In other words, you can use multiple monetization options in order to gain the maximum revenue from your website and that can mean many things.

One option is to have a big ticket item that people can buy and that you promote from your site. Another option is to include adverts still around your blog. Perhaps you have some kind of advertising deal with sponsors, or perhaps you profit from an entire e-store.

The smart membership site will take advantage of these multiple income streams rather than letting them work at crossed purposes however. This often means coming up with a somewhat symbiotic relationship between the various models. For example, you might say that your most premium members get a discount off of the most expensive items. This at once makes your membership more interesting and incentivized *and* it makes your products more appealing to people who *are* members. It's a smart trick!

Another similar option is to make sure your adverts are somewhat irritating and then offer to remove them for your premium members. This might sound like something that wouldn't work in the real world but in fact it does and it has. Not only is this the key business model for many mobile apps but the blog *Penny Arcade* even ran a Kickstarter with the promise that it would remove ads if it received enough funds... And it worked!

Affiliate Schemes

An affiliate scheme is basically a scheme that allows a marketer to earn money by promoting someone else's product. This works *just* like a door-to-door cable salesman in that they get to keep commission on the product. This is a *big* deal on the internet and affiliate marketing is in fact one of the very most popular tools for making money from a website (it's also one more option for your membership site!).

But it can *also* be used to help you get more people to sign up. You simply offer a percentage of your profits to the affiliates (usually quite high) and that way you can recruit a small army of professional marketing who will try and do everything they can to promote your product and get people to sign up.

You can still market it yourself but you'll get all the customers *they* bring *on top* of what you would have managed yourself! The great thing about this is that affiliates *love* membership sites because it offers *them* a recurring income too. This gives you an advantage over other affiliate products and means you can likely get more marketers to get involved.

The best and most popular affiliate networks are JVZoo (www.jvzoo.com), Commission Junction (www.cj.com) and Clickbank (www.clickbank.com). Sign up to these and you can potential multiply your income several times over!

Conclusion and Summary



And with that, you know pretty much all there is to know about building, marketing and profiting from a membership site! At least you know a lot more than most people and should be perfectly situated to begin bringing in a steady income from your hard work.

We've covered an awful lot over the course of this book though and introduced a wide range of ideas. So let's break down everything we've learned into some useful and actionable steps and take-home lessons.

1 This is a 'hard sell'

Remember that you are effectively charging people for something that they *normally* get for free. This makes a membership site a hard sell by definition and means that you're going to have a hard time convincing people to sign up – so you need to use psychology and you need a *really* compelling proposition.

2 Your compelling proposition

That proposition should be that you have content or tools they really want. Often this should represent some kind of investment – so what you're offering can improve their career prospects, their health, their relationships or something else that won't induce 'buyers' guilt'.

The compelling proposition also means that you're going to offer as much content and as many extras as possible. This often means thinking outside the usual confines and offering things like video, physical products and software. Go beyond mere content!

3 The psychology

Now make sure you understand the appeal behind a membership site and the psychology you need to employ in order to sell. That means making your product appealing but also talking about the 'exclusive' members' club and 'privileged' access that will speak to people on a very emotional level and appeal to their need to belong and be a part of something bigger than themselves.

4 The sales

You also need to find ways to remove buyers' guilt and any risk. This means thinking about smart pricing and about using free trials and tiered membership.

5 Choose the right niche, find the right marketing

With all this in place, you then just need to start building your list. This is partly defined before you even begin – choose the right niche and you'll have your routes to market in place. Create a sales page, create PPC advertising and try to focus on creating something great instead of 'getting rich'.

Do this right and you can build your own community, your own legion of fans and your own movement. What could be a more rewarding way to make money?

And of course it helps that you'll keep making money while you're in the Bahamas...