



# 4 UNUSUAL (BUT EFFECTIVE) MEMBERSHIP CONTENT STRATEGIES

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Mike Morrison:

Hello to everybody welcome to episode 188 of the Membership Guys podcast. I'm your host, Mike Morrison. This is the number one podcast for membership site owners in the world and the number one place to be for all the proven practical tips and advice you need to take your membership business to the next level. Thank you so much for hanging out with me today. I appreciate you spending some of your precious time. I know about running a membership site is a hectic, hectic life, so I really am grateful for you carving out five or 10 minutes of your day to listen to me talk all things membership.

Today I'm talking about membership content strategies. Now, a lot of the memberships that have been run by people in our audience typically follow two or three fairly common strategies when it comes to how they structure and distribute their content. Usually most of the memberships you've come across that either going to be all access, so they have a full library of content and then you join and you get access to everything or they're going to be structured like a course. Maybe they're drip feeding their content. So there's a fairly standard, fairly common two or three types of membership content strategies that you'll find in most memberships. But of course there's all sorts of different ways of skinning the membership cat.

There's a lot of different ways that you can structure and distribute your membership content. Today I want to talk about for fairly unusual but pretty effective ways of actually approaching your membership model.

So the first of those is the insider strategy. So this is something that you see more and more with the rise of platforms like Patreon and with big social media and publishing platforms like YouTube and even Facebook bringing in options for creators. So people who previously were just creating content for the love of it, for the passion because it was their hobby or to build an audience. Places like YouTube, like Patreon, like Facebook they're bringing in the ability for those creators to monetize their following. And particularly with YouTube and Patreon, those options and those features full monetization are actually centered around subscriptions. They're centered around memberships. Almost enabling people to create these micro memberships that are built on the back of a passionate fan base.

A great example of this is a guy by the name of Jonathan Oakes runs a very popular podcast called Trivial Warfare and he's been able to monetize that podcast through using Patreon. So if you go over to his Patreon page, he has a few different levels at which you can support the podcast and you can essentially become an insider. And those are priced at different levels and the different price levels give you different perks.

So some of those things will include access to premium episodes of his show. Some of them will include essentially being considered to be a guest. Some of them will simply include getting shout outs during the show. So unlike a lot of memberships that are generally comprised content coaching community and feature a lot of E-Learning and stuff like that, this is a completely different animal. These are perks. These are little extras and bonuses given to you for becoming an insider, for joining the gang, for showing support for something that is primarily a free vehicle. So something like trivial warfare, the core of what they're doing over there is still the podcast. That is the main thing.





That is what you're supporting. You're not buying a separate standalone product. You are joining a membership to become a supporter of the podcast, to become an insider.

You also have big celebrities like Ronda Rousey doing a similar sort of thing. She has a membership site that again, a lot of the content that has been provided, they are behind the scenes snippet. So it's road diaries, it's videos from her travels around the world via UFC, via WWE and stuff like that. So again, is that insider club element.

Now this is going to be a massive growth market in years to come. YouTube are pushing this hard, Patreon or really putting a lot behind this, Facebook are adding these sorts of features into their platform. So this insider's club strategy, which I almost liken to the blue ray extras a broch. So if you really love a movie, you're like go and see it in the cinema, you might buy the DVD which just has the movie or you pay a little bit extra and you get the movie, the movie is the main thing that's the star attraction, right?

You get the movie but you buy the blue ray that has the two additional disks of behind the scenes interviews and commentaries and a lot of perks and bonuses and so again, it's paying that little bit extra to get the additional material on top of the core product. So that sort of blue ray extras bonuses inside [inaudible 00:04:55] kind of strategy. It's an unusual one in the space of the types of memberships that our audience are and you listening predominantly are dealing with. But this is something that's going to come in more and more and more. And of course, you can find ways of actually adopting aspect of that in your own membership.

So a lot of people's focus on the value proposition of their membership will center around those three Cs, content, coaching, community. And the content is usually E-learning. There's a responsibility for you to publish content that helps people meet the goals that they joined your membership to achieve, but actually you can enhance that with the almost trivial bonuses inside a club type of content behind the scene stuff, stuff that's just entertaining, stuff that's a nice little perk or a reward or a thank you to people for supporting you. Actually incorporating that stuff can help set you apart from your competition.

So that's the first content strategy that I want to talk about, unusual within the realm of the type of memberships we usually deal with, but highly effective and certainly a model that we're going to see growing and growing and growing and becoming more prominent within the membership space.

So the second strategy I want to talk about is the paid archive strategy. So this is quite an interesting one. It's one that I've seen being used by CreativeLive, it's being used by Mixergy, it's being used by influencers in the online business space such as Chris Brogan. So effectively, what this model involves is charging people for access to an archive of material that when originally released and originally done live was available for free, so how it worked with CreativeLive is all the new content they put out there is available for an initial period of time for free.





So if you go their website, you will see that the current program, the current thing that is available to watch is free, but once that window time has closed the recordings of all of that stuff that was maybe originally delivered live or originally just available for a week, that then goes into an archive that you need to pay to access and then the next thing comes available for free. So basically the new stuff comes out, it's free for a limited window of time, but if you miss that window the only way to access it is inside the paid membership.

Mixergy have used a similar model as well, their interviews with entrepreneurs are initially available for free for a limited period of time. That window closes, the next freebie comes up and the one that was there before goes into an archive and if you want to get it, you've got to pay to access. Chris Brogan does this with some of his higher level webinars, so you end up really involved really in depth webinars that you can attend for free, but then if you actually want access to the archive of those, once he's done, once they've been done for free, the only way to get those replays is by paying to join the membership that gives you access to that archive.

So this is a really interesting spin on a freemium model and it's all really down to timeliness. So this actually has an inbuilt degree of urgency, of scarcity and of fairness. This content is available for free. It is entirely possible to watch every single thing that we put out completely free and never pay us a penny, but only if you're willing and able to actually watch it live. Otherwise, if you want to watch a replay, if you want to revisit, if you want to dig into the archives and what's related material that is the paid membership. And the value proposition is amazing and again, it's very, very creative.

So it's an unusual but a very effective membership content strategy and a very interesting alternative to having a free membership level or to offering a trial and stuff like that. You're essentially still getting that risk reversal that comes from being able to allow people to consume your content without making a financial commitment, but you have that added hook of the fact that this will go away and the only way to get it again would be to join and you'll also get all these other things as well. So that's the pay at archive strategy.

The next strategy is the magazine strategy and predictably this is a strategy that is modeled off the back of traditional print magazines. So usually if you buy a magazine or you subscribe to a magazine, you only start getting issues of that magazine that are released from the date that you subscribe. It doesn't matter how long the magazine has been running, it doesn't matter how many past issues have been released. You only get the content that is released during the time that you're a subscriber.

So when we talked about one of the more common content models for membership sites being the all access model, somebody joins and they get access to everything. Or the paired archive strategy, somebody joins, they get access to the entire archive of your webinars or your interviews. This is kind of the reverse of that. You don't get any of the older stuff because you weren't a paying subscriber when that stuff was released. You only get new stuff that is added. Now there's a lot of angles to this. One, it enables





you as a membership owner to then sell access to that older content, much in the same way that magazines will allow you to back order previous issues.

So if you want to get anything that was released before you started subscribing, you can actually buy them on an individual basis, but it's not included in your ongoing subscription. You get this with comics as well. You can subscribe to a comic series if you want to buy some older compendiums of some of the past episodes, you can do that. So that's certainly an angle when using this model for membership sites is you can actually sell access to your archive. You could potentially have two levels of membership. So level one follows the magazine strategy. So you join on level one which is the cheaper membership level and that gives you access to anything new from the date that you join up. Or membership level to give you all access. You get all of the archive and all of the new stuff.

So there's a lot of different ways in which you could actually utilize that strategy. And also if you are using the magazine strategy, it gives you a little more longevity to your content because it means that actually you could potentially reuse some of that older content for newer members. Whereas if you were given them access to everything, you wouldn't be able to just kind of take something that came out a couple of years ago and then polish it up and present it as an update piece of content or a new piece of content or a bonus or anything that. With the magazine strategy, your archive suddenly becomes a very separate asset that you can leverage in a variety of different ways for your membership. So that certainly makes it an interesting, unusual and effective strategy for online memberships.

Final content strategy we're going to talk about is the credit store model. So you do see this around from time to time. One of the reasons it's not as prevalent within the membership space is because it can be quite tricky to pull off and it's not necessarily suited to every type of content that people are putting into the membership. So the idea of a credit store model is that your subscribers are allocated a certain amount of credit. So tokens, points, what have you. Credits that is effectively currency for use in purchasing content and features within your membership. So as an example, a very old client of ours Choreography To Go, it's a membership site that specializes in tutorials for choreographers. And they operate a credit store model.

So you join up, you'll get an allocation of say 10 credits, and then you can go into their library and you'll see, okay, most videos will cost you one credit, some of the longer ones, some of the more advanced ones, they may cost you two or three credits. And so you might have thousands of videos in that archive, but you then have to choose which of those videos you are going to actually redeem your credits for. So somebody joining doesn't get your whole library, they don't get the thousand videos that you have on offer, they get the ability to purchase up to 10 videos if you're running your tutorials at one credit per video and your giving people 10 credits.

So the way that this will work in the membership model is essentially what someone is subscribing to is a monthly allocation. It's a monthly stipend of credits. So every single





month you get given 10 credits to spend and then essentially you get to decide what those 10 credits are spent on each month. And maybe you have it so that people can accumulate their credits, maybe you have it so that they are only able to spend their credits for that month and then it resets all sorts of different ways you can approach this. Now, when used for membership sites typically, what people will do is they'll have two or three different subscription options that gave you a different amount of credits.

So the cheaper option might give you five credits. The middle option might give people 20 credits a month. The top option might give people 50 credits per month. So basically the more your paying, the more videos you can purchase access to within your membership. And you know many people using this credit model will also give people the ability to purchase bulk credits as well. So they can buy add on credits and stuff like that. So it is a real interesting content strategy. What it's certainly more suited to is the type of membership or the type of topic where you could potentially have hundreds and thousands of fairly short, fairly easily digestible consumable videos as opposed to a smaller library of courses. So you know if you had a membership site that's got 20 or 30 courses, then you're certainly going to find yourself a lot more limited if trying to use this sort of model.

Although you know you can kind of put a spin on it where essentially every month you can choose a single course to consume in your membership. Problem with that is the value proposition doesn't really seem very high. So I would certainly say that this is a model most suited to memberships that have a vast library of shorter tutorial videos or shorter resources and stuff like that.

An alternative approach is a one that's used by Avalon Yon. She runs a cake baking membership. She's actually been on the Behind The Membership podcast with my other half. Many would say better half Callie Willows and if you head over to the show notes for this episode [themembershipguys.com/188](http://themembershipguys.com/188) then you'll see the links to Avalon's interview there if you want to find out more about her membership. But she utilizes the credit store model in order to allow people to purchase lifetime downloads of content. So most membership sites don't allow people to download the video content. There's always that concern that if you do that, someone will join your site, download everything, and then cancel their membership.

You want to give people a reason to log into your site and actually one of the best ways to do and that is making it so that the content can only be watched on your site. There's all sorts of other reasons why it's better to do that rather than let people download stuff, but we won't dive into that right now. But what Avalon does is she allows obviously her subscribers to be able to watch all of the content. So you join in, you have access to the entire membership, but on top of that there is also a monthly allocation of credits that you can spend on the ability to download individual lessons.

So those downloads they get to keep for life. So they have those even if they cancel their main subscription, but because they are based on credits and because obviously there's an allocation of credits every single month, you couldn't come in and just download absolutely everything.





So this is an added perk that allows Avalon to tap into the credit store model in order to have an extra little value add, but without sacrificing the length of subscriptions, the length of time someone stays a member because you're limiting what people are able to actually download. So using that credit store model for downloads versus access, again, it's a real smart twist on that model.

Okay. So those are four unusual but effective and certainly interesting membership content strategies. The insider club strategy that is more centered around giving people a way of supporting you in the content you're creating, whether it's a podcast, whether it's a video, a channel or what have you. This is more about the trivial behind the scenes stuff. More about making people feel like an insider. The paid archive strategy, that CreativeLive, Mixergy companies like that use. Where you put something out for free for a limited window of time but when that window closes, the only way of getting access is inside the membership.

The magazine strategy, that's all about only enabling people to access content that is released from the date from which they join rather than giving them access to the full archive. Gives you the ability to leverage that archive in many different ways.

And then finally the credit store model. Really good for memberships where you're going to have a huge library of stuff and you want to give people the ability to essentially pick and choose what they are getting for being a member as well as open up other avenues for generating additional revenue by having various different levels and by enabling people to essentially pay as they go as well.

So hopefully this has given you a little food for thought. If you are in the process of planning out your membership, then it's always good to kind of know some of the less common approaches and strategies that people are taking. Now, again some things that we're talking about, like the magazine model, like the credit store model they are a little more technical to get open running, but certainly they are feasible so very much worth considering. And even if your membership is up and running, there's always little twists that you can put on what you're offering. Again, that example with Avalon with her cake school using the credit store system in order to give her a way of allowing members to download their membership that actually cannibalize her subscriber base because it's set up in such a way that someone can't do the whole hit and run where they're joined and download everything from your site.

Anyway, hopefully you found that interesting and I know not everyone's quite as nerdy and geeky about memberships as I am, but I always love exploring the sides of this world that aren't talked about so much in terms of how people are structuring and running their membership. So hopefully you found it useful, hope you enjoyed this. As always. I'm going to be back again next week with another episode of The Membership Guys podcast, so I'll see you guys later.

