



4 WAYS YOU CAN USE
A MEMBERSHIP TO
SUPPLEMENT
YOUR EXISTING
BUSINESS



Mike Morrison:

Hello there, welcome to episode 159 of The Membership Guys podcast. I'm your host, Mike Morrison, one half of the membership guys. We are experts in membership websites and on this show each and every week, we are bringing to you tips and advice on growing a successful membership site of your own.

This week, we're talking about four different ways that you can use a membership website to supplement another type of business. Your existing business. Now, most of the memberships that we talk about, most of the times when we're discussing memberships, it's in the context of it being the main thing that somebody does, or being a product that is a completely stand-alone thing.

But that's not the only way that you can use memberships to grow your business. In fact, a membership website where you have protected content, where you have a protected community, that people pay for, or at the very least, that they have to have a registered account for, that sort of membership site can work really well in combination with your existing business, even if the membership itself isn't your core focus. So in today's episode, we're going to cover four ways that you can use memberships in this manner.

The first is using a membership site as a training area for your clients and customers. Either something that you get them to pay for, or in most cases, as a free value add. So if you're a web design agency, a marketing company, coach, consultant, personal trainer, yoga instructor, music instructor, so on, and so on, and so on, if you have clients who need training or reference materials, or who would benefit from things like templates, worksheets, downloads, quick tips, other resources, then you can create a huge value add to your regular service by giving those clients and customers their own private membership area in which they can access that stuff as part of what they're paying you for.

Back in my early days as a freelance web designer, I used to give people a printed manual to show them how to manage their site, how to add content, how to add pages. Bear in mind that this was 10 years ago or so, before everybody was using WordPress. But nine times out of ten, these systems that they were using were identical from project to project, client to client, and that training was largely the same. But I was wasting time rebranding it, changing a few things, spending money getting this stuff printed out, putting it into a nice ring-bound format, all of that nonsense.

So I ended up switching to providing training videos inside a little client membership site. And it worked like gangbusters. Not just in terms of actually ensuring that my clients and customers were able to more accessibly figure out how to use what had been built for them and all that sort of stuff, but it just seemed like so much more value. And it was more value, and it was a lot easier for me to run. And of course, it gave me somewhere where I could provide them other little bits and pieces too.

Not only did this help me set myself apart from my competitors who weren't doing this stuff, again, keep in mind this was around a decade ago, before the whole membership site hype trend caught on. But it was also a great way of keeping the conversation going with my clients and my customers. Keeping them engaged with me. As a result, that





increased how many people came back and worked with me on other projects, because that relationship never really ended, because they were inside my client training area.

So this sort of approach works really well if you're offering SAS, that's software as a service product. Or pretty much any type of product that requires training, but also where you have customers who will have other needs that you can quite easily help them with. This is something that I talked with about Mark Asquith back on episode 155. They do this at PodcastWebsites.com. Their main business is a SAS product, but they also use a membership site as a value add to house the training on how to use their platform, as well as some bonus stuff like expert interviews, and all that sort of thing that helps their customers.

Because they know that not only is this a massive amount of extra value that their competitors won't be providing, but also if they can help their customers become successful podcasters, then their going to remain customers of that SAS product for even longer. If for no other reason than their more likely to be making money, and as a result, their more likely to be able to afford to keep using it, and to want to keep their podcast going, and as such, want to keep their website going. So it's a big, big part of their strategy.

And of course, even if you're doing this just as a value add to begin with, you're also creating an asset that you can then spin off into a stand-alone product further down the road. So even if to begin with it's just something that's supplementary to your business, you're putting the pieces in place to potentially turn it into its own stand-alone revenue stream too. So that's the first way in which you can use a membership site to supplement your existing business, and this really is perfect for coaches, for consultants, again, yoga teachers, personal trainers, where you might have lesson plans or workout videos, offering this as a value add to your one-to-one stuff is a fantastic idea.

The second way of using memberships to supplement your business is to have a free membership level as part of your lead generation strategy. Now, when it comes to lead generation, getting email sign ups, most people do the same sort of thing. They create a lead magnet, so an opt in bribe, or maybe they have multiple lead magnets, so these will be things like a free guide, a PDF ebook, a webinar, a checklist, or whatever. They put up a landing page on their website with an email sign up form. So when enters their details, they get sent the freebie, and they're added to a mailing list and typically, put through some sort of series of automated emails that are geared at selling them something.

There's nothing wrong with that approach, in fact, we do it ourselves. However, if you want to go one step further, then an alternative approach to this would be to put all of your lead magnets, all of your freebies, and all those little bits and pieces into a free membership website. And then, rather than having people just sign up for your mailing list, you get them to register to your free membership. You're still giving away the same stuff, you're just reframing it, and repositioning it. So this could be an entire stand-alone membership that is completely free. Or maybe if you have an existing membership, it could just be a free introductory level for your main premium content.





A number of people use this strategy very well. This is something that Nathalie Lussier, who's founder of AccessAlly, calls The Login Optin strategy. Copyblogger, for example, do this very effectively. They have a free membership level. There's no time restrictions, or anything like that. You register for that membership, you get all sorts of guides, you get a free course, and so on, and so on.

Now, of course there's a little more friction, there's a few more bribes in getting people to register to a free membership, versus simply signing up to an email list. But that added friction is balanced out, and in fact, outweighed in most cases by the fact that in registering, they're getting a whole load more value than they would normally get for just popping their email into your landing page. So this can work very, very, very well for lead generation if your free membership is packing a lot of value.

So what this does is it gets those people over some initial hurdles in their relationship with you. It gets them to create an account, to log in, to consume your content, and to engage with you as an educator, as an expert, as a leader.

When you've got them that far down the road, it's easier to then convince them to go further with you. To join your paid membership. To join your coaching programme. Attend your event. Hire you as a consultant. Buy your other products, and so on. So free memberships as part of your lead generation can really work like gangbusters, either as a lead in to an up-sell to a bigger membership, or as simply a place to bring together your most engaged, most qualified leads.

The third atypical way of using memberships to support your existing business is to utilise it as a home base for a networking group, or a mastermind group. If you're part of a mastermind group, or maybe you organise a regular local meetup of other businesses, or maybe people who share the same interests, or share the same hobbies, then you could use a simple membership setup to keep the conversation going between your meetings, and to store any useful files, resources, maybe even recordings of mastermind calls, and so on.

So in this sense, the membership is kind of just for you, and for your small group. You're really just taking advantage of the technical setup, and the technical benefits of a membership. The ability to lock things down, and restrict access to just your core group of people. But it's certainly something that can be very useful, and can add an extra, beneficial dimension to networking, or to masterminding.

Again, it's kind of building a little bit of a foundation if you later decide you want to take things further. Particularly if you're using this for a local networking group that you run. If you ever decide you want to expand on that, and perhaps start a larger network of multiple groups in your area, then having that online side of things in place as the backbone to that as a business idea, can be a great, great foundation to build on. So it's definitely a different use for a membership than we ordinarily would talk about on this show, but it's certainly a valid one, that can be really beneficial to your business if you do run those kind of network groups, or if you're part of a mastermind group.





The fourth way you can use memberships to supplement your existing business is to have an alumni membership for your course students. So if your main business, your core offering online, is selling a signature course, so hundreds, or even, thousands of dollars for this stand-alone, self-contained course, then you might consider offering an ongoing membership exclusively for those people who have enrolled in, and then completed, and graduated your course.

Now, usually those sort of courses, they won't have any sort of ongoing element to them. You pay once, you maybe get a lifetime access to that material, or perhaps you download the course to your computer. But it's not common when you're buying that type of course to expect ongoing training, or even lifetime access to a community.

Now, sometimes course creators offer those sort of things, they offer a little bit of support, and a little bit of community access for a limited period of time, maybe six to twelve months after buying the course. But usually it's not offered as an ongoing thing that's included in the cost of the course.

So this is where you could potentially consider having a paid membership that people can join as soon as they have finished your course. Or maybe you're checking in, and doing a live Q&A with them once or twice a month, but where the main purpose of that membership is about providing that ongoing community support.

This is a great way to extend the lifetime value of a customer. There would certainly be a nominal fee to remain part of that community. You can keep them in there, continue supporting them, continue helping them in their journey, without having to deal with that issue of needing to turn down people who come to you once they're done with your course, and they want to pick your brains. They've got extra questions. They want some free advice. Usually you have that uncomfortable situation of trying to figure out how you can say no to a lot of those people. So if those people who want that advice and support are inside your membership, and they're paying you a recurring fee for it, then it's not an issue for you to give them that attention.

And of course, what this does is it keeps people in your ecosystem. If somebody's bought your course, and they've gone through it, and then that's the end of your dealing with them, they're just going to go off and perhaps you'll never hear from them again. But if you keep people in your ecosystem as part of this alumni membership, then if you do develop any other services and products further down the line that they might be interested in, they're right there, that relationship has been nurtured, that trust has been developed even further, these guys are going to be the first port of call whenever you've got any other product, or offerings, that could help them even more.

So those are four ways in which you could utilise membership websites in order to supplement and support your existing business. Number one, create a training area for your one-to-one clients. You could charge for this, but actually, use it as a free value add. Brings so many different benefits, and gives you a starting point if you ever decide to set a paid separate membership. Number two, create a free membership site, or a free membership level, as part of your lead generation strategy. Number three, use a





membership site and take advantage of that technology to give you a meeting point, and a home base, for any local networking group you may be running, or mastermind that you're part of. Number four, if you sell courses, consider having an alumni group for everyone to go into, and transition into, as an additional low ticket paid product, once they're done consuming your course content.

So if you're running a business where you're working with clients one-on-one, if you're selling courses, and you're perfectly happy doing that, and you've been trying to figure out what ways you could potentially explore opportunities with a membership model, hopefully, today's episode has given you a little bit to think about, better food for thought, and some options for how you could use memberships without them having to be these big, all-encompassing separate stand-alone businesses.

That's it from me for this week. I'll catch you guys next week with another installment of The Membership Guys podcast.

