

HOW TO MAINTAIN HARMONY IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP COMMUNITY



Mike Morrison:

Hello to everybody. Welcome to episode 109 of the Membership Guys podcast. My name is Mike Morrison, your host for this show. And if this is your first time with us, thanks for checking us out. Please do subscribe because we've got a lot of awesome membership site tips and advice coming up for you. If you're coming back to the show, then thank you. We truly appreciate you tuning in. Keep up the support. Keep up the reviews. Keep up all that good stuff. We really, really appreciate it.

Today, we've got a great show for you. I'm talking all about how to maintain harmony inside your membership community. Now, community could be such an important asset to the success of a membership site. The cliché as the saying goes that members will come for your content but they'll stay for community. However, if your community is a toxic place to be, then that's not going to happen. No one is going to want to stick around. And so maintaining harmony inside your community is key to making sure that it's a solid asset for you in terms of keeping your members subscribed, month after month, year after year.

So we're going to be diving into this topic a little bit today. But before we do that I want to let you know that the Membership Guys Podcast is brought to you by membersiteacademy.com. [Membersiteacademy.com](https://membersiteacademy.com) is the leading trending community for membership site owners. Our members get access to an extensive library of courses, training, and resources, covering everything that you need to start, build, and grow a successful membership website. As well as regular live Q & A sessions, member only perks, discounts, and resources, plus access to our active supportive community. Where you get advice and input not only from myself, and Callie, but also hundreds and hundreds of fellow membership site owners. If you are serious about growing a successful membership website, you absolutely need to be a part of Member Site Academy. Head on over to membersiteacademy.com today to check it out and to join in.

All right, so we're talking about how to maintain harmony inside your membership community. I've already mentioned why this is such an



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

important thing. Nobody wants to actively participate in a community which it's stressful to be a part of. Where it's a toxic environment. Where you're worried about saying for fear of getting jumped on or trolled, or have something negative said about you or your business or your opinions. So for you, as the community leader, it's really important that you take action and you take steps to ensure that your communities are positive, harmonious place to be. And there's a few things you can do in order to make sure that that's the case.

First and foremost, you need to have clear guidelines on what is and what isn't acceptable. Now, obvious things that you want to have guidelines and rules for will be things like abusing other members, using offensive language, and so on. But you might also want to think about things like your policy on self-promotion, posting links to your website, posting affiliate links. Maybe even discussion of your competitors, whether positive or negative. Maybe you also want to think about things like your members sharing discussions that are being taken place inside the community out publicly. Do you want to have a policy or some sort of guideline in place for that? In order to help your community members feel comfortable sharing slightly more sensitive slightly more private things inside your forum or your Facebook group.

Maybe you want to make sure absolutely everything in your community stays on topics or perhaps there will be guidelines about posting general discussions stuff or off-topic stuff in certain section, or what have you. Sit down and think about the crucial guidelines, which obviously relate to behaviour and stuff like that. There's going to be those definite no-nos, in terms of how people interact. But also those sort of other things we talked about like self-promotion, sharing links, posting affiliate deals, and all that sort of stuff.

And then write those guidelines out and make sure that they are publicly available within your community. So by that typically if you're using forum software, or even if you're using Facebook groups, you have the ability to pin certain posts to the top of your forum or your group. Now you want to make sure any rules or any guidelines are pinned in a way that they're going to be seen by every members. If at all possible, if you can make it part of your registration process, to have people actually read and agree to your terms and to your guidelines before they jump in, then it makes it much easier later on to refer back to them, if an issue does come up.

Now of course, there's no point in having guidelines and what is and isn't acceptable if you're not going to enforce them. Now of course, you don't want to go over the top. You don't want to be overly strict or seen as being too controlling, or seen as being as a bit of a dictator who's too controlling. But you also need to act swiftly and sharply in order to ensure that any clear breaking of your community guidelines is dealt with.

We typically advocate and use ourselves a two strike rule. So first time somebody does something that breaks the rule. Now this will typically be something like posting something they shouldn't, or maybe being overly critical of another member or something like that. Then that first strike, we'll either edit or we'll delete the offending post. Now of course, if somebody



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

posting obscene materials, racist material, anything like that, then it will just be a complete and swift wielding of the ban hammer. They will get that content deleted. They'll be instantly removed from the membership and so on. But most of the time the issues that you're dealing with won't be quite as severe.

And so this two strike rule gives you the opportunity to get rid of the offending post first, contact that person privately, using a private messaging platform or just email them directly, to let them know why their content is being removed. And also that a second violation, so a repeating of that offending post or that behaviour may result in their removal from the community. Because ultimately if somebody's done something that they shouldn't have done, and you've spoken to them about it, and then they go and do it again, of course you're going to remove them from the community. If you don't want to be as harsh, then you can extend that two strike rule to a three strike rule and maybe you remove them from the community for a week or you suspend certain privileges. It really depends on how complex your community is. Whether you have certain perks, your community members, and so on.

The important thing is that in most cases, unless it's extremes of behaviour, an extremely bad content that's been posted, you want to make sure that that first instance you are speaking to that member. So that they know that what they've done, what they've posted, isn't actually acceptable. Because sometimes, you know, if it is a guideline on something like self-promotion or discussing competitors and so on, it might not be obvious that this isn't something that you should do. But once they know that it is something that is against guidelines, they shouldn't then be doing it again. And if they do, you probably want to get them out of the community. Because that's likely just going to escalate in the future.

Now I definitely recommend you check out episode 85 of the show, for some pointers on how to deal with difficult members. Because in there I talk about the right way to handle removing someone from your community, if they have broken the rules. In a way that's going to help you avoid headaches and also avoid that toxic element spreading to other parts of your communities. So definitely check that out, episode 85 of the podcast.

So make sure you've got clear guidelines of what is and isn't acceptable and ensure you're enforcing them with a two or a three strike rule. You know a lot of maintaining this sort of harmony and this control inside your community comes down to you. It's important that you're actually showing up and taking part in your community. Quite often simply your presence within the community can be enough of a deterrent, if somebody is thinking of bending the rules a little bit. Because they know that you're around. And they know you're on it.

You've got your finger on the pulse of what's happening in the community and you'll jump on any issues. It's down to you to set the tone. If you're helpful, if you're positive, if you're constructive, then other in the community will follow suit. But if you're own behaviour goes against the sort of behaviour you expect your members to exhibit, then you're just asking for trouble. It's down to you to set and maintain the tone.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

And that can come down to little things like intervening in discussions in order to bring them back on topic, if they start to stray, or if they start heading in a direction that you know is going to cause problems later on. And it's also crucial that you avoid being drawn into conflict yourself. It's not uncommon within a community to have one or two members who may try their luck. Who may challenge you. Some people are just like that. They like to challenge anyone who they deem to be an authority figure. And so if that happens, you need to make sure you're not drawn into public conflict. Deal with that issue personally. And don't be afraid to just cut ties, get rid of that person out of your membership quickly so that the toxicity of their presence doesn't spread to the rest of your community.

Now you don't have to do all of this alone. As your community grows, then you'll be able to appoint moderators and maybe other admins. Perhaps if you have virtual assistants, if you have business partners, you get them involved in roles within the community, too. Maybe you promote your most active members to moderator roles, where essentially, they're just like a regular member but they have few little powers like the ability to edit and delete posts. If you're concerned about allowing members to have that ability, then some form of software like IPBoard, gives you extra little controls over that. So for example, if a moderator decides to delete a post, it's not permanently deleted until an administrator then deletes it. So there's a lot of technological solutions and technological options that will help you to empower other people in your community to play the role of maintaining harmony and keeping everything positive. Keeping everything on a good vibe.

And a good example of the way technology can help you on this front is content reporting. So most popular foreign platforms for example, have the ability to allow your members to flag any content that they think is inappropriate. So they can actually click a little button to alert you of the fact that there's a post or there's a discussion, that has caught their attention that they feel you should know about so you can take action. Not only does this make your job and the job of that admins and your moderators a little bit easier, but it also again, empowers your users to self-police in a way. Because that is a great thing that you'll find when you build momentum and your community increases in size, you will find that your members quite often become self-policing.

And if other members start causing problems, or post things that they shouldn't, then the rest of the community will kind of try to steer them back in the right direction or they'll make sure that you're made aware of any offending content so that you can take action. When they see you taking action, they see that you're as committed to ensuring a positive community experience as they are. They see that you're as invested in providing a positive community experience as they want you to be. Because again, nobody wants to be part of a toxic negative environment.

Now another thing that can have a huge impact on your community dynamic, is encouraging people to use real names and real profiles pictures. It's incredible how much more emboldened somebody gets when they're hiding behind an anonymous random pseudonym, user name and avatar. Where they don't have the accountability of their language, their content,



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

their behaviour, being attached to who they are in the real world. We see this all the time in the countless communities we've been parting. The ones that are more positive, where people interact better, where there's more harmony, where it's a friendly place to be, are the one where people are posting with their real name. They've got their real business, their real website, it's a real person. And not an anonymous shield for people to hide behind.

Almost any community we've been in that been negative and toxic has been one where it's just random user names, random profile pictures, and no one has any personal responsibility there. So if it fits for your membership, encourage people to use their real names. And maybe even having real world meetups where people are getting together in a room together. It's a lot harder to be rude to somebody online that you actually know in real life and that you might bump into at an event. Even if you feel the temptation to be negative and rude, the prospect that you might see them at the next member meetup can often get people to behave that little bit better. So where you can if you can have that real world element, if you can get that accountability and that responsibility in there, then that can play a massive, massive part in giving you a harmonious positive community dynamic.

And the final thing that I would encourage you to do in order to keep your membership community positive, is just be wary of and mindful of cliques forming within your community. Take effort to include other members where ever you can. Tag people who you think can contribute to posts. Welcome new members. Use different tools and platforms and software, to highlight and to flag people who maybe have never logged in to your community, never posted in your community, and encourage them to do so. Make sure that you or your team are responding to newer members or to people who don't post as much, rather than just replying to your more active members. Because you want to make it as seamless and as easy as possible for the people who are maybe on the sidelines or maybe have just joined your site, to jump in and to take part. And to feel comfortable in doing so. And it's much, much harder for them to do that if they feel like an outsider.

One of the worst things that you can do as a community leader, is to get involved in a clique within your community. Because that is a guaranteed way of excluding the majority of your member base, and making your community not a particularly friendly, or a particularly positive place to be for anyone other than those in the inner circle. So definitely be mindful of that. And be watching out for all cliques starting to form within your community.

So just to recap, if you want to ensure that you're maintaining a positive and harmonious membership community, first and foremost, have clear guidelines on what sort of content and what sort of behaviour is and isn't acceptable. Ensure that you enforce those guidelines with a two strike rule. Or if you have the sort of community where maybe there's going to be most of the in grey area in terms of people's behaviour, then at most have a three strike rule. It's important that you have a structure and a strategy for applying your guidelines.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

It all starts with you, so you need to make sure that your showing up regularly. You have a continuous presence in your community. And that you're setting a helpful, positive and constructive tone. Intervening in order to ensure that discussions remain on topic and avoiding being drawn into conflict yourself. Appoint moderators and other admins to help you to do this within your community. And make sure that when you're choosing your option for your forum platform or deciding between a forum and a Facebook group, that you take into consideration whether or not there are options and tools available for things like content reporting and so on. That will make your life and the life of your other staff and the rest of your team a little bit easier in terms of controlling and managing your community.

And if at all possible, encourage the use of real names, real profile pictures and if it suits your membership, real world meetups, in order to give that little bit extra accountability and responsibility that can discourage people from behaving poorly in your community. And definitely, be mindful and aware of the danger of cliques forming within your community and the effect that that can have on other members.

So whether you're still planning and building your membership site and you're trying to get a handle on how you're going to approach the community side of things, or if you've got a community that's been open running for years, and you've had some problems here or there in terms of the community dynamic and keeping everything positive and friendly, then hopefully today's episode has given you some great pointers and given you a bit of food for thought on how you can really improve that community experience for your members.

That's it for this week. Thank you so much for joining me and spending a little bit of your day with me. Hopefully I made it worth your while. And I'll be back again next week with another instalment of the Membership Guys podcast.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)