

DO YOU NEED TO BE AN **EXPERT** TO START A MEMBERSHIP?



Mike:

Hello and welcome to episode seventy of the Membership Guys Podcast with me, your host, Mike Morrison, one half of the Membership Guys. This is the show where I dispense proven practical tips and advice for membership site owners. In today's episode, I want to talk about creating a membership when you have no discernible skills, knowledge, experience or expertise. Now, most of the membership sites that we talk about involve some sort of skill, involves some sort of knowledge, some sort of experience that you utilize and that you let people tap into in order to help them achieve a result, a transformation, achieve a goal and so on.

Most of these sites involve some sort of authority, you as an authority figure, you as a credible expert. What happens if you really want to leverage the membership model, if you really want to tap into the recurring revenue and the freedom and the lack of pressure that this model can bring you in business, but you don't necessarily have skills, knowledge, experience or expertise to build a membership around? Does that mean that you can't enter the membership arena? Now, I won't lie to you. It's going to be harder. It's a much harder sell, getting people to pay you money and join the membership when there's nothing immediately obvious that you personally have to offer in terms of what you know or what you can do for people.

Of course, we can't just set up a membership site which is just the Mike Morrison membership site for people who feel like giving me money, although now I mention that, I wonder whether it's worth trying it just for the novelty to see if anybody joins. I digress. I'm sure somebody will take that idea and run with it. Now, if you feel that you don't have the necessary skills, the necessary abilities or any particular area of expertise to build a membership around, there are four strategies or four models that you can follow that we'd recommend in this sort of case and one that we don't.

Let's start with the one that I don't recommend, and that is faking it until you make it. Some people put a lot of stock in that, the idea of pretending and acting as though you're an expert and hoping that the gaps will fill themselves in. First and foremost, anything which involves misrepresenting yourself, misleading your members and tricking people into joining should



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obviously be a massive no-no. Take this idea of fake it til you make it and throw it out the door. That's not the world that we occupy. It's not the type of memberships we're talking about. There's certainly areas with Internet marketing, there's certainly people in the world of online marketing who will tell you to do this, who are perhaps a little unscrupulous, who are a bit dodgier and who see nothing wrong with BSing your audience if it means that you can make a fast buck.

By now, if you've been listening to this show, you'll know that's not what we're about and if it is what you're about, I recommend you find a different podcast to listen to. If you're still with me, setting aside the ethical problems of the fake it til you make it approach, there's also the fact that membership sites give you nowhere to hide. You can't con, you can't trick your members into joining because they're going to be around you. They're going to be interacting with you. You're relying on them getting enough value from you and your membership on a month-to-month basis to keep paying you month after month, year after year.

If you're faking, if you're pretending, if you can't deliver on your promises, you don't live up to your own hype, you're all sizzle and no sausage, then you're going to get found out, and that's going to happen very quickly. Not only does it mean people won't stay to the second month, but it also means they'll probably be hitting you up for a refund on your first payment and also saying not very nice things about you across social media, to their networks and so on. If you're thinking about starting a membership site up and just blagging it, just winging it in terms of acting as though you have expertise and acting as though you can help people with stuff that you just can't, then cross that idea out right away.

There are four solid strategies that you can follow to create the membership site when you're not the expert, when you don't have a specific set of skills. First and foremost is to get good at something. If you don't have knowledge, skills, experience and expertise, get them. Take the next three, four, five, six months to just get good at something. Pick one thing and throw yourself into it completely. It doesn't have to be huge, and in fact, when it comes to memberships, when it comes to online courses, if you can get specific and you can help people solve a specific problem, then that's going to be more compelling than if you're just a master of everything.

You've probably already got an idea of the general market and the general arena that you want to run a membership in, and actually not necessarily having a specific set of skills or a specific knowledge set, that actually could be used as an advantage because it means you can pick and choose what it is you want to really deep-dive in and to really develop some serious hardcore skills in. Let's say, for example, you know you want to set up a membership in the online marketing space, then right now the hottest thing in online marketing is live video. Straight away, you can zero in on that and you can see that Facebook Live is big, that Periscope are bringing out this whole new Periscope Producer thing, that Instagram are really doubling down on live video. You can just choose one of those things.

You can choose to spend the next three or four months becoming as knowledgeable as anyone could ever possibly become on Facebook Live. Because it's a small self-contained area, it's not something that is going to



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take you the typical ten thousand hours people will say in order to develop mastery of a subject. You could figure out everything that you need to know pretty much about Facebook Live to a degree that you then feel comfortable and confident in actually teaching other people this stuff, you can do that within a few months. Rather than jumping into this idea of just getting the membership going despite the fact that you don't have a particular skillset to tap into, take the extra time to actually just get good at something.

The easiest and most obvious thing. If you don't have skills and you don't feel that you have the knowledge and experience to set up a membership, get it. Strategy number one, get good at something. Strategy number two is pick an area and actually instead of being the expert, be the host. Be the facilitator. Be the person with the platform that brings other experts together. Your membership could consist entirely of content created by other people. Those people could be guest experts who do have the skills, experience, knowledge, expertise in order to actually teach your community. The service you're providing to your members is giving them a place they can come to to get access to all of that information.

If you're good at networking, if you are good at developing connections with people, if you have an idea of the sort of stuff you would like to teach your members or you would like your members to learn but all you're lacking is the knowledge or the skills to actually teach it yourself, then your role as a membership site owner could simply be to negotiate for guest experts to come into your site to create this content through live webinars, through pre-recorded workshops and so on. You can go out there and you can negotiate perks and discounts and tools and software, and you can partner up with companies and with product providers and service providers in the area, in the niche that you're serving in order to get some great deals for your members again.

You don't need to be a subject matter expert in order to do that. There's still a lot that you can do simply by being a facilitator instead of being the expert. All you need to have there really is a passion and an interest in the particular market that you're looking to serve as well as networking skills, as well as the ability and the confidence to go out there and rustle up some guests and rustle up some perks and deals for your members. Strategy number two, be the facilitator and not the expert. The third strategy is similar to the second one, but for this, we're moving away from the main thing that people join memberships for, and that is to reach a specific goal or to get a specific outcome. We're focusing more on the benefits of community.

The third strategy would be to run an interest-based community where actually it's not about learning something, it's not about traveling down the journey. It's just about giving people a place to come together and participate in their shared interest in a particular topic. You don't need to be the authority if what you're essentially doing is just creating a community that's centered around shared interests rather than shared goals. Now, this sort of membership's going to be a little less compelling. People are likely not going to pay as much in order to simply be part of a community, but actually what you can do, and this is where you see with interest-based discussion forums and discussion groups is you can actually make the core community free and then have a paid element that gives people access to more advanced profiles or private forum sections and so on.



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The ability to monetize this sort of membership is somewhat more limited but you just have to think about it differently. If you're creating a membership community that is predominantly free because it is just interest-based and there's nothing being taught, you're just providing the platform, providing the place for people to come together, then maybe you're not going to monetize it so much with the premium paid-for membership element but you would have some degree of that, but you'd also partner up with advertisers. You can also make more use of affiliate marketing and so on. You're still running a membership site, but it's more community-based. It's more open forum and so on. That's the third strategy, run an interest-based community membership.

The fourth strategy is a one that I'm not as huge a fan of because it's a little more old-school Internet marketing, but there's no denying that in many areas, many markets, many niches, it works. It works for some people and while there are certainly a larger proportion of people running this kind of site in a somewhat unethical way, there is a lot of scope for running this kind of site ethically and running it well, and that is running a membership or creating a membership that sells PLR material. Now, PLR stands for private label rights. This is basically where you purchase the right to offer for sale material that other people have created.

Now, that in and of itself isn't something that I disagree with or think is a bad thing. I think white labeling material and particularly if somebody is an expert in a particular topic and you are able to partner with them in order to put that material into your membership, white labeling, joint ventures, content exchanges, that sort of stuff, nothing wrong with that whatsoever. What you typically find though with a lot of PLR based memberships is you probably have hundreds or even thousands of people selling the same materials. Quite often, the material is of questionable quality, depending on where it's been bought from. It's often outdated. Some people will put this sort of stuff in their membership as part of their fake it til you make it approach.

With all of that being said, you can certainly create the membership that has great value to people, that you run in a positive ethical way, that isn't scammy, that isn't misleading people, that isn't ripping people off but that provides them with good quality PLR material that you spend time to research, to validate, that you've hand-picked because you feel it is high quality and not because you could get thousands of pre-written eBooks for five dollars or what have you. That fourth strategy, run a membership that consists primarily of PLR material is certainly a way of creating a membership that can be very profitable without you actually having to bring the expertise to the table yourself.

There's a whole subset in terms of online marketing where people do have highly profitable membership sites that follow this model. It's not for me personally. The accessibility and the ease with which you can actually create a membership site that sells PLR does mean that there's a far greater proportion of PLR-based memberships that really suck in terms what they offer, in terms of how they do business. Don't let that put you off if you are really keen to run a great membership site, but you're just looking to use PLR in order to account for the fact that you can't necessarily create expert based or skill based material yourself. Those are the four strategies that you can



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take if you want to create a membership site but you feel that you're lacking the skills, knowledge, experience and expertise.

Strategy one, get good at something. If you feel that you're lacking all of that stuff, then develop that stuff. Pick one thing, pick the one thing you're going to be good at, the one thing you can become an expert at and throw yourself into it completely so that you fill the gap. You no longer have the issue of not having skills, knowledge, experience and expertise because you've taken three, four, five, six months to really just devour everything and to sharpen your skillset and to develop your own opinions, to develop your own methods, concepts and all that sort of stuff around a very specific topic. Niche is good.

If you can become the leading expert on Periscope Producer, then that puts you in a very small group of people who can claim to be the same thing, and that gives you a good basis for potentially creating a membership site just about that topic. It's a lot easier to sell a specific targeted subject based membership site than it is to sell a broad one. Strategy one, get good at something. Strategy two, be a facilitator of other experts. If you're not the expert, make your membership all about you being the host, being the facilitator. Be the person who brings the experts to your members, who negotiates perks and deals on the software, the product and so on that your members might need. You don't need to be the expert. You can be the host. You can be the facilitator. That's strategy two.

Strategy three is to run a [inaudible 00:15:26] interest-based community. Give people with a shared interest somewhere to assemble. You would need to look at things differently somewhat in terms of how you monetize this, because chances are you're not going to be able to get people to pay fifty dollars a month just to be part of a forum where you discuss how much you love playing World of Warcraft. There's certainly other avenues you can go down to monetize that sort of membership.

Then, the fourth and final strategy is to sell PLR, private label rights materials as part of your membership. While that's a strategy that certainly attracts a greater proportion of people looking for a shortcut to take than a more skill-based or experience-based membership, if done right, it can be a very valid and profitable approach to running a membership site when you don't have the skills to bring to the table yourself. Those are the four strategies we recommend for creating a membership site when you're not the expert yourself, but again, just reinforcing what we said before all of those, the one strategy to absolutely avoid is attempting to fake it til you make it. Big, big no-no on that from us.

Hopefully, that's given you a bit of food for thought. Hopefully, you've enjoyed that and found something useful. Let us know if you have. Tweet me @membershipguys or hit me up along with Callie and three thousand other membership site owners in our free private Facebook group, talkmemberships.com. Go to talkmemberships.com. That will redirect you through to our Facebook group and you can join in there and let us know what you thought of the episode, any comments, any questions, any feedback that you may have on the back of that. We'd love to hear from you. Thanks so much for choosing to spend a little bit of time with us. Hopefully



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you found it worthwhile and I'll be back again very soon with another installment of the Membership Guys Podcast.

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