



Mike: Welcome, everyone. Thanks for downloading episode 64 of the Membership Guys podcast. I'm Mike Morrison, one-half of the Membership Guys, and if you're running or planning to start a membership website, then you're in the right place. This show is for you. On today's show, I'm joined by Colin Gray from ThePodcastHost.com. Now Colin, as well as helping other people to become successful with podcasting, is also a Ph.D. in online education.

I'm really excited to get Colin on the show to share some of his insight and experience around how to create educational content in order to help us all make our membership content better, as well as the content that we use in our marketing, such as blogs, podcasts and videos. It was a very good chat, lots of actionable stuff coming out of it, so you're going to want to grab a pen and paper for this one, because I guarantee, you'll be taking plenty of notes. Without further ado, I'm going to jump right now into my chat with Colin Gray.

On today's show, I'm joined by Colin Gray, founder of the ThePodcastHost.com, where he and his team provide education and services for podcasters. He's also a public speaker, having just returned from presenting at ProBlogger in Sydney. We've just caught him coming out of jet lag. And just an all-around top guy. Colin, welcome to the show.

Colin: Thanks for having me, Mike. Yeah, not feeling too jet-lagged anymore, I've kind of caught up. But yeah, keep falling asleep at four o'clock.

Mike: Yeah, I think I'm still feeling the jet lag from an event I went to last year, so who knows? Obviously, mentioned in the intro that you work a lot with podcasters, you teach them how to set up and get the best from their podcast, as well as help them with editing, with production. The one thing I didn't mention in there is while that's essentially your day job, you also, was it last year? completed a Ph.D. in online entrepreneurial education. Is that right?

Colin: Yeah, that's right, yeah, that was my, well, it's kind of how I got into podcasting originally, was I worked in higher education for about six years. That work was in online education, so I taught lecturers how to teach better online, so how to use any kind of technology to help their students to learn, and that led into the Ph.D.



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which I started back in 2012. So yeah, I was doing that alongside joining ThePodcastHost at the time.

Mike: Wow, so we have a legitimate doctor of online education in the house.

Colin: Indeed. I don't tend to advertise it too much.

Mike: I was going to say, when you get that call at the restaurant, is there a doctor here? Hopefully, you're not raising your hand for that one.

Colin: No, no, and I'm always torn on planes whether to put it on, because you think, oh, it might get me an upgrade. But actually I don't really want them to call me if somebody has a heart attack halfway over the Atlantic.

Mike: Yeah, I have, when I attended a friend's wedding, and they bought all of their guests a lord and ladyship, where you basically own one square inch of land in Scotland.

Colin: Oh, nice.

Mike: It's not quite the same as with the doctor thing, but I do wonder if I should put Lord Mike Morrison on my airplane tickets, just for the same reason, see if I can get a ...

Colin: Certainly should, yeah.

Mike: Yeah, carry around a photograph the square inch of land that I own. All right, I want to dive a little bit deeper into the online education side of things, if that's okay. Because obviously, the majority of our audiences, of course, they have memberships, and their memberships have a huge e-learning element. I can't not take advantage of the opportunity to speak to someone who has completed education at such a high level in that very specific area.

When it comes to teaching people online, what would you say are the biggest mistakes, the ones that really top the list for you, that you see people making?

Colin: Yeah, there's loads, but yeah, let's talk, a few of the top ones, really. One of the biggest ones that people always make at the start is try to put too much in. People start planning a course, and I've done this in the past as well, I see it all the time with what we're working with, whereby they start to think about something they want to teach, and they worry about not including enough, when really, to make a course effective ...

I mean, if you think about the aims we have here, what we want to do when we're teaching somebody is to help them attain a certain skill, obviously. Common sense, you actually want to teach them something. But really, they don't want to learn something for the sake of learning something, generally. They want to learn something to achieve a particular aim, so your aim as a teacher isn't actually to teach somebody something, it's to help them to achieve an aim that they have.

The problem is, when you start creating a course, you start to think, "Ooh, so I want to teach this, I want to teach this, but this is related as well. I'm kind of afraid, I'm going to be charging for this, so I want to make sure I'm putting tons of value in, so I'll put that in as well, I'll put that in as well." You end up with



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something that has so many different aims in it, that actually, it's really hard to help them achieve any of them, because they're so different. They're all so varying.

The best way you can create a course is to make it really deep, rather than really wide. By that I mean actually breaking it right down to one thing. So thinking about that particular aim that somebody has and designing every element of that course, every part of that course, to where it's achieving that one aim. There's all sort of scientific educational terms around all this stuff, but it's really just, it's about the whole purpose of it is, you start with one lesson, that leads to the next lesson, that leads to the next lesson. Each of these has one particular learning outcome that you have, you know, you want to teach them one little thing. Each of these outcomes lead towards that particular aim at the end.

That's one of the biggest ones, is people not cutting it down so that people know, so that the learner knows exactly what they're going to achieve at the end of this course, and therefore they know why they should take it, why they should keep going with it, why they should complete that course, and what they're going to get out of it in the end.

Mike: Yeah, and I'm sure that our listeners are nodding their heads throughout everything you're saying there, because, yeah, of course, whether it's online courses or with memberships, you're talking about the aims of that content. If you're thinking about, "Well, I need to make sure that it's commercially valuable, I need to make sure that it's substantial, there's enough stuff to justify the price tag," that's a lot of aims that have nothing to do with your students. I think it's certainly something we see all the time with memberships. Like you say, we're a little bit guilty of that ourselves sometimes as well. You know, sometimes it becomes more about what you want to teach than what the student needs to learn.

Colin: Yeah, but I mean, that's one of the benefits of a membership site, actually, because you suddenly, you change from, and this is something we're looking at just now with our podcasting courses, is changing from on-off purchase courses to a range of courses, all within one membership. Suddenly you go from having a course that you're selling for two hundred quid, two hundred dollars, whatever it is, to having them all under one membership. You don't feel that you have to put, you don't feel the pressure so much to make it big just to justify the cost. You can put in that tiny little course, that's only, say, three videos, but it's got a really targeted aim that people can achieve. That sits well in a membership, I think.

Mike: Definitely, and I think, you know, when you're talking about the outcome of that solution that your customer is wanting, when it is that course, the pressure to actually deliver on a bigger transformation with that course, it's obviously going to be a lot bigger. Whereas obviously with a membership, you're not having to get that transformation in one single piece of content.

I know with our membership, Member Site Academy, the biggest thing we have is the membership roadmap, and that's basically just a navigational tool through other pieces of content. It's not even a piece of content itself, and yeah, so you're tying together all these little courses or resources or articles and stuff like that.

If someone who's listening has had their membership up and running for a while, or maybe they've been selling one-off courses, and they're worried that perhaps



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they've got the structure wrong or the approach wrong, maybe they haven't been thinking of things in terms of facilitating the end result that the user wants, what can someone do to almost audit their content or make little improvements? Is there any kind of quick wins or small adjustments you can make to improve existing content?

Colin: Yeah, yeah, there's two things spring to mind in terms of those quick wins. You've got, so another mistake that I think a lot of people make is assuming that video is always best, because it's seen as the high-quality, you know, if you want a really professional course, you have to make it video. People often just end up spending two or three days recording a bunch of video. That's great. Video does work really well in certain circumstances, but it's not always the best solution.

Sometimes actually, well, I mean, the main problem that video has is that it's a full-attention medium. People have to sit down and they have to concentrate on this video, and therefore, you struggle to get people to watch a video for more than five, ten minutes at a time. It's quite often they'll get distracted. When you've got a course, which is two hours worth of video, the completion rate on that type of course is just horrible. It's just really, really low, because people rarely actually watch through the whole series.

Whereas if you think about your course, break it down into the segments, use video for bits that really need the visual elements, but then actually create some audio accompaniments as well, so you maybe have some longer lessons which are in audio, then they can be listened to out and about. You allow people to download them or you have some kind of a feed they can subscribe to into their podcasting apps, that type of thing, then that's great, because then they can go out, they can listen to it in the car, when they're walking the dog, they're doing all sort of, washing the dishes, all that kind of stuff. Then you get that attention and people can actually consume longer material over, you know, in the context that suits them, basically.

Then add to that as well text, the much-maligned word on paper, well, screen, I suppose. It's difficult, because if you had somebody that signed up for a course, they paid two hundred pounds for a course, and they just saw it was pages and pages of text, then they'd probably feel pretty gyped. But in a lot of cases, in most cases, text is more effective than video or audio, because people can consume in their own way.

Video and audio, the disadvantage of both of them together, is that it's paced. So people have to consume it at the pace that somebody delivers the video, delivers the audio. It's very hard to skim through, to go back and find a bit that just two minutes ago, that you went over. Whereas with text, you can just, your eyes can run over the page, you can find the bits that are relevant to you, you can skip over bits really easily that you already know. You can go back and revise bits that you know you didn't quite understand. Text is a really flexible medium for learning, and that's why there's tons of, I mean, that's what most of the learning materials you find in universities are these days.

A quick win for me actually is to go back through, look at your course and see, start to think more smartly about the mediums. Think, "I've got video here, but actually, could I create maybe a bit of a longer audio that supports that, that people can listen to out and about? Could I create some text that actually gives a summary of that that people can go back and revise, after they've deep-learned in



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the video?" That's one of the big things for me, because people tend to just pick a medium and stick to it and not bring the variety in.

Mike: Yeah, and of course, if someone has actually created the videos, then there are software options that aren't too complicated to strip the audio from those videos, so they'll already have that audio there. Certainly that was one of the first requests we got when we started one of our video courses, is, "Can we have the audio?"

Colin: Yeah, definitely.

Mike: We've actually just recently gone through all the, the non-walk-through content, where someone listening to the audio of a technical demonstration isn't really going to benefit from it. For all the other stuff, the theory stuff that actually doesn't need the video element to it to be useful, we've just done a full run-through of our content, and stripped out all the audio individually. I think this was actually on your suggestion, bundled those all together as well in a single zip file that people can just download and load up as a playlist as well.

You're absolutely right, and it's funny, this is kind of segueing a little bit into podcasting. We don't have transcripts for our podcasts, the Membership Guys podcasts. In speaking to [Callie 13:18] the other day, we both said that we are both far more likely to read a transcript on a website than listen to a podcast episode because of the convenience, because, like you said, the speed of being able to skim through it and all of that. It's funny how I think your instincts on what to create go often go against the way that you consume.

Colin: Yeah, yeah, or what you think would be effective, definitely.

Mike: Yeah, so that's something that anyone who is using video for their membership can do right away after this podcast. If you have courses that could work very well as audio, you can strip those out, and you could even, on the text side of things, just pay a service like rev.com or Speechpad to transcribe those to give you a starting point to actually put in some sort of accompanying text.

I think some of the fear around doing that, or some of the reasons why people will do embedded video instead of downloadable audios and text that can be copied and pasted is this fear of people joining, taking everything from your membership, and then cancelling, and doing a runner. We've covered on a past episode, which we'll link to on the [inaudible 14:33] on this page, why that is something you shouldn't worry about.

Colin: Yeah.

Mike: It's something you shouldn't let affect the actual creating of content.

Colin: Yeah, I mean, that's reducing the user experience for the people that are going to stick around, isn't it? Because you're not offering them everything that they want, making it as easy as possible for them, just for the sake of the few people that are going to pop in and steal everything anyway, no matter what you do.

Mike: Absolutely, and the likelihood is even if someone does come in and steal everything, someone with that mentality probably isn't going to implement what they've stolen anyway. You can kind of feel a little bit smug about that, I think.



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Colin: Yeah, I imagine as well, I'm sure you teach the same thing, but if you're, certainly as a teacher, I used to work with a lot of lecturers that used to worry about their jobs when we were bringing in technology. They were like, "Well, you're bringing in virtual learning environments so you can get rid of all the lecturers. Just robots will teach." All this nonsense. It was like, do you know what? If you think that the biggest value that you're offering is in this static content that you're creating, then there's something far wrong with you, or you're not a very good teacher.

I suppose in a membership site, it's the same thing. Your courses are great, they're support resources, they'll give a lot of value to your users, but it's got to be the live stuff, isn't it? It's got to be the other things that you're offering in terms of access to you, the live sessions that you're offering, the management. In fact, I can talk about a lot of the things that I was thinking about talking to you about around time scales and accountability, and implementing habits of learning and all that kind of stuff. That's all live things that are long-term, not just one-off. They can't be stolen.

Mike: Yeah, exactly, and if it was just purely just about the content, then schools and universities around the world would just have cubicles where they'd put students in with a textbook. That would be it, there'd be no teachers, although, yeah, there may be robots teaching if those fears come ...

Colin: Yeah.

Mike: Obviously, this is all stuff that is applying to the content that we put out there, both publicly with blogs, videos, and podcasts as well as within our membership. Obviously, podcasting is a big thing we do, something that is a major part of how we market our membership. Obviously, that's your world, that's your life, that's your obsession, podcasting. Of course, that's through ThePodcastHost.com, where you have courses and you're teaching people about podcasting. You speak about podcasting, workshops, all that sort of stuff, as well as providing the production and the editing.

With your doctor's hat still on, how does podcasting compare as an educational vehicle or medium or format to blogging and other forms of content? Is, do you see podcasting as being better than, or the best of the middle of the road content medium compared to others, or is it just something you're a particular fan of and decided to build your business around?

Colin: Yeah, it's just different. I think we've covered this a little bit already. It's great in certain contexts, and it's brilliant in the context of long-form content, because, like I said, the attention you get on video, it's pretty low. You know, the stats are three to five minutes or something on YouTube, and similar with texts. People just skim through texts often. Text is good as a [division 17:56] tool, or well, I mean, people do learn from textbooks and books, but a podcast allows you to basically learn while you're in wasted time, I guess.

That's why I love it. The fact that you can, you can be driving in the car, you can be washing the dishes, you can be mowing the lawn, whatever it is, you can be listening to a podcast. For me, it's where you engage people, it's where you put out a bit of your own personality, a bit of your own values. You show who you are, which builds that relationship, that one-to-one with the listener. Audio is great at one-to-one as well, because it just feels really personal, because you're just that



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voice, you're getting it straight into your head through the headphones. The presenter tends not to be worrying so much about things like appearance and technology and all the stuff that goes into video.

Mike: Yeah, that's a big one for us.

Colin: Yeah, so there's all that, all that visual element just disappears, and the presenter can be far more honest and transparent, and themselves. They can just act like themselves. They can just be less nervous. All of that goes together to create a medium that for me is the most engaging out there. I think that podcasting creates the biggest engagement, which leads to the biggest trust, which actually leads to sales at the end of the day, if that's what you're looking for.

Or if it's learning, it leads to consumption, because when you're trying to teach somebody something, it's about them being engaged with what you're saying, what you're teaching. It's about them buying into you as a person, knowing what you're talking about and them sticking around long enough to actually consume what it is you're giving out. Whether it's sales or whether it's education that you're looking for, I think podcasting is at the top of that engagement heap.

It's got downsides as well, compared to video and text, but that's where I think it stands by itself.

Mike: Yeah, I mean, I'm a huge fan of podcasts, so when we actually, when we set up our podcasts, it was more of a vanity exercise in some ways. I'm fond of the sound of my own voice. I used to do, I used to run a long-line radio station for tall nerds back in the mid-2000s, so it was an opportunity to do the whole, stick a mic in front of my face and just ramble on. Yeah, we actually, like when it started it was so inconsistent. I think we launched with five episodes. Episode six was maybe ten days later, episode seven, two weeks later. Episode eight was like two or three days later. It was just whenever I got a bee in my bonnet and something to talk about.

Colin: Yeah, that's pretty standard.

Mike: All of a sudden, when we opened the doors to Member Site Academy and we were asking people where they found us, there was a surprising amount of people who had found us from the podcasts. These were people who weren't previously in our audience. That kind of lit a fire under me a bit to actually take it seriously. Let's actually put a little bit of thought into this.

Colin: Yeah, good stuff. I mean, the thing that people often fall down with in podcasting is that they assume that that's a place to be found. For me it's not really a place to be found, you can be found there, it gets you into more search engines. I mean, you get into iTunes [inaudible 21:05], all the different ones, but the proportion of people searching in those places for new content is tiny compared to the proportion of people searching on Google, just plain text search. Or even YouTube, YouTube is massive now, obviously. They're really the search platforms, and podcasting is the engagement platform.

I think it works, you try and snare people in with the text, with good text content, so that could be accompaniments to your podcast, it could be a blogpost that outlines what you talk about in the podcast, or it could be a video that's a highlight reel of the podcast maybe, and then you direct them towards the



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podcast as that next step of engagement. Once they've bought into a little bit, you've gained a wee bit of trust through the blog, you've gained a wee bit of more trust through the video.

Then you've convinced them, because often it's a barrier for people to subscribe to a podcast, because a big proportion of folk out there that still don't listen on a regular basis, so once you build that trust, you get them onto the podcast, and that's really where you turn them from casual readers or even regular readers into fanatical fans.

Mike: Yeah, for sure, and I think when it comes to membership site owners as well, because so many membership sites are built around authority or personality. You know, especially if you're in a niche where there's numerous different options people can take to fulfill their educational needs, and this is coming back to what you said before. If it's just about the material, if it's just about the information, then with the internet, with all the books under the sun that are being published on every possible topic, that's not going to be enough.

I think something like podcasting allowing you to flavor the content with your own personality, with your own opinions, and putting your own spin on things, it's certainly something that we get a lot of positive feedback on, despite the fact that it still surprises me that anybody can actually listen to the show with my accent, because I still, for as much as I've tried to soften Geordie accent, I still, I don't know if I could listen to someone with my accent on the podcast. But hey, not to discourage people from the show.

Colin: I've heard far broader Geordie accents, don't worry.

Mike: Yeah, yeah, a couple of drinks in me, and you'll definitely hear a much broader Geordie accent. Now we both attended Content Marketing Academy conference back in June of this year, and we saw Mark Schaeffer talk. Big fan of. Mark has coined this term content shock in response to the sheer volume of content that's out these days. Now podcasting, I'm sure you would agree, is in the thick of this major resurgence. It was big, and then all of a sudden it wasn't quite as cool, but now everyone is doing it and everyone is consuming it and all of that. The podcasters in our audience, what can people do to make sure their show stands out with all that content that is out there, and doesn't just get lost in the shuffle?

Colin: Yeah, I think a big part of this is another one of those big mistakes that people make actually when they're first creating either courses or podcasts, or anything like log-in video, whatever, is not taking that design-led approach, basically. Which means, not so much, not the traditional ways people think of design as in visuals and graphic design, that type of stuff, but design-led as in customer-led, user-led, so thinking about the users the whole time through it. It's all there. Everybody has heard of ideal listeners, about avatars, about personas. It's really about thinking through that three-part definition of your content, of your podcast.

Whenever we're working with people on creating a podcast, we always get them to think first about, what was the big problem you're solving? Think about your customers, think about your listeners, think about your audience, what is the biggest problem that they are experiencing right now? To be really design-led here, you need to speak to people. You can't just sit there and assume it, you can't just assume that you know. You might well know your customers really, really well, but you go out and speak to them. Find ten, fifteen, twenty of them



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and actually talk to them, in person if possible, but I mean, online, fine as well. Even just surveys gives you a bit of an insight. Find out those problems, find out the language they state in as well.

Once you've got that down, that's a big hook in the first place. Then obviously, you want to talk about the solution. What is it that they're aiming to do, that this problem is stopping them doing? State what the solution is, and then finally, you've got the uniqueness of it. So why you are uniquely served to solve this for them, why they should list yours amongst all the other shows? I think if you can state those three things really clearly to yourself, make sure you know exactly what your show is about, that problem-solution-uniqueness fit, and you manage to tie that into your title and into your description, and also into the first fifteen, twenty seconds that you put out there.

You've got to state that every single time, that's your mission, that's the selling point of your show, then that makes a huge difference, because, I mean, there's all sorts of ways to be found. We could talk discoverability, and all the different ways that you can get out there more, but really, it's about once you are found, it doesn't matter how many people find you if that problem-solution-uniqueness thing isn't sorted out. Then people are just going to look at it and go, next one, next one, next one.

It's about that hook, it's about showing people exactly who the show is for, so when they look at the problem, they go, that's exactly who it's for, this is definitely a show for me. This is a problem that I'm having right now, and this show is going to solve it. That is why I'm going to invest time in listening to the first few episodes, which will then get me hooked, and that will get, that will be me there forever. I'll be a fan forever.

Mike: Lovely, and that's something we advocate for that strongly, that idea of, something that's so obvious. Listen to what your audience are saying, and then use their language that they use to describe their problems back to them in your titles, in your content, whether it's a podcast or a blog. I know when we were first planning out the podcast in particular, it was all based on questions, but about half of them were questions we just wrote down as, these are probably some of the main things we should address.

Actually, through our Facebook group, and a free Facebook group is a great way of basically assembling your own little focus group. We're seeing people post and tell us daily what they're struggling with the most, what knowledge gaps they have, what solutions they're needing, and that's just endless fodder for podcast ideas, blog ideas, membership content ideas. It's something that you think would be really obvious, but a lot of people don't do it.

Colin: That's the thing. It's common sense, but it's the whole idea, it's not a podcast for you, it's a podcast for them. It counts for courses as well, it's not a course for you, it's a course for them. Listen to the people that are demanding the course, they're asking for the course, in their language. The language thing is an important part, I think. I mean, you probably have a good idea of the problems, but you just don't know how exactly they're stating it.

Even you will probably discover some problems you didn't even know, but it's about including that language, those problems that they're seeing and how



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they're seeing it in the title, the description, the intro so that it just grabs them right away. It grabs their attention.

Mike: Yeah, I can't remember who it is that actually said this or coined this, the idea that if you can describe your audience's problem better than they can themselves, they'll assume that you have the solution.

Colin: Yeah, yeah, it builds a huge amount of authority.

Mike: Absolutely. Now sticking with podcasting, one of the things that I find very interesting about what you do with your own podcasts and certainly seeing you speaking at the Content Marketing Academy is the idea of seasonal podcasts.

Colin: Okay, sure.

Mike: That seems to be something that has become a much bigger topic, or a much more used strategy on the back of successful series like Serial. Is that something everybody should be able to do? Is it something that, an approach or strategy, that is best applied if you have a particular outcome in mind, or is it just a gimmick or a novelty?

Colin: No, I think it's something that can work for anyone, and it's much more than just a gimmick. It's got a huge amount of benefits. It ties really well into the courses as well, so the fact that we're talking about that too. The thing with seasons is that I started doing seasons in the first place, because it was from my course-building mentality. It was because I'd come out of education, it was because the first podcast CD that I ever created was Podcraft, which is our show about teaching podcasting, and I created the first season of that as a course for lecturers at university. That was how I started podcasting, basically.

I taught it as, I basically created the first ten episodes of that show as a course to releasing your first episode, so it was just everything, or the minimum they needed to know to get their first episode out there, from choosing a microphone, getting your environment, creating a script, that kind of stuff. It was just thinking about it in a basic way. Again, breaking it right down, like I said at the start, breaking it right down in the simplest possible way to get that first episode out there, because that was their aim.

They're not thinking about a thousand listeners, five thousand listeners, they're not thinking about high quality. All their aim is at that point is release an episode of the podcast. I broke that course down to the simplest possible way to get from zero podcast to one podcast episode. That's how that season approach started. That ties into a bunch of the, a few of the benefits, which is you have a really big aim towards the end of the CD, so it's a huge hook for people to follow you on.

Like when you're podcasting about different things every single week, there's no massive benefit for people coming back every single week. They might like you, they want to and listen to the content. You'll be giving good value every week, sure, but I mean, if they miss a week, it's like, well, never mind, I'll catch up next week. Whereas if you're doing a season which all ties together, suddenly they've got a much bigger incentive to come back, week in, week out.

Building on that, another thing is that they get a lot more success out of it, because they actually do that, they build up every single week. They're building



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their knowledge, they're hopefully doing an activity as well. I'll come back to that, that's something that's really important with courses particularly. You're putting out an activity in each one, so they're actually doing something after every single episode. It's building momentum, every single time, and hopefully by the end of that season, they've achieved something in their real life, like in their work, in their life and their person, whatever it is that you're teaching, they've achieved something. That achievement is what makes them, or what builds in their mind the perception that you are damn good at what you do.

Because it doesn't matter how great you are at describing things or teaching theory, all that kind of stuff, if you don't help them actually succeed with something, just something basic. Then they're just, it's not going to build that engagement, it's not going to build that authority that you want to build. Because they need to actually use something to build that. Yeah, that whole achievement thing is great. There's other stuff as well that are in seasons in terms of planning, to help you.

I mean, if you plan out a season ahead of time, say it's a twelve episode season, then you spend maybe an hour doing that, say the first of January, you spend an hour planning that season, and then suddenly, you've got a plan for your content for the next three months. That's like an episode a week for the next three months. That's all planned. All you have to do is sit down each week and record. Or, of course, you can batch it, so you can record three or four at a time, and save even more time as well.

There's even the motivation for you around the fact that you feel that you're building towards a name at the end of the season. You feel like you're building towards completing something, creating this great resource, which is that podcast season that you can point back towards. It's this evergreen resource that you're just going to, you're always going to have there. You can have a break at the end of it, too. You can take a few weeks off if you want. This has that natural little delineation.

Final thing, final, sorry, is that a season, I talked about the evergreen content. You're creating a season of content, which is twelve episodes, all tied together, basically forms a course. That can be turned into all sorts of great stuff. Like you can turn it into an audiobook. Hopefully you've been writing blog summaries of each one, so suddenly those blog summaries of each chapter could be a chapter of a book. You've got an e-book out of that. Or you've got a e-mail course you can point people towards the podcast, the blogposts, the video summaries that you've put maybe together as well. Suddenly you've got this e-mail course that you can point people towards. Or something that we did was actually turn them into a full-blown, proper online course, like we've been talking about.

That first season, sorry, last thought, that first season of Podcraft, sorry, you can tell I like this, that first season of Podcraft turned into our first and our current flagship course, because I took the structure of that course, I built in how-tos, I built in videos, I built in activities, tasks, I built in all the things that are needed in a full course. But that first season of Podcraft was the basis for that course. It gave me such a step up in starting to create that course.

If you're out there thinking, I don't know, it's such a big task to create a course, then just start planning it into your basic content delivery each week, and suddenly you've got this starter from which it's much more easy to build.



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Mike: Yeah, it's funny when you talk about taking a podcast series or season and turning that into an e-mail course or into an e-book, we're actually, like right now, what's up on my white board in front of me, we're looking at doing the reverse of that, in that one of the things we did early on, which helped us really explore the list-building, was an e-mail course. It was a thirty-day e-mail challenge, where it was build and launch your membership in just thirty days.

We're kind of, we're going the reverse of that, but still same principle of not just creating individual bits of content that only live within that content, but looking for ways to multipurpose and repurpose them. We're turning that into an actually printed book. It's already available as a PDF. One of the big things I want to do is actually sit down and record that, because it breaks up nicely into thirty weekly lessons, or sorry, thirty daily lessons, and then possibly releasing that as a podcast series as well.

Colin: Great stuff, yeah. I think it's still the way people can make it work these days, compete with some bigger companies, especially if you're kind of new to this is thinking really smartly about how you can repurpose every single thing you do. I don't mean duplication. I think repurposing has a bad rep. Basically people think of it as just getting one thing and posting it everywhere, copying it everywhere, which is useless.

It's about getting one bit of content, so you've got one thing you want to teach, one content idea, breaking that down, seeing if you can create a season out of it, breaking it down into those single lessons that I talked about earlier, going deep rather than wide in each single one, then tailoring it for the medium. So you know the podcast episode is going to be quite long, it's going to be the long form, but you might be able to take highlights out of that, or even break down the podcast episode into four or five videos, to repurpose it to video. Then you know, create a blogpost based on that.

You've come up with the content idea, you've come up with a lesson. You'll have created a bulletpoint plan for your podcast at least. That takes a lot of the effort out of creating a blogpost. Create a good, quality blogpost, based on that plan. You can write a blogpost in half the time you would normally if you've got, if you've just recorded a podcast episode you've got planned for already. So do that, and then suddenly all these things can turn into, like you say, e-books, and e-mail courses and all that kind of stuff. It's the only way to do it.

It ties into discoverability as well, because we talked about that, the fact that the podcast is that engagement pinnacle, that's where you want to get people to, because that's really turning fanatical fans who are either going to refer you to others, promote you for yourself or buy your stuff. They're only going to get to that podcast if you catch them through the wider search areas of text search or video search. So having all of that together in a way that leads people from the blogpost to the video to the podcast, that's how you get discovered as well, [never mind 37:54], yeah, just be prolific. Appear everywhere that people can find you.

Mike: Love it, love it. Now I know that you're planning on launching your own membership in the future. You touched on that a little earlier. You're going through the planning process. Given your level of knowledge and experience around online education, what is it that inspired you to move towards a



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membership model, rather than continuing creating one-off courses or as an accompaniment? What in particular about the membership model from an online education point of view appeals to you the most?

Colin:

Yeah, it's a great question. I think the big thing for me is the fact that you have people's attention over a much longer period of time. You can effect a lot more change, you can encourage much more success. For example, we've been selling our courses one-off up until now. People just come to our website, they buy the course. They go in there, I'm confident, it's really good quality stuff, but I don't really see it results, and the results aren't half as good, because people are just in there themselves. They're just working through it self-study, and with the best will in the world, the completion rate of self-study courses is horrendous.

All the MOOCs out there, just now there's a load of research around this at the moment, like the completion rates on some of the massive courses that are run by full-on universities, people with massive resources, huge reputation, and it's still something like ten, fifteen, twenty percent completion rate for people who sign up. It's just horrendous. I'm planning to put into action a lot of this stuff that I've been talking about already, around designing and breaking it down, all that stuff, multimedia for the right areas.

The big thing for me is the action. The big thing for me is that I want to create a membership site which has lots of learning resources in there, but there's a lot more structure as well. I think that a lot of people are afraid of that structure, a lot of people think that, a lot of people delivering courses, delivering membership sites, for me, shy away from giving direction, because they feel like people ... The benefit of online, the benefit of learning digitally is that people can be flexible. They can learn when and where they want, but the problem of flexible learning is that you're also free to give up and just not bother and watch the telly instead.

That was a big part of the research that I did my Ph.D. was around how you increase completion rates, how you increase success. One of the biggest, and to be honest, kind of common sense things that came out of it was that, if you set somebody a very small task every single day, and I mean every single day, Monday through Friday, well, not including weekends, we'll give them a couple days off. So you set them a single task, every single day that only takes maybe twenty minutes to do, maybe even less, maybe even five to ten minutes. Then if you can encourage them to stick with that for a week or two weeks, then they get in the habit of it, and it becomes a routine. The barriers are so much lower because they can get in there and they can just do it quickly, on a little coffee break, something like that.

There's a few, a bunch of benefits here. Barriers are lower, so that's easier to get in there. But they start to build momentum, they build that habit. They start to build this sense of achievement because they feel that they're progressing, because you can gamify it a little bit, even just with a simple tick box. Just a little bit of gamification that shows them they're completing things as they go, they're achieving, they're building something.

It's that structure, that's what I want to build into what I'm doing. I'm thinking about a bunch of different ways to do it. It will be that simple stuff like gamification, drip-feeding, same, that's a tried and tested method. You drip-feed somebody a course, but I also want to do a lot more group challenges, I want to do a lot more [taught 41:42] courses. So say we're going to go through this course



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over the next two months, and we're going to do these assignments. Like I actually set homework and assignments and stuff like that.

I realize, I realize this is going to be a lot more work, I realize that a lot of people are not going to do it, because a lot of people do want to just do self-study. Not going to get them, but I think, going by my experience in the past with higher education, research, all that kind of stuff, and the problems that I see with current courses, current membership sites with just lack of engagement, I think that there will be a big proportion of people that will buy into this, and they'll see the results that they're getting, and they'll start telling other people.

I'll achieve, I'll have a lot more people in the site that are achieving success, that are achieving great things. That's going to be testimonials for the site, it's going to be great people in there that are helping other folk that are in the community as well. I'm hoping that that stuff, routine, habit, accountability, structure, all those types of approaches are going to help me differentiate and create a lot of successful people.

Mike: Love the sound of that, and we'll have to get you back on once your membership's been up and running six to twelve months to take the temperature of how that's gone. Yeah, I think leaving people to their own devices maybe ticks a box for them in terms of, most people don't want homework, or don't want to have to do the work, but actually if they're not going to do the work, they're not going to get the results, which is going to, helping people get those results is what's builds up the goodwill that keeps people subscribed long beyond the point at which they actually need your material.

Colin: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Mike: Creating advocates and success stories and case studies that you can then leverage to promote your membership, I mean, that can be gold dust for the longevity of a membership site. It will be great to actually, to watch how things progress with your membership.

Colin: Yeah, no, I can't wait. I'm going through all the tech stuff right now, so I'm sure I'll be calling you afterwards to ...

Mike: Figure it all out.

Colin: How do I get this one, how is it, I have no idea what ...

Mike: Actually this may have, you may have just answered my next question. Being in that planning stage, what would you say is the biggest challenge that you're facing now with your membership?

Colin: Actually, I mean, the tech is a challenge, but you understand, I have a bit of experience there in a way, so I'm not too worried about it. The challenge for me right now is actually figuring out the target, because I talked early on about the design-led approach, like figuring out your avatar, making sure I know that problem, solution. I'm worried a little bit at the moment that what I want to teach applies to so much more than just podcasting, so I kind of want to get out of the just the podcasting niche, but that is what we do right now, that is what ThePodcastHost is focused on, that's what our audience wants.



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I'm kind of, I'm struggling right now to think of how I target it, because I don't know exactly what the, I think we're going to start with podcasting, but I want to talk about how to tie in with video, I want to talk about how to tie in with blogging, how all of those three content mediums tie together. I think our aim really is much more about, it's about creating a fan. It's about how you create, from a casual visitor to whatever medium it is, to being a complete and utter fanatical fan of what you do. That is what I want to teach. I realize that that concept is quite different from what our site's current targeting is.

Mike: From being, yeah, a podcasting membership.

Colin: Exactly. That is my struggle at the moment, is figuring out how I tie those two things together.

Mike: I think the focus of your current site and of the current business, that gives a strong enough bridge into the broader topic, I think, to enable you to do that without their being a disconnect [inaudible 45:33] with your audience, because what are the chances that your current audience are only using podcasting?

Colin: Yeah, slim to none. Do you know what, actually that was again design led. I was planning to do a survey to my mailing list and put it up on the site for a few days as well, just asking people what else they do. So I'm going to say, "You are obviously a podcaster, you're interested in this subject. But do you also do video? Do you do blogging? Do you do social media? What social medias do you do?" I want to get a picture of what our target audience is doing right now, and that will hopefully get a better steer on just, yeah, that problem I just described.

Mike: Yeah, and the thing is as well, with podcasting, is even if your entire audience are only doing podcasting, that then gives you the first stage of the journey you then want to take them on. If you go on the assumption that actually a large portion of your audience are coming in only doing podcasting and they want to know how to get more from that as well as how to add other elements, then that gives you that roadmap between where they are now and where you want to take them. Look, the whole idea of creating fans, I'm a big, I love the whole Kevin Kelly theory and ideas ...

Colin: The thousand true fans.

Mike: Yeah, the thousand true fans I think is something that if you really embrace that mindset, it can totally change your approach to business.

Colin: Yeah, and I think, sorry to jump, but I think podcasting is the most effective way to do that as well, to create those true fans. Yeah, it totally ties into that Kevin Kelly thing, bringing them from blogs to videos to a podcast, which really creates them into that fanatical true fan.

Mike: Love that. Before we wrap up loads of big, golden nuggets there, lots of advice I'm sure our listeners have all been scribbling down and they'll be going back to their memberships and creating audios and creating their texts and looking for ways to improve podcasting, and all sorts. If there's just one thing that our listeners could take away from this episode, what would you want that to be?

Colin: I think the biggest thing is activities. I think, so if we're talking, do you know what? It could be either podcasts or courses. The biggest thing for me that people miss



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in a course is they just put out the content and they don't ask people to do anything. There are so many courses out there, you'll just be watching through the videos and they'll say, "This is how you do something," and that is it. The best way, one of the most effective ways you can get a grown-up person, so adult learning science here, one of the most effective ways you can get an adult to learn something effectively and like you better as a result, trust you more as a result, is if you give them something to do in their real life.

Say I'm teaching podcasting, go back to that first season of Podcraft. I was teaching lecturers how to release their first episode. My episode on scripting, say, at the end of that episode, I would say, "Spend five minutes now and create a bulletpoint script for your next episode, for your first episode. Go away and do that right now. Here's a couple of tips on how to do it. Here's some resources on how to do it. But that is your task right now is to just sit there and for nothing more than five minutes, just create five to ten bulletpoints of what you're going to talk about on your episode."

It's so powerful when you do that, because if they go and do it, which if you do it right and you make it simple enough and you make it directed enough, then there's a good chance they will. They'll go and do it. They've actually achieved something real. It's not just theoretical, it's not just you've taught them some theory and you've got them to do a little practice task. They've done something that's actually useful to them in their real life, in their real work. That little sense of achievement is gold for your engagement. That is what makes them come back next time, makes them trust you more, makes them like you more. That's what turns them into fans.

Make sure every single time you're putting out a bit of content, whether it's a lesson on a course, whether it's a podcast episode, at the end of that bit of content, ask them something, get them to do a task, give them something short to do in their real life that will give them just that little bit, that little hit of achievement.

Mike: Awesome advice. That's great. Actually, implementing that advice right now, we're going to give our listeners an activity to do.

Colin: Perfect.

Mike: You need to go and check out [ThePodcastHost.com](http://ThePodcastHost.com). What else should they be doing to find out a bit more about you, to learn more about what we're talking about here, and to tune into your podcast, check out your courses and so on?

Colin: Cool, yeah, [ThePodcastHost.com](http://ThePodcastHost.com) is where they can find all of our stuff, whether it's the paid courses, or whether it's all our free material, tons of stuff on the blog there about how to run a podcast. Probably the first stop I tend to send most people to is an e-mail course. Actually it stems from that first season of Podcraft that I was talking about, which is basically aimed at you getting your first episode out. If you go to [ThePodcastHost.com/ecourse](http://ThePodcastHost.com/ecourse), then that will take you to the sign-up page for that e-mail course and take you through the whole thing.

Mike: Awesome, so there you go. That's the homework for tonight. Colin, thanks so much for joining me on this show. It's been great having you on, I've really enjoyed your insights into how to make your educational content more effective, which I think moving away from podcast courses [inaudible 50:40] I feel has being



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the overall theme of what we're talking about here. I know that we'll certainly be making some little tweaks as well to some of our own stuff, and hopefully our listeners will too. Thanks for coming on the show, been a pleasure having you on.

Colin: It's been great. Thanks very much for the invite, and I just love the stuff you guys are doing over there too. You're doing, your courses are really good quality.

Mike: Well, thank you, thank you.

Colin: Thanks again, Mike. Cheers.

Mike: Cheers, Colin. Thanks again to Colin for coming onto the Membership Guys podcast. I don't know about you guys, but I really enjoyed that conversation. So much actionable stuff, so much gold there that we can all take away and improve our content with. In true fashion of what Colin said, I'm actually going to implement one of his big pieces of advice that he said is the golden nugget, the one thing he'd like everyone to take away from that podcast, and that is to give your audience activities.

Here is an activity for you. I want you, if you're listening to this, to do one thing to improve an existing piece of content. It could be a blogpost, it could be a podcast episode, or it could be your membership content. I want you to make one improvement to that content, so that may be adding some activities into it. It may be taking your most popular course within your membership and stripping out the audio and then offering that as an additional option to your users. Or maybe it's taking an e-book that you've written or a series of blogposts that you've written and recording an audio version of that, that you'll release as a podcast series.

Decide on one thing that you're going to do on the back of Colin's advice in this podcast, and then I want you to either tweet me at Membership Guys on twitter or to jump into our free Facebook group for membership site owners at [talkmemberships.com](http://talkmemberships.com), and let me know what change you're going to make on the back of this podcast. Then I'll hold you accountable, I'll keep track of that, and I'll check in with you to see how the change has gone, and more importantly, see what sort of results are you getting when you make those improvements with your content.

That's my challenge to you, that's your homework on the back of this episode. I'll look forward to hearing from you and what you're doing to improve your educational content, implementing the advice from Colin Gray on today's episode. That's it for me, for another week. Thanks once again for choosing to spend a little bit of time with us. Thanks again to Colin for coming on the show. Really do hope you've enjoyed it. As always we'd love to hear your feedback. Let us know on social media, pop a little review into iTunes. Let us know what you think of this show. I'll be back again very soon with another episode of the Membership Guys podcast.

If you've enjoyed today's episode of the Membership Guys podcast, we invite you to check out the [membersiteacademy.com](http://membersiteacademy.com). The Member Site Academy is the essential resource for anyone at any stage of starting, growing, and running a membership website. Whether you're still figuring out what your idea is going to be, or whether your website is already up and running, and you're just looking for ways to grow it and attract new members, then the Member Site Academy can help you to get to the next level. With our extensive course library, monthly



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