

AVOIDING BURNOUT WHEN RUNNING A MEMBERSHIP SITE



Mike Morrison:

What's up everybody? Welcome to episode 140 of The Membership Guys podcast, I'm your host Mike Morrison, this is the place to be for proven practical tips and advice on growing a successful membership website and over the next three episodes, we're doing something that I've never done before here on The Membership Guys podcast. I'm going to be reaching back into the archives from the past hundred or so episodes we put out on The Membership Guys and I'm hand-picking three episodes that I think are worth revisiting. Now, the podcast has been going for over two years now and while some of you guys have been listening from the very beginning, I know that we've got a lot of people who are discovering us each and every day. So there's some real important episodes and real important topics that we covered back in the earlier days that maybe some of our more recent listeners haven't actually listened to.

So for the next three weeks, I've got some handpicked episodes that we're going to take a look back on, starting off today with some tips and advice on how you can avoid burnout when running a membership site. You know, there's so many plates you've got to spin, there's so many things to stay on top of as a membership site owner, it's real easy to get overwhelmed and ultimately burn yourself out, losing sleep, end up stressed, not enjoying what you're doing and that's not good for everyone. Ironically, membership site owners tend to burn out because they're trying to do too much to help their members, but in trying to do too much and burning themselves out, they end up doing the opposite of what they intended because if you're burned out, then you're definitely not helping your members. So we're going all the way back to episode 19, for my top tips on how to avoid burnout while running your membership site.

I want to talk about how you can avoid burnout when it comes to running your membership site. This is such an important area that doesn't really get talked about a lot, particularly when it comes to running membership websites but it's

so, so important that we actually make sure that we're taking steps to ensure that we don't run ourselves into the ground as membership site owners, because if you're operating your site in such a way where you're overworking yourself, you're working crazy hours, you're not getting enough sleep, you're not taking care of yourself because of the demands of your membership site, then the long term implications of this can be disastrous.

Setting aside the actual health effects that this can have, and I'm by no means a health expert, but I'm pretty sure stress is a bad thing, right? Setting all of that aside, from a purely practical point of view, from a business point of view, and from a marketing point of view, making your life a living hell essentially with your membership site, is a pretty fast route to you becoming disenchanted, becoming disgruntled with the stuff you have to do on a day to day basis for your membership site and if you get to that point where you actually hate getting up in the morning and having to do all this stuff for your membership site, then that's going to be reflected in the way in which you communicate to your community, in the effort that you put into promoting it, growing it and so on. So if your membership site becomes burden because it's burning you out, then that is a very quick way to send your site into a spiral where eventually, you're going to give up on it, you're going to throw in the towel, or it's just going to go downhill.

So, here are my tips for ensuring that you don't burn yourself out when it comes to running your membership site. First and foremost, we need to think about the big picture, okay? So take a step back and get a little bit of context. We all like to think that we're doing really important work that we're doing world changing stuff. While I don't want you to belittle or demean what you'll be doing with your membership site, it's so important to take stock and realise that in the grand scheme of things, it's not quite as important as we probably think it is. Yes, of course it's a business, business should be taken seriously, we have a commitment to deliver to our members, but if, for example, a course that you're releasing into your membership site is two days late, nobody dies if that happens, okay? We're not doctors, we're not surgeons, we're not firemen, we're not military personnel. Our job as a membership site owner doesn't have life or death consequences, so if you need to take an afternoon off, if you're just not finding your groove when it comes to actually putting in the work for your site, or diving into your community, it's okay.

The absolute worst case scenario is, if you're a couple of days late with something that you're releasing, or maybe you've been releasing three courses a month and then one month you only release two, you might get a very small smattering of members who raise an eyebrow, who even spot it. Most people won't even notice it if you're a couple of days late, you need to take a little away, or maybe you're not posting as active on your community one week compared to others, most people won't notice. Some people will and they won't mind. The very, very small percentage of people who would actually kick up a fuss about that, well do you really want those people as your members anyway?

So, first step in making sure you're not burning yourself out is to get a bit of context. Think of things in terms of the big picture. It's so easy to get really tunnelled in to the importance and the magnitude of what it is we're doing with our membership sites but just take a big step back and realise that you can take some time away without the whole internet collapsing. Your business isn't going to all of a sudden disappear overnight if you go to the cinema one afternoon, or you decide to goof off one day and play a little bit of PlayStation. So, get that big picture. Get some context when it comes to what you're actually doing, because sometimes that's all it takes to actually help us relax a little bit, stop putting as much pressure on ourselves and stop going crazy when it comes to how hard and how much we're working on our membership site.

Second step is to be realistic about your ability and the time you have available to you in order to deliver content, materials, to take part in your community and so on. So it's so easy, and we've certainly experienced this ourselves, particularly in the run up to the launch of the Member Site Academy, it's so easy to underestimate just how much time is involved with things like content creation, with things like the marketing and promotion side of your membership site. So, when you're planning out your site, or if you're renewing your strategy, or looking at your content plans for the next three months, or six months, be realistic. However long you think that content production's gonna take, double it. Always hedge your bets.

If you are looking at a schedule where you're looking to add four or five big courses per month into your membership site, then again, veer on the more pessimistic side. Go with the assumption that maybe you'll only get two of those done a month, or one of those done a month, and then at those times when you're actually getting more done, then it's even better because that's over delivering. But if you're setting yourself up for failure and setting yourself up for burnout by putting too much work on your plate and not being realistic about the time you're going to have available in order to actually deliver what you want to deliver, or even your ability to do it, then that's a very quick way to burning out, overworking yourselves. That's not good in terms of the quality of the content that you produce and in terms of the way you're going to approach the day to day running of your site, because you'll be stressed, you'll be easily annoyed, you'll be irritable, you'll be less open to engaging and interacting with people in your community and your members. So, again, step two, just be realistic about the time it's going to take you and your ability to deliver what you want to deliver when it comes to planning out content, or planning out developments for your membership site.

The third thing to do in order to avoid burnout is to manage your member expectations. So again, when we're talking about being realistic with yourself in terms of what you can deliver, you also need to make sure that the expectations of your members are accurate, that they're not unrealistic. So if somebody joins your site and for some reason is under the impression they're going to get five or six new courses every month, or that they're going to receive your private cell phone number and they can call you up any time, day or night, for advice on

their project or their business, then you need to be managing those expectations and a lot of that comes down to the messaging you use on your sales page, the way in which you position and promote your product.

So, if you're promoting your product and if you're laying out the features and setting out the map ahead for your members in terms of what they're going to get, and people are expecting more than that, then you need to look at your messaging to make sure that it's clear. To make sure that you're not setting realistic expectations for your members and where members do have crazy expectations, which happens sometimes ... Sometimes, even though you're being as clear as day on the fact that, for example, your membership site has one live training call a month and it has one new course, or one new resource added every week, you will still get people who just inexplicably have bizarre expectations, but you need to make sure that you contain those, that you manage those and you set people right because again, if you're putting pressure on yourself to produce content and then you're getting added pressure from members because they're expecting more than you're putting out, that means there's something missing. There's something going wrong in terms of what members are expecting to get, what you're communicating to people about what they're going to get. So make sure that your members' expectations in terms of what they're going to receive in your membership on an ongoing basis are managed and realistic. Because again, this just dials down the unnecessary additional pressure that can lead to you overworking and getting burned out.

The third thing to look at in order to avoid burnout is building a team. So this can actually be a difficult transition for anyone who's accustomed to kind of being the one man band within their business. Going from being the person who everything runs through to being somebody who also has team members can seem a massive, massive leap, but actually, it's something that's very well suited to membership sites because a lot of what you do with your membership site ... Sure, there's stuff that only you can do. Only you can produce your courses. Only you can go in there and represent yourself in the community, but there'll be a lot of mundane, boring, simple admin tasks that pretty much anybody can do.

So if you're producing video courses and those video courses also have an audio download, or they also have a worksheet, the process of turning those videos into audio, or the process of creating a worksheet and making them look nice, they're things you can give to somebody else as a task. If you're doing member news shows, for example, or if you're sending out email digests of popular discussions in your community, again, that's something you can have a virtual assistant or some sort of admin person take a look at that whole process, and taking away something they own. So all you need to do is focus on the higher end stuff that only you're capable of fulfilling, or you're capable of actually taking care of and then you leave all the more mundane, run-of-the-mill, standard, bulk level kind of stuff to somebody else.

So if you're running your membership site, really look at the tasks that you're actually doing on a day to day, week to week basis. What are the standard stuff that you repeat over and over again? If you do a webinar, for example, over Google Hangout, then are you doing the set up of all of that? Then when it's complete, are you going through the process of downloading the video, uploading it to another video host, putting the video on your site, writing up a summary what was discussed? All of that can be done by somebody else, so all you do is show up to deliver the actual webinar and it's all been set up for you in advance and then once it's done, you know that your virtual assistant is going to take care of the other tasks. So, look for ways to build a team in order to hand off the sort of tasks that you shouldn't be spending your time on. Think of yourself as the front man of the band, as the superstar of your membership site. You need your supporting players, you need your band mates behind you all doing their part to contribute towards making your site a slick presentation.

So look at ways in which you can break down the demands of your membership site and pass off tasks to different team members. And if you've got a community, this is something that it's even easier to do once you've actually got a lot of momentum going with your community, because what you'll find is, you'll generate power users. So you'll have certain members in your community who are highly active compared to the others. Now, these people are prime candidates for being given moderator roles within your community. So if you're finding yourself just keep an eye on what's going on in the community, almost police it to a degree. So, move topics from one place to another if people are posting them in the wrong place, answer support questions, deal with any sort of arguments or heated discussions between members, that's something that as your community grows, you're going to have to think about how to deal with that. You could turn to your power users and give them that level of responsibility within your community in order to take care of that side of things and take it off your plate a little bit.

So again, just various different ways in which you can highlight the stuff that needs taking care of in your membership site, and find ways in which to pass on certain tasks and responsibilities to other people so you can focus on the more important stuff. And kind of a side to this as well, if you're delivering live training, or you're delivering masterminds, then another way of lightening the load is to bring in guest experts. So, if you're doing a monthly live training session, it doesn't need to be you who's delivering that training every single month. You may do it where you'll deliver one session and then for the next two months, you have different guest experts and then you deliver basically one session a quarter. So that lightens your load in terms of your responsibility for producing and creating that live content and it also actually is better for your members 'cause they're getting a greater variety of people. You could bring people to talk on stuff that you perhaps don't have as much expertise on. So, build your team, look at ways to bring in guest experts just to lighten the load of what you personally need to take care of on your membership site. Great way of making sure you don't get burnt out.

And finally, have a schedule. Make sure that you're scheduling what you're doing, and manage that schedule. So, if your membership site is just one of the things you do, let's say you have a day job, your quote-unquote day job, and your membership site is something that you're running on the side and that's something that is true for quite a lot of people. A lot of people will have a set of daily responsibilities, either they're self-employed, so they're running their own business but their membership site is almost on the side of their own business, or they are actually employed by somebody else. And of course, in those cases, the long term aim is usually to make sure the membership site takes over and becomes the main project, but until that happens, you're going to need to juggle your time and manage a schedule effectively. So, make sure that, when it comes to your membership site, you're not just slotting it in around everything else that you're doing because that's a quick way to going a little bit crazy because you're just grabbing ten minutes here or an hour here.

So, make sure you set aside allocated time to work on your membership site. Again, a lot of this comes down to focusing on putting together an overview of what jobs need to be done, what tasks need to be fulfilled on a day to day, week to week, month to month basis and then allotting time to yourself to get those done. So if you're scheduling in your day job, you're scheduling in any other responsibilities you have, you schedule in time to work on your membership site and ... and this is very important, you schedule in some down time. Down time is perhaps the best thing that you can get in running any sort of business, but it's usually one of the first things to get sacrificed. Nobody hands out prizes for people who work the most hours in a day. If you're working 12, 14, 15, 16 hour days, then you need to look at that because it's not about working the longest, it's not about working the most, it's about working the smartest. You need to work smarter, not longer, not harder.

So, make sure that you're scheduling in down time where you can completely disconnect, where you can relax, where you can get away from the screen, take a walk, go to the cinema. Anything that isn't business, or that isn't related to your membership site and I promise you, that will have an infinitely positive effect on the time you then do spend working. Again, this comes back to the very first point we're talking about, when we're saying that a lot of people over exaggerate to themselves just how important it is, the work that they're doing. Just how vital their membership site is. And again, not to denigrate that, but if you decide to step away for the afternoon, most people won't notice, the people who notice, most of them won't care. So, don't tether yourself to your computer, don't fall into the trap of thinking that you need to work every single hour under the sun in order for your membership to be successful. You need to work effectively, you need to work smarter rather than just working endless hours and burning yourself out.

All right, I hope you enjoyed that little look back in the archives and I hope that if you've been starting to feel like maybe you're getting overwhelmed, maybe everything's getting on top of you, perhaps you're starting to burn out, then I really do hope that the tips that this episode has given you, it's going to help pull

you back from the edge, and help you to regain control of the day to day of running your membership. And control is such an important word there, because we forget that one of the big upsides of running a membership site is that we get to set the terms, you're in control. If you're getting overwhelmed and burned out with how much content you're creating, you have the control to be able to slow down, to be able to tweak your offering, to pivot into something that's a better fit, that's more manageable.

What we said in episode 19 still rings true. We tend to overestimate our members' expectations. Nobody is going to be kicking your door down if you decide that you only want to put out two new pieces of content a month instead of four new pieces of content a month and actually, if anyone does get majorly annoyed that you're making that change, you probably don't want them as members anyway. You just have to remember, you are in control. You're the one who sets the rules, you set the terms. Remember that, and you'll go a long way to avoiding burn out in your membership. Hope you enjoy this little look back in the archives. Over the next couple of week, we're going to be revisiting two more fantastic past episodes, so be sure to join me again next week for another instalment of The Membership Guys podcast.



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