

How to Deal With **PROBLEM MEMBERS**



Welcome everyone to episode 85 of The Membership Guys podcast. I am your host Mike Morrison and this is the show for anyone looking to run and grow a successful membership website. Thank you so much for downloading this latest episode. Always appreciate you choosing to spend the little part of your day with me and hopefully I can make it worth your while by just spending proved and practical tips for membership owners.

So, today's episode, we are talking about problem members, how do you deal with problem members and how do you face the situation where you might want to kick somebody out of your website. So the first thing you need to ask yourself honestly, is this member really a problem? Or is it just the case of you don't like them. There's some sort of personality clash. They've been rubbing you up the wrong way. You don't have to be friends with all of your members and as your membership site grows, there's more and more chance that you'll have personality clashes with some other people who join. It's just not realistic to expect that when you have hundreds and hundreds of members, you are going to gel with each and everyone one of them.

As you get more and more people in your membership there will be more times where someone is posting, who you just don't connect with or to you they just seem a little bit odd. Maybe their sense of humors dry, maybe they are very blunt and direct and you are not a big fan of that. But if this person isn't negatively affecting the experience of others then they are not necessarily a problem member, just a member you don't particularly like.

But if they are causing problems, if you've had complaints, if they are triggering arguments or offending people, maybe they are posting offensive or inappropriate materials, then you've got a problem. And you are going to have to think about how you actually deal with them to get them to either change their behavior or kick them out of your membership.

Now it's important not to overreact.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

If somebody is starting the part a little bit or the discussion gets heated you don't want to come down on them like a ton of bricks and start banning people left, right and center. You don't want the sort of membership community that is a totalitarian regime where people are scared to express their opinions or scared to be passionate about what they are there for. And in some markets those sort of passions are going to be inspired just by nature of the topic but there is a definite difference between people who are just passionate and expressive and people who are toxic element to your membership.

The approach that we recommend is to have a two tier strike based approach and have this as an internal yardstick for figuring out how to deal with these kind of situations. Again it's not the sort of thing where you necessarily want to lay down this really tight, strict rules in your community because that can have an adverse affect on how people interact, how people behave and chances are if someone is worried about breaking the rules, that might not actually stop them from contributing or stop them from engaging as much. So with this kind of approach we are talking about with two tier strike based approach, just keep that internal and use that as your own guideline and the guideline for staff, for moderators or you have helping you out and how to deal with this kind of situations.

So the first tier, it really relates to the type of situation you have, the type of issues. If it's a case of a member who is causing friction in your community, they are rubbing people up the wrong way, they are causing offense, they are starting arguments, and they generally just being a little bit unpleasant, then approach them with a two strike approach.

So strike number one, you warn them. You contact them privately and its always better if this is done privately rather than having drama play out on your forum because that's not going to reflect well on you or the member. Contact them privately, let them know and know in certain terms what the situation is. Be clear about the issue and make sure they know that you are not happy with it, that it's not an approach or an attitude that's going to stand and that if there's a problem again the next step will be that they will be removed from the community. So if it is just someone being a bit unpleasant and causing friction, give them that warning, that's their first strike and let them know that second strike, they are out.

However if this is a member who is actively harassing or threatening other members, that is stealing, ripping of your content or that's posting extremely inappropriate materials on your site, then instantly remove them. That's not something you can tolerate in your community and so rather than giving them a warning, because that kind of behavior isn't deserving of a warning. You get rid of them right away. Shut that down. Those people can be extremely toxic, they can cause you to lose members and depending on what they are actually doing, especially if they are threatening, abusing, harassing members, that can land you in hot water. So you need to shut that down.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

So if you are actually issuing a warning, so if it is someone on their first strike, just follow your explanation, don't enter into an argument or be hostile. Don't be accusatory or you know stalker fires and potentially causing even bigger problem. Make sure that they just know that your policy is first strike, you make them aware of the problem, you let them know that it's not acceptable from your perspective and that the second strike will be removal.

Be clear in saying that. It's not something you take pleasure on, it's not something you want to happen and your hope is that just making them aware that there's been a complaint or that there is an issue will be enough to get things back on a positive track.

Definitely approach it with a positive mindset because it may well be that this person just doesn't realize how they are being perceived. People have all sorts of different styles, all sorts of different attitudes and what we see is something that is a negative or what other people will see is a negative, that person may actually think they just being funny. It may just be their way, maybe they just don't realize that they are causing problems so don't go in there with hostility. Go in there with a positive outlook and add genuinely approach it from the mindset that you would love to turn this around and make this a positive and have that person contribute in a far more positive way in your community.

But on the back of that, what I would definitely say is keep an eye on their behavior after you contact them. Don't allow this private communication to devolve into an argument or a mudslinging. Or he said she said. Or if you tell them there's been a complaint, don't allow them to demand or get the names of people especially out of you who has complained. Just make it clear that this is a situation, this is our reaction to it, this is what happens next. We don't want that to happen and that is the line drawn. You are not entering discussion; you just let them know how it is.

But you want to keep an eye how they then behave in your community, if you are using something like Active Campaign or Ontraport or Infusionsoft where you have site tracking enabled then just take a look what pages are they going to.

If suddenly you give someone a warning and then you see that they are going through every single piece of content on your website and it looks like maybe they are downloading everything or they are copying everything and they are planning on running off then that might prompt you into taking some sort of action.

Now if you are removing someone completely so whether its strike two for someone who is just been a problem element or whether it's an instant removal when someone is clearly crossed the line, our advice is to cancel and remove their access before you email them to let them know you are cancelling them. Because what could happen is if you contact them and say there's a problem, we are going to remove your access. Is if they happen to be online when they get that and they act quicker than you, they could start causing problems whether that's posting stuff in your community, whether its downloading everything, whether you know, there's all sorts of different things that



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

could happen. So cancel and remove access to your website before you actually let them know that that is happening, just to safeguard yourself from potential fallout.

Now if these guys are paying you on a recurring basis, cancel their subscription, both within your membership plugin and if possible within your payment processor whether that is Stripe or Paypal or what have you. If you have the ability to cancel it, cancel it within your processor so there's no chance that they will accidentally be re-billed later on.

You may also want to consider refunding their most recent payment, is someone is a monthly billed member then again just refunding their monthly payment. Sure it's a little bit of a financial hit but that just limits the chance of any sort of blow back or of this turning into a case of them essentially saying, "Well I paid for this access and you are restricting it from me, so you are breaking the law or I am going to take action." If you have refunded the entirety of their most recent payment then there is not much they can say in response to that. You will likely get some people who comment you and say they want the whole of the sum of what they paid you so far refunded, but honestly they don't really have a case for that if that's what they request because they will have had full access to what they paid for for that time.

The refund of the most recent payment is purely to save you any hassle rather than doing it because you should do it or you need to do it or you are required to do it. Now if someone is paying you on an annual basis, then again you might want to think of doing a pro rata refund so that means if someone has been a member for 4 months but paid 12, it may be necessary to take that hit and refund them for the remaining 8 months. Again to reduce blowback, to reduce any question of whether there's a legal issue about you not providing what's been paid for.

Now yes that is financial hit but ultimately the cost of not taking action could be way way greater in terms of lost members, in terms of potential headaches that come later on. We would say to ensure there is something in your terms and conditions for your membership that makes it clear that you can revoke access at anytime; just so that if that's questioned or if that is brought up, you've got something to refer to as well.

Something you may want to keep an eye out for especially within the days and weeks after cancelling this member's membership and removing them is keep an eye out on suspicious enrollments. Any names that seem a little bit off, email address that seems a bit off, people who are behaving oddly in terms of how they are using your website, because you can't put a pass on some people especially if they are behaving in such a way that's had them banned from your site. You can't put a pass then to try re-enrolling or re-subscribing under a fake name.

Now it takes a particular type of person to waste their time in doing that but I am sure we've all encountered people like that in various walks of life so again this is something you might want to be aware of.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

When it comes to removing people from your membership is definitely a far greater chance of fall out than if you have simply warn them about their behavior but its far preferable to keeping that kind of toxic element inside your membership. You need to remember this is your website, your business, your livelihood, you need to protect it and you are well within your rights to do so. It's so crucial to maintain harmony within your community and to do that, you got to remember you set the rules, you set the terms and it's important that you take action when you have people who want to disrupt that harmony and threaten your business and your livelihood through their negative behaviors.

So hopefully if you've had a situation where you are troubled by a problem member, you are not sure how to deal with it, hopefully this gives you some guidance, it gives you food for thought.

I'd love to hear from any of you who have dealt with this kind of situation before and have had it go particularly well or you feel you've handled it well or maybe you've tried handling it a certain way and its blown up in your face, let me know shout at me on twitter: twitter.com/membershipguys. Make sure you are in our Free Facebook group; let us know in there if you are in the group at talkmemberships.com. I'd love to hear your stories about dealing with difficult or problem members in your own membership.

That's it for me for this week, thanks again for downloading the podcast I really appreciate the support, the love, the feedback, the social interaction. I'd love to hear from you guys on Twitter on Facebook and all that so keep it coming and I'll be back again very soon with another episode of The Membership Guys Podcast.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE](#)