



7 THINGS YOU
NEED
TO VALIDATE
BEFORE

STARTING A MEMBERSHIP

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Mike Morrison:

Awesome everyone. Welcome to episode 201 of The Membership Guys Podcast. I'm Mike Morrison your host for the show. This is the place to be for proven practical tips and advice on growing a successful membership business. Today we're talking about the very early stages of starting down the membership journey. Seven things that you need to validate before starting a membership. So many people get real excited and real carried away with the idea of creating a membership site and they get source of juiced by the attractiveness of recurring revenue and the lifestyle benefits and the fulfillment that can come from being a membership site owner that their skip the first few chapters. And then they launch their membership it doesn't go to plan and they're left scratching their heads wondering where it all went wrong.

So today I want to help save you from that happening by talking through the most important things that you need to validate before you create any premium content. Before you even look at membership plugins, before you decide on a name, this is the stuff you need to think about. First thing, you need to validate the existence of a problem. All of us in business, whether it's with a membership an online course, coaching, bespoke services or whatever, we are all in the business of solving problems. People don't join a membership site to stand still. They join a membership site because they've got a problem they want to have solved, a result that they want to reach. A goal, an outcome, a transformation that they want to undergo. And so the role of your membership is to solve a problem, but you need to make sure if you've got a problem in mind that you want to address with your membership, you need to actually validate that this is a problem that exists.

That this is a problem that your members, your potential members, your audience are actually struggling with. And to do this, you need to actually pay attention to them. You need to speak to them. You need to find out what makes them tick, what causes them stress and anxiety. What are they struggling with? What obstacles are in their way? Listen to them talk, observe. When they discuss with each other, some of their biggest challenges are right. Ask them, what are the top three problems you're dealing with right now? If you create a membership site that addresses a problem that literally nobody has, why would anybody join? Right? So you need to research and to validate that the problem you're trying to solve with your membership is one that actually exists and is a one that people care about and that they care about it enough. You don't want to start a membership that addresses an issue that is so far down someone's list of priorities that they're not even going to bat an eyelid when you launch, right?

You want your membership to be addressing a problem that's keeping people awake at night. That's stopping them from hitting their goals, from reaching their dreams, from being the best version of themselves, or whatever. It needs to be, a compelling problem. So that's the first thing you need to validate whether the problem you're trying to solve actually exists. The next thing to validate is whether that problem represents a recurring need, an ongoing situation or a lengthy journey. You know, right now as I'm recording, I can see in my office that one of my light bulbs has blown. That's a problem. But to solve that problem, it will take me a matter of minutes. Once I've replaced that bulb, the problem goes away. It's not persistent, right? And learning, let's say I've never





changed a bulb in my life, then you know, once I've learned the process, that's it. I don't need to keep relearning it.

I don't need to embellish on my understanding. I don't need to deepen my study of this field. So this is all to say that it's not enough to just solve a problem. It needs to be a compelling problem, but also for the sake of a membership site it needs to be a problem that represents a recurring need. A lengthy journey, because memberships are always about that long game. You don't want someone joining your membership and basically learning everything they'll ever need to know about the topic within their first week. That's not conducive to a membership. That's something that is better suited to a short course. I could watch a YouTube video on how to change a light bulb. I could buy a course on how to change every conceivable type of light bulb ever and what to do if I can't find the right size bulb for the socket.

Maybe I might pay 10 bucks to take that course if I was particularly passionate about light bulbs. But once that knowledge is there, it's not something I need to keep topping up on. It's not a lengthy journey. Solving the problem of needing to replace a light bulb is not the first step of me then going on to learn about how to rewire my whole house. Right? So again, you need to really think about whether there's a recurring need, whether there's lifelong learning to be had that would constitute a good idea for a membership. So learning to play a guitar, for example, that could be seen as a fairly linear process. Perhaps there's some very specific basics that I need to learn, some stuff I need to learn in a certain order, but there's a point at which it can be said I have learned how to play guitar and I know how to play, but the learning doesn't stop there. Right?

The continued development, the expansion of the styles that I can play. Understanding the business side of it, how to secure gigs, how to deal with going on tour, all of that sort of stuff. There's all wealth of opportunity for lifelong learning. There's a recurring need within that topic. So again, when you're looking at the problem that your membership solves, is this a problem that is recurring that is expanding for which there is a lengthy journey or lifelong learning involved? If you try to research this topic, do you find just a handful of articles all saying essentially the same thing with no room for expansion or do you find a whole range of different books and courses and training programs and other memberships and all that stuff? The latter would be a better indicator of a broad topic, a vast topic that you can continue to plumb for more material and for which people will need long term support that a membership is perfect for servicing.

So second thing is the problem recurring need, lengthy journey? Third thing to validate is the efficacy of your solution. Now I've said that not just 'cause I wanted to use the word efficacy. Basically are you providing something that actually solves the problem effectively? What we essentially mean by they say is, is a membership the best way to teach they subject to solve that problem? Could you actually solve someone's problem? Teach them what they need to know, get them to where they want to get too much more effectively in a 10 part two week course rather than dragging it out and putting them into a membership where we want them to stay for months and years on end.





Membership isn't always the best solution for every problem. So again, a lot of this is going to come down to your topic. It's going to come down to the specific type of goal that someone has or the outcome they're looking to achieve.

Typically with a membership, there is no end date. It's not finite. It's not an A to Z process you're taking people through. If someone can get to where they need to get to by following 10 specific steps, one after the other after the other, after the other, then something like an online course is probably going to be a better solution than a membership. So that's definitely something to think about. Something to validate before you go down the journey and you decide to start a membership rather than addressing this problem and addressing this need in a more suitable model. Next thing you need to validate is the existence of an audience. So are there actually people out there who need what you're offering? A lot of people come up with a problem in their head that they want to solve, but they never actually talked to anyone. They never go out there to see.

Are there people out there who are currently struggling with the very thing that this membership is being created to address. Now, if you don't have an audience of your own, first and foremost, you need to dedicate some time to building your own audience. However, if you're still in that very early stage, then you need to go out there and see are there other people in the market with the audience that I plan to serve? Are there other people talking about this? Are there Facebook groups? Are there online communities? Are there local meetups? Are there blogs? Are their podcasts? Is there an actual origins for this? Because if there isn't, who are you going to sell to? These people won't magically appear. You need to know that there are pockets of passionate people out there online who have the problem that your membership is going to solve.

Ideally, you want to be reaching out and speaking to those people earlier on in the research. You know, and we're talking about validating the existence of a problem. The only way to validate that it's to speak to the people that you think have this problem. Right? So don't take it for granted that just because you and maybe one or two of your connections, your friends, your peers have struggled with something that that's representative of a much larger audience out there who all have the same sort of needs. It could very well be that you are literally the only person in the world who's ever had this problem. So you need to validate that. If you cannot find existing audiences, that is not a good sign. Sometimes people get real excited when they start researching and they see, oh wow there aren't any of the memberships, there's not even a Facebook group.

Nobody's podcasting, nobody's blogging, no one's creating content. No one's serving this audience. But if that's the case, how do you know that this audience exists? Right? Where are all these people at? They may exist, but if you don't know where they're at, how are you going to find them when you have something to take to them? When you've got something to sell, when you've got a blog, when you've got a podcast. You need to know that this audience are there. And where they are at. Again, some people get so excited when they see that there's a gap in the market that they don't establish





whether there is a market in the gap, so so important. So you absolutely need to validate the existence of an audience, but you also in number five need to validate that audience's willingness to pay.

So they may have a problem. You may have a solution, there may be a huge audience, but that problem is not compelling enough that someone will pay to have it solved. Then your membership is not going to get anywhere. You may very well have people who will be all too happy to subscribe to your email list to listen to your podcast because they have a general interest in the topic, but they don't care enough about it to actually pay for content. Or maybe there's just so much free content out there you're going to have a near impossible time trying to convince anybody to actually pay for something if they're already getting their problems solved with what's available for free. So the signs of a buying market can usually be found in other products that are available. Again, this is why we kind of talk about why you shouldn't get too excited by spotting a gap in the market because actually what that means is nobody's selling to these people.

That doesn't always mean no usually it doesn't mean that no one's thought of selling to those people. What it usually means is either the people don't exist or they do exist, but other people have been here before and they've tried to sell a product and they're just not a buying audience. So you need to validate the willingness of your audience to actually pay. Again, all there courses? Are there books? Are there seminars? Are there conferences? Is somebody out there making money from this audience? Is there any sign at all that this is an audience who are willing to put their hand in their pocket and pay for solutions to their problems? Even if there are the next thing you need to validate is your own personal ability to mobilize that audience. You could have the hungriest audience in the world. You could have the best solution to the most painful problem, but if you do a terrible job of connecting those dots and of mobilizing that audience to pay you specifically for your solution to their problem, then it doesn't matter how good your membership is.

It doesn't matter how much knowledge or expertise that you have, if you can't bring it all together, mobilize that audience and getting them to take action. So with this one, the proof is in the pudding. Dip your foot in the water. Try and compel this audience to do something. Try and get them to read your blogs. Try and get them to subscribe to your podcast and to leave reviews for your podcast. Send them an email if they're on your email list, asking them to hit reply and let you know about there number one thing they're struggling with right now, but nobody replies. Again, this demonstrates that you might have a few struggles in actually compelling people to take some form of action. If you can't get people to sign up to an email list, you're probably going to struggle to get them to sign up to a paid product.

If you can't get people to join our free Facebook group, you're probably going to struggle to get them to sign up for a paid product. If you can't get people to subscribe to your podcast, you're probably going to struggle to get them to sign up for a paid product. Doesn't matter how good that product is. Your ability to mobilize an





audience to give them a call to action and have them respond the way that you want them to respond, that is an absolutely crucial component. In fact it's the most crucial component 'cause again, it doesn't matter how amazing you can have the best, best product in the world. If you can't connect the dots, it's not going to take off. It's not about having the best product. That is not enough. It doesn't need to look at the music charts today to see that the cream doesn't rise to the top.

I'm saying that very well aware that I've used that line before fairly recently I think on the show, but it bears repeating, right? Don't just assume that having a great product is all that you need. Don't just assume that there being a big audience as all that you need. You need to validate all of these things. The final thing you need to validate is about you. So you validate that a problem exists, that that problem lends itself to a recurring membership because it represents an ongoing need, that your particular approach to solving that problem is effective and that our membership is the best way to address it. That there's an audience out there who will be willing to pay, but you have got a connection with to the point that you can effectively mobilize them. But are you interested enough? And are you committed enough to running a membership site long term because memberships are a long business model.

It's not a fly by night thing. It's not something you can dabble with and then in a few month's time throw in the towel and then start something else. Memberships are all about the long game. So that actually requires a high level of commitment to being a membership owner and a sustainable level of interest. Not just in the topic, but also an interest in serving your members. An interest in creating content. Of replying to posts in your community. Of answering the same question for the 50th time on one of your live member Q&A calls. If the idea of having to do that a year down the line, five years down the line, 10 years down the line, if that petrifies you, if that sounds like the absolute worst thing in the world, then maybe, maybe don't pursue the membership model. Now I'm not saying you need to make that lifelong commitment.

I'm also not saying that the only way of running a membership is to set something up where you have to be there in the trenches on the ground day in, day out for years to come. There's various different approaches. You can have memberships where you're completely hands off or where you have a staff of teachers and tutors providing the material for you and so on. But still you need to think about your initial ideas about what your membership might look like and then really be honest with yourself about what your interest level and commitment level is and whether it's sufficient to be a membership site order. Some people will think about 10 years time if your day to day job consists of creating content about this material and talking to people about this topic. Some people will be enthralled by that idea. That to some people will sound like heaven, all they want to do with their life is create content, and talk about this topic.

To others, that'll sound like hell. If you're one of the latter, maybe go in a different direction. So those are the seven key things that you need to validate before starting a membership. Validate the existence of a problem. Validate that that problem represents a recurring need or an ongoing journey. Validate the efficacy of your solution, the existence of an audience, that audience's willingness to pay, your ability to





mobilize that audience and your own interest and commitment level. If you validated those things effectively, then and only then should you move on to the next steps of turning your membership ideas into a reality and of course oi you ready to do that, then there's only one place to go membersiteacademy.com will help you from there.

That's it for this we call. Hopefully this has been useful to you if you are early on in your journey this will hopefully, hopefully have caught you in time to ensure that you get off on the right foot. If you're further along in your journey, then maybe this is just a little bit of a kick up the backside, a little bit of a reminder about some of the key things that matter when it comes to memberships. Hopefully you've enjoyed this episode, hopefully you found it useful. I'll be back again next week with another installment of The Membership Guys Podcast. Bye for now.

