



R U N N I N G A  
**M E M B E R S H I P**  
T H R O U G H T H E  
**H O L I D A Y S**

*6 Things You Should Do*

[WWW.THEMEMBERSHIPGUYS.COM/178](http://WWW.THEMEMBERSHIPGUYS.COM/178)



- Mike Morrison: What's up everyone, welcome to episode 178 of the Membership Guys Podcast. I'm your host Mike Morrison, one half of the Membership Guys. Thank you so much for joining me this week. If you're looking for tips and advice on growing your membership, you've come to the right place. This is the number one podcast for membership site owners. Today, we're talking all about the holiday season.
- Mike Morrison: It's December. 2018 is coming to a close. This is a time where you might be starting to think about how you're going to not only finish this year, but also position yourself to get off to the best possible start in 2019. Today, I want to talk about six things that you as a membership site owner should be thinking about doing during this holiday season.
- Mike Morrison: Now, before we actually dive into it, can we all just agree something. Can we all just agree that if I say holiday season, it's not an attempt to avoid saying Christmas for fear of offending people who don't celebrate Christmas, and if I say Christmas, I'm not trying to exclude anyone who happens to be from a faith or a culture who don't celebrate Christmas. You can substitute Christmas with whatever significant event you happen to celebrate, and the advice just remains the same.
- Mike Morrison: Now, I know you guys are all smart cookies and that this all probably goes without saying for 99.99999% of you. But hey, this is the internet, so it's always worth being careful. If I say Christmas, I'm not attempting to exclude anyone. If I say holiday, I'm not trying to be overly politically correct. You all know what I'm talking about, and essentially, this is really about how to leverage a significant holiday period whatever that is for you or for your audience. Let's dive in with six things that you should be doing in your membership business during the holiday season.
- Mike Morrison: The first of these is something I love doing each and every year, and that is doing some form of year-end review content. At the end of every year, here on the podcast, starting back in 2016 I believe we do a very special episode which is usually the last episode in December. In that episode we do a recap. We do a review of the 10 most popular episodes of the Membership Guys Podcast over the past 12 months.
- Mike Morrison: This is a great opportunity for us to cap of the year by taking a little bit of a look back, picking out some of the best moments and really tapping into what has most resonated with our listeners. It's also a great way of us creating something a little bit different, a little bit special. It feels like a special episode, something that has been created to celebrate the holiday season. We've done two of those now in 2016 and 2017 and in a few weeks time in episode 181. We'll be doing exactly the same thing; counting down the 10 most popular episodes of the Membership Guys Podcast during 2018.
- Mike Morrison: That sort of year-end review was something that we'd encourage you to do in your own membership, so maybe it's a review of the biggest lessons that you've learned, the highlights of your year. Maybe it's member successes, so you could actually get soundbites or little interviews and clips from your members and compile them as a year-end membership review, or a roundup of your best content like we do on the Membership Guys Podcast.





- Mike Morrison: Now, fun fact. This year's episode actually comes out on Christmas Day, so we recently changed our release day from Wednesday to Tuesday just because that gives us a little bit more of the week to actually promote the show whereas previously releasing it in the middle of the week meant that our promotional efforts for the show kind of had to straddle the weekend a bit. Anyway, I digress. We changed the release day to a Tuesday, and of course, this year Christmas day is a Tuesday. Episode 181 is going to come out on Christmas day.
- Mike Morrison: Now, I doubt people are going to be pushing their presents aside on Christmas morning to listen to that episode, but these year-end reviews do go down very well. If you think about how things like TV programming is run around the holidays, quite often, you have special episodes of shows. You have Christmas specials. You certainly have them in the UK. I know you have them in the US. In fact, the Christmas specials of the office, which controversially I kind of prefer the US version to the UK version. Don't tune out of the show. I said it was controversial. But they have Christmas specials.
- Mike Morrison: With those Christmas specials, there's a little bit of a pattern interrupt going on. Something that tells people that this episode is not like the others. It's something we're doing that is special to mark the end of the year. That's what we do with ours and it works well. Think about whether you could do something similar. Not just a podcast, it could be a blog, it could be a video, it could be a Facebook Live.
- Mike Morrison: It might be a workshop that you do just inside your membership, again, looking at lessons learned, highlights of the year, member successes, maybe even just a phone kind of member party. Maybe you do an hour live hangout with your members where members can actually join you on a Zoom call or on a Facebook Live just to hang out with you. No format, no formal structure. Just almost a virtual Christmas party. Could you do something like that as a way of capping off the year for your audience and for your members? Something like that can be very fun.
- Mike Morrison: The next thing you could do during the holiday season is to run a seasonal promotion. The holidays are a great time to run a promotional campaign. Whether it's a discount, whether it's a promotion where you offer some bonuses, some sort of event marketing like a summit or a challenge, the festive theme gives you a lot of fun elements to play with that you don't get the chance to tap into at other times of the year. You can really get creative. You can really play around with that. Of course, if you look out into the wide world, there's all sorts of examples of people doing specific promotions that are tailored to the Christmas theme: lots of Santa Clauses, lots of Snowman, lots of Christmas trees, all that sort of thing. You can use that theme to pep up your promotions, pep up your launches, that sort of thing.
- Mike Morrison: Something that makes a really good promo, if you have the tech to allow it, is a gifting promotion where you do some sort of an offer or a big push on allowing others to purchase membership that they then give to somebody else as a gift because, of course, at this time of year people are buying gifts for each year. They're thinking about what's





going to make a great present for my significant other, for my friend, for my partner, for my family member and so on. And so it may be that if you've got a guitar membership, even if you're not a big guitar enthusiast, your partner maybe, or your friend or family member. And so gifting them a year's membership to that site, that could be an awesome Christmas gift.

**Mike Morrison:** People give vouchers, people give gift certificates and that sort of thing, so maybe that's something you could explore. Some membership site plugins have the options that allow that sort of gifting where you can come on your site and they can sign up to essentially create what amounts to a gift certificate that they can then give to somebody else. That can just be something you provide them digitally. You could potentially go one step further, and this really does depend on how logistically things are setup in your business.

**Mike Morrison:** But you could look at ways in actually creating something physical, so you can actually physically create something that's about the size of a business card on which you have printed different promo codes, or a gift certificate code or a coupon that allows someone to join your membership for free and then you sell those to your audience. It might be something worth investigating, something worth exploring. Gifting can work really, really well around this time of the year because obviously this time of the year people are more prone to buying gifts for other people.

**Mike Morrison:** Something we've done before with the Membership Guys and that we're going to be doing this year is actually running an advent calendar campaign. You can actually get a plugin for WordPress that allows you to essentially have a virtual digital advent calendar on your site, and then every day a new thing is released within that calendar. Sometimes it may just be a new blog post or a new piece of content, so you'll actually see on our advent calendar that today December 4th. If you go over to the Membership Guys and you check out our advent calendar, you'll see behind today's advent calendar window is this podcast episode.

**Mike Morrison:** But not every day of the advent calendar is just a new piece of content. In some of them maybe it's a giveaway. Maybe it's a silly video of my head and Carly's head superimposed over some dancing elves, which is something we've done in previous years, or an embarrassing photograph of us in Christmas jumpers and stuff like that. You can have a lot of fun with this, and this gives you something daily to be talking about and getting your audience excited about. Of course, it's very fitting with the festive theme. You couldn't do this sort of advent calendar promotion at other times of the year.

**Mike Morrison:** Now, it's not just about fun stuff. It's not just about releasing your content. You can have flash sales somewhere within the advent calendar. You can launch new products, so it might actually be that you on the tenth day you open the doors to your membership if you have a membership where the doors are closed. You open the doors to the membership unexpectedly for a 24-hour period and you really tap into that urgency there. Again, it's just thinking about creative ways of really using that seasonal theme to promote your membership. And if you run a Google search for WordPress advent





calendar plugins, you'll find a few different options, so check those out if you like the sound of doing something like that for your audience.

**Mike Morrison:** The third we recommend membership owners do around the holiday period is to take a break. This is definitely something that too many people forget to do, and that's true year-round. People just forget to take time away from their membership, but please, please take some time away from your membership site over the holidays. You shouldn't be answering forum posts between forkfuls of Christmas dinner. Take time off. Relax. Have fun.

**Mike Morrison:** Christmas is usually a time where family and friends are gathering around, or even if it's not, it's a time for binge watching on Netflix. It's a time for playing the latest video games, or it's a time for getting out there and throwing some snowballs around. It's so important to take breaks from your membership and have some good quality downtime, and the Christmas period really is the perfect time to do that. The world isn't going to end if you have some time away, and chances are your members are doing just that.

**Mike Morrison:** They're taking a break. They're binging Netflix series. They're spending time with family, friends, with their children. They're not going to be sitting at their computers logging into your membership. Things aren't going to fall apart if you take some time away from your membership. Unfortunately, there's just far too much focus on hustle, and grind and all that nonsense these days.

**Mike Morrison:** Some people consider it a badge of honor that they never take a break and that they work all through the holidays. I remember all the way back years back when I was running an agency, and I would see some of my peers tweeting about the fact that they were building websites on Christmas morning, and how real entrepreneurs never stop, and this is what it takes to build a business. That didn't tell me that they were some incredible entrepreneur. That just told me that they were so disorganized and so lacking in control of their business that it would fall apart if they didn't take time away.

**Mike Morrison:** It's not a badge of honor. It's not a good thing to be incapable of taking a break. Close the laptop. Shut down the computer. Take a break over the Christmas period. Spend some time with your friends. Spend time with your family. Spend time with yourself. I mean, that's why you're doing all this for anyway. You're not running a membership just to build up loads of cash in the bank account, but you'll probably die before you get the chance to spend. I know this is getting a bit dark and getting a bit morbid, but we're doing this so that we can live a happy life, so that we can take time away without being stressed.

**Mike Morrison:** Trust me, your members will benefit from it too. If you're thinking about this at all, you know, "Actually, no, I'm not doing this for the lifestyle. I want to build a business. I want my business to be the best it is." You know what, your business, and your members, your customers they will benefit from you taking a break because you're not serving anyone if you're burning yourself out. If you are looking for a pure business benefit, if you're





thinking to yourself, “Mike, but it is all about the hustle. It’s all about the grind. A real entrepreneur does what it takes to build their business.” Let me tell you this, what it takes to build a business is making sure you don’t run yourself into the ground because your business will suffer if you do that.

**Mike Morrison:** If you’re looking for a business base justification for taking a break, that’s it. Even if you’ve got to force yourself to take some time off, know that that time away is actually an extremely important investment in your business. Anyway, soapbox away on that. Just please take a break. Please, please take a break. If you lose, everyone loses. If you burnout, your members will suffer for it. Take time away during the holiday period, the perfect time to do it.

**Mike Morrison:** Now, even with all of that said, the whole idea of being away from your membership over the holidays may still be causing you a little bit of anxiety, but really, the key is in managing expectations over that holiday period, so the fourth that you should be doing is clearly communicating what your availability will be to your members. Set and manage those expectations and enforce those boundaries. Whether you’re taking a complete break or even if you’ve just decided you’re going to have a little bit of reduced availability, so maybe you’re going to log in for an hour every single day to answer any urgent posts in your group or your forum, but then that’s it.

**Mike Morrison:** However you’re handling it, make sure that you’re actually communicating with your members about what to expect during the holidays. Put a message on your customer support forms. Add in notice or an announcement to your website’s dashboard. Pin a post to the top of your Facebook group. Send an out-of-office email message. Tell your members in your weekly newsletters to them, and setup an out-of-office message, so that anyone who emails you knows when you’re going to be around. It’s so important to make it clear what your availability is during the holiday period and over what time span, so if you’re taking a break, when is it from, when is it to.

**Mike Morrison:** If you don’t make this sort of stuff clear, then that’s when you start to get panicked emails. Quite often, if people are getting in touch with you or people are posting and you don’t reply, then they don’t know that there’s a reason why you’re not replying. If they don’t know that you’re away or that maybe you’ll only be checking messages in the morning, then they start to panic because they don’t know when you’ll actually be back.

**Mike Morrison:** They think they’re being ignored. They think there might be an issue when actually if it was just clear to them what your availability was and they could tailor their expectations to that, then they’ll be less inclined to get panicky and, as a result, you’re getting far fewer emails and you’re getting far less pressure to pull yourself away from that break that you’re taking and jump on top of stuff in your membership.

**Mike Morrison:** Now, I’m sure that there’s still some of you listening thinking, “Yeah, but Mike, what happens if someone actually does have a serious emergency?” Well, you may very well still be checking your emails over the holidays without necessarily actively being on top of everything in your membership. And so if you’re doing that, or maybe you’ve got a





virtual assistant who's doing that or a member of your team who's just keeping an eye on the emails just in case something actually seriously time sensitive does come, then it's up to you whether to jump on that.

**Mike Morrison:** Maybe mention that you're going to be away, that you're only going to be checking emails periodically, and that unless it's an emergency, you won't be replying until your return. That way if it is an emergency you're covered, so you can still be checking your emails without feeling like you have to reply to all of them because you've told people, "I'm not going to be replying unless it is actually an emergency." That takes the pressure off you a little bit.

**Mike Morrison:** Now, of course, this assuming that it's just you handling the customer service side of things. If you have staff in your team, then, of course, they'd be expecting a break over the holidays too. They'd be expecting to have a little bit of reduced availability, but it doesn't have to mirror yours. Maybe you want to take two weeks off over Christmas, but maybe your staff are just needing to take a few days. Or, maybe you want to take two weeks off where it's a week before and then the week between Christmas and New Year, and they want to take just a day before Christmas up until maybe a few days of the New Year.

**Mike Morrison:** Your holidays, your reduced availability doesn't have to be exactly the same as your team's. You can stagger this. You can have it overlapping, so that the actual period during which everybody is away or during which there's the least amount of availability is shortened. If you're taking more time away than your staff are taking, or again, if you're staggering it so that there's a bit of an overlap so that not everyone's away the same time, then you can just empower and leave your staff in charge at Christmas or during the time that you're away on the understanding that they don't get in touch with you, on the understanding that only the most vital of emergencies get escalated to you.

**Mike Morrison:** Now, it's not just about Christmas service either. It's about setting expectations inside your communities, or your forum, your Facebook group, letting people know you might not be around as much. We all like to think that the world is going to end, the world is going to fall apart if we are not available 24/7. But honestly, a lot of that is ego because realizing that you're not quite as vital to the day-to-day, minute-to-minute lives of your members sometimes that can be a slight blow to the ego and, as such, we do like to convince ourselves if we're not checking the forum, if we're not checking the Facebook group 24/7, then my members will hate me. Chances are they won't even notice.

**Mike Morrison:** Make sure you're managing expectations. Make sure you're communicating clearly to your members and to your staff when you're going to be available, what they can expect. That's going to make dealing with customer service and handling your community so much better, so much easier, so much smoother during the holiday season.

**Mike Morrison:** The fifth thing to do during the holiday period is take some time and reflect on your progress and your achievements over the past year. The holiday season is really the perfect time to do this. Think about what went well, what didn't go so well and why.





What have been your major achievements, your accomplishments, your challenges, your highs and your lows? It doesn't have to be a real, formal, rigorous exercise in documenting this stuff. Just take the time to think.

**Mike Morrison:** People don't take the time to just think anymore. Make sure you do that. Reflect. Think back. How have you felt about this year what goals and plans did you have at the start of the year? What progress did you make towards them? Did those goals stay the same as the year progressed, or did they change? If they changed, how did they change, why did they change and what did that change mean to your business? Use the downtime of the holiday period and the finality of the year to take stock, to reflect and to think. Please, don't beat yourself up if you haven't hit your goals or if things haven't gone the way you want. That's business. That's life.

**Mike Morrison:** A lot of the time these goals are arbitrary. They're guesses, they're best estimates, so don't dwell. Make a deliberate effort to focus on the positives from your year, and then use those positives to plan next year's goals. And then use the things that you have learned and you have achieved, the things you have fallen short on, the things that you have exceeded expectations on. Use all of this to help you plan next year's goals. That's the final thing I want to recommend that you do during the holiday period. Plan out next year's goals.

**Mike Morrison:** New Year is the perfect time to set goals for the next 12 months and, indeed, beyond that. I know my good friend, Mark Asquith, from podcast websites. He likes to set short-term, mid-term and long-term goals that span up to an entire decade, so he's actually setting goals 10 years in advance. That sounds a little crazy. It sounds a little daunting. But trust me, there's a little bit more method to that madness, and he talks about this on his own podcast, The 7 Minute Mentor. Look it up on iTunes. Check out episode 445. I really dig Mark's approach to goal setting. The episode you want of that podcast is called Plan the Decade, and that's The 7 Minute Mentor Podcast. Look it up on iTunes. Give it a listen. Hit subscribe as well because the dude is smart.

**Mike Morrison:** Anyway, so again, here I am advocating for using the New Year as the kickoff point for goal setting for 2019 and beyond. I'm sure that you'll hear people saying, "Well, you shouldn't wait until the New Year to make goals." Honestly, that's just pretentious waffle. New Year is as good a time as any. In fact, it's a better time if you're someone who's drawn to symbolism, if you're someone who benefits from the slightly extra bit of momentum given by seeing other people talking about their goals and other people making a big push on what they want to achieve during the year.

**Mike Morrison:** If the whole newness of the year is a bit of a kick up the butt for you, then why not set those business resolutions? During the holiday period, think about what those goals are. Think about what you want to achieve in the next 12 months, and then when the New Year kicks off, commit to those goals, get them down on paper, start fleshing out the plan to actually reach them and get to work.





- Mike Morrison: Okay, so that is six things you should be doing in your membership business over the holidays.
- Mike Morrison: Number one: create some sort of year-end review content. You'll hear our 2018 review episode in just a few weeks. That comes out Christmas, so I may very well be spending Christmas morning with a lot of you, and it's episode 181. Keep an eye out for that.
- Mike Morrison: Number two: run a seasonal promotion. Gifting promos and having some sort of digital gift certificate are perfect for this time of year too, and you can also tap into the festive theme to add an extra element to other promo types and really help push those as well.
- Mike Morrison: Number three: take a break. Seriously, get away from your membership for a while. The world will not end if you do.
- Mike Morrison: Number four: prepare for reduced availability. Not just your own reduced availability and making sure you communicate that clearly to your members, but also the reduced availability of your team and the reduced engagement you're likely to get inside your community. It's normal. It's par for the course. Communication is clear, set boundaries and stick to them.
- Mike Morrison: Number five: take time to think. Reflect on the year that you've had, the progress you've made, lessons learned and so on.
- Mike Morrison: And finally, number six: take all of that and use it to help you to set goals for the year ahead.
- Mike Morrison: There you go. Six things that every membership site owner should consider doing over the holiday period. Hopefully, some of this is stuff that you've already done in previous years or that you're already on top of. Maybe you've already got your Christmas promo planned. But if not, hopefully some of what we talked about today gives you a little bit of inspiration, or at the very least, especially when it comes to things like taking a break, things like reviewing and goal setting, hopefully it's given you a little bit of a kick up the butt to make sure that you prioritize the stuff that really matters over the festive season and that you don't get so entrenched in running your membership business that you fail to actually take time away to enjoy the fruits of your labor during the time of year that is perhaps the best time to do just that.
- Mike Morrison: Hopefully, you've enjoyed this week's episode. I appreciate each and every one of you for listening. If you are a new listener and you've enjoyed today's show, make sure you hit subscribe in whatever it is you use to listen to your podcasts these days. If you are a returning listener, you know I love you. Thank you so much. Thanks for all your support. I'll be back again next week with another installment of The Membership Guys Podcast.

