



Mike Morrison:

Hey there. Welcome to episode 142 of The Membership Guys Podcast. I'm your host Mike Morrison and, if you are looking for tips and advice on growing a successful membership, then good news, you are in the right place. This is the podcast for you.

Today we finish off our little journey down memory lane with the third and final trip into the archives of The Membership Guys Podcast and, we pulled out for you a duzi of an episode that answers one of the most common questions that comes up time and time again from people who are getting ready to launch their membership and, that is, how much content do I actually need before I can open the doors to my membership? How much is enough?

We see this question coming up time and time again in our own membership, in our Facebook group, from our podcast listeners, blog readers, social followers, it's such a common cause of anxiety as you move closer towards launching your membership sights so, the episode we will be revisiting today really digs deep into how to tackle that whole area.

Now before we dive into that episode, if you listened to last weeks podcast episode, you may have been expecting today's to be focused around urgency and promotions and all of that stuff. Now we decided to have a little bit of a change, I'll go in a different direction. We'll be covering that topic in a fresh episode in the future so, definitely keep your eyes and ears open for that one. But for now, we're going to dive right in to tackling that problem. Tackling that question of how much content is enough to launch your membership?

Now technically you can launch a membership with no content at all. If you listen to episode four, way, way back of The Membership Guys Podcast, and that was all about how to quickly bootstrap a membership sight and get up and

running quick then you'll have heard me talking about the idea of actually delivering all of your content in the early days of your membership in real time after you've launched through live training webinars and then, turning those into [inaudible 00:02:02] courses.

So, if you are purely asking this question because you want to know how much content you can, "get away with having before you launch a membership" then, the answer is none. You can launch with no content whatsoever. Nothing other than a schedule for live training webinars, which will then form the basis of your permanent ongoing content for your membership.

So, if that's all you wanted to know then, easily done. Get yourself back to episode four, and you'll hear me talking about how to get up and running in record time with your membership. But overall, for everyone else, the most important thing when it comes to membership content for me, is to stop thinking of it as content. As membership site owners you are not selling courses, you're not selling downloads, tools, resources, widgets or any of that. What you're selling are solutions to problems.

Now this is absolutely key when it comes to figuring out how much needs to be in your membership before you launch. Because when you think about things this way then you can start breaking down your members problems and looking at how you can provide a solution in as few steps as possible.

This has nothing to do with the number of courses that you have. If you're not trying to sell your membership on the basis of how many widgets you've got then you're focusing on the wrong things. The quantity of content is irrelevant if that content isn't solving the problems that your members have. So, focus on delivering results, providing solutions and, getting people to where they want to go. You don't need to solve every problem, just the important ones. You can go deeper and you can drill down into the more specific stuff later on but, when it comes to launching, you want to be trying to identify the core problems that your members have and make sure that you have something in place, whether it's content, whether it's community, whether it's live training, whether it's a tool or a resource or a workbook, something in place that acts as a solution to those core problems.

So, a key, key part of all of this as well is to identify your member avatars. If you haven't already done that, if you haven't analysed your audience and kind of come up with the archetypes, the main types of members that you're going to attract in terms of where they are in their journey or their experience or skill level is, how their standing relation to the topic or the subject that you're covering, then doing so is a great, great way of basing your plans for your marketing, your content and all of that on.

So, think about your audience, what are your main member avatars? What situation are they in when they join your membership? And, where do they want to get to? Why are they joining your membership?

Map out the entire journey that your members could potentially take. Literally grab a sheet of paper and list it out step-by-step. What are the key steps along the way? What are the milestones between where your members are now and where they want to be? Now this may be one giant roadmap from, you know, someone who is literally at day one of their involvement with your topic through to someone who is an experienced veteran or pro or, this is where you actually bring in your member avatars so, if you know that your audience typically breaks down the three core groups, beginner, intermediate and advanced then, you can actually look up the typical journey of each of those three core groups. How does a beginner who is literally at day one, square one get to a point in which you might consider them to be intermediate?

Now obviously if you're creating them avatars you're going to go a little bit more in depth into what intermediate means. You know, intermediate could mean, for example, if you're teaching someone to play guitar, intermediate could be somebody who plays in a band or somebody who is out gigging at the moment but, you know, isn't getting booked for big shows or what have you. It may just be someone who is comfortable reading music or, who can compose their own tracks. When you're creating member avatars, you need to really nail down the characteristics of what the average kind of person at this sort of stage would be.

And that's going to feed into being able to map out the journey of that particular member from their starting point of joining your membership through to that next stage. And when you do that you can start to identify the milestones along the way, the most important problems that require a solution in order for those people to make progress.

So, to begin with, when it comes to creating content and planning a launch for your membership, you want to start by making sure that you have enough, in your membership to at least get those people to the next step along their particular path. And, again those member avatars are so important for figuring this stuff out especially if you have an audience with different experience levels or, an audience where people are typically going to be at different stages of their journey.

If you can zero in on three to four core groups within your audience, then your starting point for your member content should be centred around providing one thing to each of those groups that addresses their core issue or moves them one step further down the road.

So, as an example, with the Member Site Academy, we generally have three core groups of members. We have people who are planning a membership, people who are creating so, they're actually in the process of building or putting together all the tech side of their membership and then people who are trying to grow. So, those are essentially the three "K" stages of the member journey when it comes to Member Site Academy. Planners, creators and growers.

So, when it came to launching, our priority was having something in place for each of those groups that addressed the strongest and most common problem that they have. So, for people planning their membership, this was actually getting their plan together and figuring out specifics. You know, these are people who knew they wanted to create a membership, they knew they had an interest or a passion or experience in a particular area but maybe they hadn't figured out what that meant in terms of shaping a product, coming up with a price, giving it a name, figuring out how to position and promote it.

So, for our planners, putting that plan together, actually figuring out what they're offering in terms of specifics, that was the most common or the largest problem that needed addressing. But people who were creating their membership and they were at a stage where they needed to actually take their plan and turn it into something, their most compelling problem was actually determining what technology to use so, things like choosing their plug-in, figuring out which email marketing provider to use and so on.

And then for people who already had a membership up and running and they were just looking at how to grow it, then, again, the most prominent problem that those guys had was figuring out ways to attract new members.

So, with that in mind, we identified three core courses that we were going to create, one for each of those three core groups and that was really the basis for what we decided had to be in place for the launch of The Membership. So for the planners we came up with our Master plan course which is all about helping them get their plan and get all the specifics and flesh up their product. For the people in the creating stage, we put together a membership platform course which was all about the technology, all centred around helping them to choose a plug-in, help them determining the web horse to use and get all their technological ducks in a row. And then for people who already had a membership site who were looking for ways to grow, we came up with the Member Lifecycle Course which is all about how to attract and keep new members.

So, for the launch we actually only created two of those courses. The Platform Course and The Master Plan Course because we knew that upon launch, the largest proportion of our audience would be people who didn't yet have their membership site in place. So, in terms of our big courses, our kind of flagship courses, we created two out of the three and that was it. And then, for the people who were in that third group, growing their membership, we knew we had to provide them with something to help them attract members but, The Lifecycle course we were planning we knew was going to be a huge one so, we made the decision to leave that until later and instead we created a bunch of shorter, more specific, more tactical courses on things like email marketing, sales funnels and Facebook ad's.

So, again, that was addressing that main problem of how to attract new members. Even though people in that stage, you know, it's not just about

attracting members, it's about keeping them, engage with them and all that sort of stuff, for people joining the site, typically, if you're running a membership one of your main priorities you're going to have is getting new members so, we've made sure that for launch, we at least ticked that box too.

So, none of that started out as a centre of sales, "Okay well, how many courses do we need?" Or, "As long as we've got 12 courses then we're fine." We weren't asking ourselves how much content was enough, it was all about identifying the main, most compelling problem for each of our typical member avatars or archetypes and then insuring that we had had something in place to provide solutions to those problems.

We didn't skimp, we didn't phone it in and it certainly wasn't a checkbox exercise, we just zeroed in on what was most important to those people and those groups and we made sure that we smashed it in terms of the solutions that we provided.

We didn't solve every problem that every single person joining our site could conceivably have but, we addressed the biggest problem for the three core demographics to give us the broadest coverage possible and, for everything else, we had the community there that enabled us to answer more specific questions.

So, it's really important to get real about expectations. Both our own expectations of ourselves as well as our interpretation of what our members expect. Listen we all like to think that our members are going to live or die by our every word and that they'll dedicate their lives to everything we put out therefore we need to break our backs working twenty-four, seven to feed the beast.

I actually saw a membership recently where the people running it genuinely expected that new members would take a week off work to focus full time on consuming their content. That's never going to happen. Your members aren't as ravenous or as demanding as you expect. And even if they were, they're not the ones who get to dictate the terms and set the rules so you shouldn't be thinking that you have to kill yourself creating content in order to satisfy them.

You don't want to end up creating more content than your members can assume. You'll overwhelm them and, ultimately, they'll leave because of it because they'll have this growing feeling that they're not getting things done and that they're getting left behind because you just throwing too much content at them.

So, you need to realise that there's no pressure on you to have this huge behemoth of membership content from day one and, you also need to reassess your expectation of just how much content you'll actually be able to create because, we always underestimate just how long it takes.

So again, this is where it comes back to not overloading people with content. Not trying to solve every conceivable problem. Focus on what is most important to the core or, the most common groups of people joining your membership and just focus on creating something of high quality rather than just pushing for quantity, quantity, quantity.

One of the biggest benefits of the membership model is that there isn't as much demand or isn't as much expectation for you to have a finished product as there is for a course or something similar. When somebody enrolls on a course, they know that what they're buying and what's there on day one, that's it, it's not going to be added to. Now of course some courses are drip fed and all that sort of stuff but ultimately, it's not something that's going to evolve, it's not something that's going to grow. With a membership people know that they're joining something which is going to be updated, it's going to be added to, it's going to evolve and grow on an ongoing basis so, you don't have to have everything created and available in your site from day one. Just enough for people to get started and making progress towards their goals.

Remember, as well, that you don't stop creating content when you've launched. In fact, as we mentioned earlier, you mightn't even start creating content until after you've launched. In fact it's beneficial to hold back on creating some of the things you want to create until after you've launched because you're almost always get feedback from your paying members that challenges the assumptions you may have had about what content they wanted or, what content they needed or what problems they have. So, this feedback from your paying members becomes invaluable in determining which content to actually focus on.

And remember when I said that we identified our three core courses that we knew long term were going to be the cornerstones to the material we created. Our Master Plan Course for the planners, our Platform Course for the creators and our Lifecycle Course for the growers. Now, that Lifecycle Course was almost entirely shaped and it changed in a large way based on member feedback.

So then that comes back to what we're saying. It's often worth holding a little something back until after you've launched because the real time feedback you're going to get from your members, what they're going to tell you about what they need and what they most enjoy and, what they're finding most valuable, that's going to shape the content, the solutions that you incorporate into your membership on an ongoing basis.

Remember too that, while people will often join for the content that you've provide and how it solves the problems that they have, more often than not, the reason why the stick around is usually more routed in the community element of your site. So, don't get bogged down with this idea that content is the be all and end all of your membership. So, really the question of how much content do I need to launch is the wrong question to be asking.

What you really need to be asking yourself is, what are the core problems that my audience have? How will my membership solve them? And, what do I need to create before launching, content or otherwise, to move those people a step or two down the road towards the outcome that they want?

Hopefully if you've been stuck on this, if you've been really struggling with trying to figure out how much content is enough to get moving or, when you should put your launch date down in terms of how much content you're going to be able to create, hopefully this helps put everything in perspective, give you a little bit of food for thought for figuring that out.

Remember, it does all just come back to that basic truth. You're not selling content, you're selling solutions to problems. Start with that in mind and everything starts to click into place.

All right gang so, I hope you enjoyed that little trip into the archives and, I hope it's really helped put to bed any concerns that those of you who are working on your membership launch strategy may have been having around whether or not the content you've got planned out for your launch is actually enough for you to open the doors.

Again, it's so, so easy to get sucked into that trap of grinding out just high quantities, high levels of content just so we can say that we offer the most courses, the most tools, the most resources, the most stuff on the market but, as membership site owners, especially ones who are getting ready to launch and have all of those moving parts to take care of, it really is the wrong approach. It's the wrong mindset and it can drive you absolutely crazy at the worst possible time in your lifecycle as a membership owner.

That's it from me. I'll be back again next week with another instalment of, The Membership Guys Podcast.

