

NEW

ONLINE MEMBERSHIP SITE MANUAL



**HOW TO START AND PROFIT FROM
YOUR OWN MEMBERSHIP**

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Introduction

An online profitable business is what entrepreneurs seek to include in their arsenal of money-making opportunities. They also want to include businesses that are relatively easy to manage and in high demand by users and internet surfers.

Businesses also want to remain “evergreen” - - meaning that no matter how economic conditions may change, their product or service will always be in high demand. This ensures that there is always a constant and steady stream of income for the entrepreneurial activities. But what type(s) of online businesses have enough of an income potential that they could be evergreen, in high demand and lucrative for the business owner?

Membership sites are veritable gold mine of income opportunity for the small, online business owner. The sites are relatively easy to start and easy to manage, making their significance even more attractive. Their popularity has increased significantly over the past few years and their momentum is neither slowing down nor stalling. Since their recognition has intensified, it has created a frenzy of hungry, interested web surfers who want information - - and this naturally leads many business people cashing in on this opportunity.

The types and niches of available membership sites across the internet vary greatly in their personality, subject matter, audiences and even fees. The drawing point for a lot of readers to membership sites is the feeling of community, the connection to value and the wealth of information that they get from these membership sites.

Since the online market is often dubbed the “information highway” for those who are seeking creative ways to produce an income online, membership sites are an optimal gateway to that source of income for them.

10 Profitable Membership Site Ideas

10 areas of profitable paid membership sites that can be very lucrative to start and manage are:

1. Freelance/Telecommute/Work-at-Home Jobs

Paid membership sites for this type of work can include communities for freelance writers, computers designers and programmers, virtual assistants and even opportunity-based jobs like Avon, Mary Kay, Melaleuca and Watkins.

What makes this topic do so well is the community-feeling and the vast number of jobs and information that is available online. There are many individuals who will pay monthly fees to get job leads and to get employment advice.

Cater to this market by offering job leads, marketing topics, interviews from leaders and managers within the organizations and even webinars giving “how to” examples on various processes. You can also offer resume-building services on your site. This can be as an additional service or can be used as a stand alone service apart from the fees that you charge.

2. Professional Speaking/Presentations/Seminars

Corporate positions have people who do presentations on a regular basis. The need for “how to” information is very high in this area and is constantly changing, requiring frequent updating. Professional speakers work off of leads all of the time. You can provide a paid membership site that will not only provide quality leads, but also tips on how the speaker can create their own leads for their profession.

This is a very lucrative market because the speaking profession is an in-demand profession that attracts highly qualified individuals. You can also offer interviews from industry professionals from those associated in Toastmasters, the National Speaking Association and professionals from LinkedIn.com.

In addition to the speaking portion of the membership site, you can also offer tutorials on PowerPoint presentations, how to use Excel spreadsheets, how to design an online seminar, etc. This area of topics can be used extensively as an instructional or tutorial site to help members grasp concepts better and understand them more comprehensively. This can also be used as an add-on or as a stand alone service as well.

3. Online Sales/Marketing

The internet is prime real estate for sales and marketing websites and blogs. But, there are many website owners who do not use or know how to use savvy marketing to increase their business. They will in some cases seek out experienced marketers and learn from them. A paid membership site on the subject of marketing is sure to win any hesitant entrepreneur over if they can see the value of what they will get from the use of your site's content.

You can use the paid membership site to give marketers inside information on marketing techniques and how to make their efforts work and create a sizeable profit for their businesses. Your site can become highly profitable in this area because the marketing world is always growing and developing. Keep your site updated on new and developing strategies, techniques and creative ways of effective marketing.

4. Personal Training

Personal training is the new wave of customer marketing and can easily be transferred into sales. If you have a health and nutrition background or just a lot of experience in the weight training and cardiovascular field, then why not lend your business insights into creating a paid membership website that can help your readers find healthy living.

What can you offer on a paid membership site about personal training?

1. Exercise tips
2. Diet regimes
3. Video manuals of proper exercises
4. Health drinks information
5. Vitamin information

As a paid site on personal training, you can gather critical information from each of your paying customers and develop a personal routine that is specialized for their bodies, lifestyles and preferences.

5. Life Coaching

Life coaching involves training or instructing a person or a group of people towards a specific goal. The aim is to help them in achieving specific skills or in developing a set of skills to help them in their personal, business or financial life.

Life coaching can be motivational or instructional and can be done through online seminars, workshops, or one-to-one individualized sessions.

The paid membership site for life coaching can include:

- 1) Live interviews and online presentations from experts in the field.
- 2) Pre-recorded Q & A session with guest speakers and interviewees.

6. Budgeting/Frugal Living/Investing

In the tough economic conditions that most consumers are in, information on how to live better on less is definitely something that is a selling point and is greatly needed.

There are many websites online that offer tips on how to live a frugal lifestyle, but there are perhaps few that will give solid resources and information on how to specifically apply these principles. And, with the economy shifting frequently, information often changes and it would do well for subject matter experts to offer insight, opinions and forecasts on this subject.

Budgeting and the frugal living lifestyle can also be broken down into other areas to include wise investing, stock investing and information, general information on retirement and 401K options and other pertinent fields. To make this subject highly interesting and attractive to potential members, you can also invite in guest financial experts to talk about budgeting and financial services and give first hand tips on things that the members can do to live within their means. In addition, you can also offer on the site:

- 1) Ways and tips to reduce living expenses. This can include online discounts for shoppers, resources for coupon and rebate shopping and discontinued items or services.

- 2) Ideas on how to make extra money. This is a great way to cross-mix the internet audience who is also interested in any entrepreneurial activities or ideas. This is also a great way to sell them in the "back-office" to any other products or services that you may offer online.

- 3) Resources and links that will help eliminate or reduce credit card debt. This is a great way to invite in third-party retailers who can offer discounts or promotional discounts to your membership site. Be careful here with crowding the customer or "over-selling" them. They came to your site for specific information and you don't want them to feel as if they've been tricked into being made to buy something else.

7. Dating/Relationship Sites

The whole 'paid membership site' idea can be attributed to the dating and relationships venue. People have been paying to get relationship advice and dating advice from field experts for years. So, the idea of this type of site is not new but *is* a very popular one.

On the site, offer information relationship building and dating information that will help enhance unions. Appeal to the readers by perhaps even offering personality-matching services to the members. You can market this service on FaceBook™, MySpace™ and Plaxo forums as well as in your signature link when you're communicating.

8. Travel

Travel information is considered broad yet romantic enough to be in high demand by users. Perhaps you decide that you will offer travel information on leisure travel on your membership site. What about travel discounts or promotional offers? What about resources from retailers who offer routine specials? Whichever type of travel information you decide to showcase on your site, remember to make it highly-valuable content and information that cannot be found anywhere else.

With this type of paid membership site, you can offer video blog entries of particular vacations spots, cruise ships sites and courses and any concentration on regions or areas (nationally or internationally) that interest the readers. You can also consider introducing weather news feeds into the site that will show members what the weather is like wherever their destination is.

9. Medical Advice

If your website has a special slant and offers registered doctors and nurses as a key source of information, then you are likely to have a hit site. Online sites like askmd.com and webmd.com have doctors who approve and edit content, thereby increasing your site's validity and professional appearance.

This can be a highly lucrative site if you target certain niche markets that are already looking for medical advice. You can connect online with pediatrician's offices, geriatric offices or any specialties who focus on a broad audience or who have a large potential following. Caution your members though to use online medical advice as a resource, not as a replacement for professional medical advice.

What areas can be lucrative to concentrate on here?

- Pediatrics

- Geriatric Medicine

- Internal medicine

- Specific or rare diseases

- Specific conditions, i.e., asthma, eczema skin or hair conditions

10. Book Writers/Authors

Book writers are an audience that is quite easy to disseminate information to. Why? Because they are generally already online, they are already surfing and seeking information and are constantly looking for new venues and places to submit their work to.

It can be somewhat frustrating for them to spend their precious writing time looking for these things when they can go right to a site where it is available - - hence, the need for your site. Your paid membership site can offer advice, interviews and tips on:

- How to write a book in 90 days
- Book-signing agents
- Funding for new authors

Niche Audiences For Your Topic

Online businesses have a core audience that they market to when they are trying to grow their businesses and drive traffic to their sites.

Depending upon their niche market and their target audiences, businesses spend a lot of time developing products and services that will work cohesively with their business model. Business owners try and gauge what their target audiences might want or be attracted to and provide that for them. They may design anything from a widget to a high-end, in-demand item for discriminating users.

There are several niche audiences that you can target for your topics:

- 1) Online entrepreneurs; those seeking online opportunities
- 2) Stay-at-home parents
- 3) College students or first time job-seekers

For instance, they may develop a set of manuals in web design for the budding web developer or the small business. Or, they may design a set of high-end cooking utensils and knives for the food community and try to appeal to cooks and chefs within that community. They may try a host of various marketing efforts to find that traffic and see what works. As a membership site, many business owners have found that the traffic to their site increases as does the interest in any products or services that they have to offer.

One of the strongest components of an online business is getting visibility on the internet and through the marketing efforts of your business. In order for any business to enjoy successful marketing, they have to be exposed and they have to let customers know how and where to find them. Through the venues of writing articles that are tailored to your niche market and offering other products like eBooks, audio books and consulting material, there is added value to your online services, thereby increasing the value to your customers.

Once you have decided that a membership site is the ideal business that you want to offer, there are steps that you must take to ensure that the business is set-up properly and efficiently, effectively equipped, have the proper tools and resources for administrative functions and that it is able to consistently produce the income that will make the membership site both profitable and productive for all interested parties.

Why Pay?

With information so readily available for free on the internet today, you might wonder just why is it that anyone would want to pay for the same information that they can get free? Is it worth it to pay? Isn't it the same regurgitated information over and over? Why will yours be any different or special? Readers may assume that they can get the same information that is on your website just about anywhere else online, and perhaps even more.

Or can they?

There are many compelling points as to just why a person would want to pay for information online. Sure they can get that information anywhere else on the World Wide Web. Sure the information is out there, available for them without cost. But is the average online surfer willing to spend the countless hours scouring and digging to find the pieces of information that they are looking for? Are they willing to go to sources and verify information, conduct interviews and establish connections with field experts in niche topics? Do they have the time, resources or professional availability to secure all of these things in an effective manner?

Usually not.

This is why people are willing to pay; and willing to *pay well* for information that is available online for free. Yes, it can be free, but gathering it may take a significant amount of their time and resources just to compile the information and place it in an understandable and acceptable format.

Your job as the online business marketer is to convince your potential member that the advantages far outweigh the cost when it comes to finding the information that they need online. When the potential member is convinced that the material is interesting and of value and has the ability to enhance their lifestyle, they will gladly and willingly pay for whatever information is provided to them.

Reducing Time Management Challenges

Online audiences are also greatly limited on time and need to gather the information that they need in a quicker, shorter amount of time than traditional methods of surfing and clicking on sites that may be of interest to them.

They just don't have the time. By offering the information that they need in a digested, ready to read format, you are offering them a valuable, indispensable tool that they can both use and appreciate. Again, this is a high selling point to the potential member because you will be able to provide them with valuable content and valuable resources in one go-to place thereby eliminating the need for them to scour sub-par websites and forums and experiencing frustration. You can save their day!

Offer Specialized Information

Another selling point about membership sites is the gold-mine of specialized information that you will be able to offer to your members.

The internet is chock-full of web pages, sites, blogs and forums that provide general information on specific topics. There are all kinds of articles online that discuss ideas and tend to "skim" on the top of the topics. Or, what you will find is that there are often web pages that tend to sound alike. All alike. That's because very often they are all saying the same thing, just in a different way. Members aren't looking for the same thing. They want different.

Your membership site should be different in presentation in order for you to attract members to your site. What kind of information do you want to present to your audience? What can you give them that is different than what they can find on their own?

There are a couple of things to consider when you are compiling the information for your membership site:

1. How Unique Is My Content?

Make sure that you are offering specialized and not general information to your readers. Sure some of the information will overlap with information found online, but make sure that the gist of the information is more customized and more directly related to your audience than if you were offering simple general content. Since content does in fact make a difference and sells, be sure to make your content and site information as customized and unique as possible.

2. Over-deliver Your Site

Good business practices infer that when you give more, you reap more. In other words, when you over-deliver, you ensure that your members get more than they paid for.

Their satisfaction is key here so you want to ensure that with all of your content, articles, reviews, interviews, software products, eBooks, etc. that you give the audience 200% more than they expect. This of course will require more work on your part, but if you don't over-deliver you risk operating a sub-par site and losing members. Remember, they are paying you because you are providing information that they cannot get elsewhere.

From a paying perspective, **VALUE IS KEY!**

Members associate the money that they are paying you with certain expectations. These expectations transfer into recurring monthly memberships or cancellation or money back requests. Help minimize these instances by serving value to your readers by emphasizing that the information that they are seeking can be found on your site.

Someone else is doing the research for them to find information on the products that they are interested in. Someone else conducted the interview with the well-known field topic field expert. Someone else has done the legwork, information compilation and put all of this together in a readable, comprehensible format. Sell them on this idea and they will get it - - and become members.

Membership Sites Provide Steady Income

Membership websites bring in a steady flow of revenue on a regular basis. This is one of the most enticing pieces of this type of business to most business owners. There is an “almost” guaranteed monthly income - - “almost” guaranteed because the number of monthly members will fluctuate and vary according to members needs, wants and direct relevance to their perceived value. However, that “almost” guaranteed income can drop the almost with a bevy of valuable, consistent content on your site that is delivered in a timely fashion to your readers.

A paid membership site allows you the enjoyment to have a steady income with a comparable amount of work to the site. The amount of money that you command for your paid membership site is directly related to how much work you place in the site and the quality of content that the site offers.

Subscriptions to paid membership sites are set up and processed for a pre-determined amount of time for the member to enjoy the benefits. The fees can be assessed for a period of time as well allowing you to determine what your expected profit level will be for that period of time.

For instance, if you assess each member of your paid site a fee of \$25 a month and you have 100 members to your site, you can expect to make about \$2500 a month from this one site. Even if your site can only bring in 50 interested monthly members, you can still make over \$1,200 from the site.

If you decide to delve into other topic areas and maintain four or five sites, you can expect to make over \$12,000 a month from the management of those paid membership sites!

A steady cash flow in the thousands of dollars to share information that you love and maintain these sites with rich content and be a lucrative and highly profitable business.

Starting A Membership Site

Starting a membership site has many variable components and it is critical to not leave out any of the steps when setting one up. Because it is a process, and because one step leads to another step and so on, it is important to build upon each step in order for it to be successful.

Readers want valuable and rich information and you can offer it to them through the channels of a membership site. In a membership site, members are exclusive to that site and privy to the information that the owner or host shares with them. A person may pay a pre-set or established monthly amount to access information that is published in a password protected area on the site.

They can also participate in webinars, teleseminars or online forums where there is specialized, detailed information shared that is exclusively for the members of that site. This exclusivity is what makes the membership site in high demand and coveted by outsiders. Knowledge is power and everyone wants a piece of it.

The owner of the site may make the information on the site totally exclusive and very niche-targeted. This makes the information shared on the site more enticing and preferable for members to want to be a part of the paid site. What kind of information can be offered on the site that is considered exclusive?

1.) Articles & Special Reports

Articles and special reports are a fantastic way to teach your members, and the content is "evergreen" so you can place it in your archives and sell copies to new members who missed them.

The need for new information will always be one of the drawing points on the membership site. To get good information to provide on the site you can either:

- Hire outside freelance writers. Get writers to submit densely-rich information that is targeted towards your niche market. Make sure that the information is customized for your audience and not too general.

- Write the content yourself. This will of course take up significant more time, but you can offer valuable content to your audience. Hands-on, directly-related experience is what readers want and deserve. Make sure to provide them with just that when you are providing them with richly-written articles.

2.) Interviews with Field Experts

You can locate experts in most any niche market by frequenting other online forums and websites that are in your area of specialty. There are many field experts in various niche areas, and the key to finding those that fit your area of expertise is by developing relationships with them.

Check them out on FaceBook™. Follow them on Twitter. See where they are on MySpace™. Read their articles on their websites. Download one (or more) of their eBooks. Get to know your interview subjects before you present them to your online audience.

3.) Video Blog Entries (vlogs)

Vlog entries can make your site fresh and inviting with this type of content. Uploading a vlog entry of you showing your members step-by-step on how to complete a task is an appealing point for many of your readers.

4.) Online Forums

In membership sites, there will be sub-communities within the site that will be appealing to your members. This is the opportunity for your readers to connect with one another, trading insider secrets and making connections with other experienced and informed readers in your niche field.

Although the reader is not paying to necessarily connect with this other individuals, the association that they will enjoy is a by-product of the membership site. Imagine the connections and relationships that the members will enjoy with other members - - they can glean information from them and in most cases, find leads and connections too for services or products.

5. Technical Services (software downloads, eBooks, games, tutorials)

The members on your site can enjoy software downloads, tutorials or eBooks as they become available. This will allow you as a business owner to frequently introduce valuable information to the readers and keep products available to the readers as well. This also instills value to the reader when they can frequently enjoy materials on your site.

The bottom line is that people are willing to pay for content and the key is to offer exclusive, valuable information in exchange for their loyalty and business.

Decide On A Topic

If people want *general* information on *general* topics, they go to the internet and type in their general term into the search engine. Perhaps they are not concerned about details. However, when consumers want specific information on a specific topic, they go to their search engines and type specific words into the search engines in order to find detailed information about their subject.

When people are internet surfing for information about topics in particular, they want to be able to find applicable, reliable and valuable information that is not readily available in every forum across the `net. Internet surfers are more inclined to follow information from you if your site is more personal (as in you've experienced it yourself) and if it offers information that they can apply directly and immediately to their lives and/or businesses.

The choice of your topic with a paid membership site is where your site will experience high levels of traffic and those interested in becoming paid members of your site and receiving the information that you have to offer.

Topics can range anywhere from dating to cooking, airplanes, gardening and even science. Topics that are popularly searched on the internet do quite well; however, this does not mean that there is an automatic buying audience for those topics. You must research and understand your topic and learn how to properly market it before you can determine if it will work or not.

Making money from membership sites is successful if the site is designed and built around a specific topic. The topic must be a niche that people are interested in enough to come back to frequently and regularly for more information or products.

To find topics that are easy to market, think about the things that interest you or that you have questions about. These topics tend to be easier to write about, of course, but may also have a wide enough mass appeal that it would entice other readers to become members of your paid membership site.

Before deciding on what topics to concentrate on, research and find out what kinds of topics are in high demand. You can do this by going to sites like Yahoo! Answers or AskJeeves.com to see what the popular topics or questions being asked are.

There are a surprising number of people who want information but simply don't know where to look. Places like these will give you an idea of what people are looking for as far as topics are concerned, and will give you a lead into what will be profitable and what won't.

Other things to consider when looking for a topic include:

1.) Is this topic viable in the marketplace?

This requires searching to see if there is a demand for the topic and if it will do well. For instance, a paid membership site on frugal living would perhaps do quite well right now and attract a lot of paying members to your site. By the same token, a topic let's say on World History from 1775-present may not attract enough of an interested paying audience to warrant a paid membership site. This does not mean that these types of sites are boring or unneeded, but rather that their focus may not be niche-based enough to warrant a paying market.

2.) What are the latest market trends?

Take a look at current business news and developments to see which way certain market trends are headed. This will help you to develop your content offerings that are specifically for hot topics. Market trends will revolve around popular culture, news developments, economic conditions and even things that are just plain fun.

3.) Research the competition

Once you have determined what your topic choice will be, then research the competition to see what they are doing. Are they offering additional products like software demos, eBooks or tutorials? Do they provide live webcasts to the members as a part of their monthly fees?

What are they doing that is special or different and helps them stand out? Knowing what your competition is doing can help you better design your site and your offerings. If at all possible, try to offer something that your competition **is not** offering and further build a niche market that offers detailed site information. Profits have the potential to increase when there is niche-based information that is not found anywhere else or all over the internet

4.) Develop a plan for the site

What is your plan for the site? Determine first what results that you want to gain from the membership site and then head in that direction. If you want to attract a large audience and have a large membership base, then concentrate on your marketing and networking efforts to get your site's name in front of as many people as possible.

What will be your niche, make you stand out? Offer something to your audience that helps you to get noticed. Don't be afraid to venture out with creative presentations on your site or to talk in detail about things that the readers may want to know about. Decide that you want to make your site memorable and simply set out to do it.

Write it down. This includes goals and a time line for completion for certain site milestones. If you decide to introduce a blog on your site, set a date for when you want the blog to become active and what types of things your blog will focus on.

Offer your content to the site as frequently as possible. At a minimum, once a week is desirable, but of course if there is more information or services that you can give to your members more than once a week, then by all means do so. Aim to add new content to your site at a minimum of twice a week when you first begin.

Limit Your Membership

At the onset of starting your paid membership site, set a maximum number of paid participants that you will allow to become members of your site. This helps you to control how many people are accessing the site at any given time. It also helps you to control the quality of the site in terms of content and information dissemination.

Although there are paying members of your site, there are still instances where people will simply recycle your information and give it away or re-sell it on their own site. There is no way to prevent this from happening, but having a little control like this in place can somehow discourage or dissuade potential violators.

Another incentive to limit the number of people who can join your site is the perception too that this creates. If there are a certain number of slots available for your paid membership site, it gives your site an in-demand appeal and creates an even greater appeal for what the site offers and what is available on the site.

Types Of Membership Sites

Free

The word “free” in this case of free membership sites denotes just that. Access to your site and to your site’s information is free to the reader and trafficker to your online site.

Free membership sites are fairly easy to establish and easy to operate. The challenge with free content sites is that there must be fresh and consistently timely content to offer to the readers who frequent the site. Although the content is free and access to the content is free, there must still be a reason given to your niche audiences as to why they should come to your site on a regular basis.

One drawback to free sites is the type of traffic and the content that will sometimes seem to gravitate towards the site. People tend to associate paying with value, thereby reducing the richness or value of material simply because it is “free.” Although the content may be high quality, because it is free, your audience may take it for granted and be unappreciative.

Ezines are one venue that will allow you to provide free information to your readers. You can offer them to your audience on a regular basis and provide key information. Publishing your ezine whether weekly, bi-weekly or monthly will keep your product or service in front of your audience and ideally make you the “go-to” person when they need a particular service.

You can use the ezines to eventually transfer the free access members to paying members on your site. Once they see the value in the content that you provide, you can then convince them to begin paying for the information in a more expanded, comprehensible format.

You can also use the free access membership site to attract and secure outside advertising vendors for your members enjoyment. You can either approach niche-based advertisers for your products or wait for those vendors to come to you. This will help keep the site content-valuable and readily available for your readers.

Fee-Based

Fees for membership sites are generally where and what online business owners are interested in. The fees can vary anywhere from \$9.97 to \$97 per month or more. It all depends on the type of content that is being offered, the frequency of the offering and even to what niche market the fees are being assessed.

Paid membership sites not only bring in a steady stream of income but also have the potential to provide more "back office" type of materials for other products and services. These other services can also be in the form of highly useful articles, products and services that provide value to the member.

Fees can be assessed on the site that will cover administrative expenses and website design access, hosting and development. Fees for the site are generally collected monthly for full site access, or can be assessed quarterly depending on the host's requirements.

Fee membership sites and free sites both have one common goal in mind and that is to provide full access to the website and enjoy all of the benefits and features that the site has to offer.

Why Start A Paid Membership Site?

Aside from paid membership sites providing an opportunity and a service to web-seekers, paid membership websites also generate a solid source of income for many online entrepreneurs.

Paid websites are a popular means of lucrative online businesses that help to provide content to the members for a cost. As the number of internet seekers increase daily, there are thousands of people who are interested in information and who are willing to pay for quality content. A paid membership website is a specialty item when they offer unique and custom information or articles.

It is incorrect to think that some people will not pay fees to be a part of sites that disseminate information to their members. Web surfers spend a significant amount of money to find certain information and will pay to be a part of paid sites.

Members will enjoy getting access to instant information without having to constantly search for it in search engines and coming up with either incorrect or inaccurate information. As an online business owner, being able to provide those members with ready-to-digest information guarantees a loyal following and a consistent online income.

Factors that make a paid membership site profitable:

- The costs involved to reproduce the content are considerably low. Since you are the creator of the content that appears on your site, you don't have to pay anything extra or inordinate to make the site profitable. You can keep the entire profits yourself!

- There is no selling necessary for your site to be profitable. Other than making your back office products available on your site, you don't have to convince the potential member to buy anything. You convinced them to become a paying member when you marketed your site to them, therefore no selling is necessary.

- There are no requirements for expensive advertising or marketing. The members that are on your site will likely be your word-of-mouth referrals, therefore negating the need for additional marketing.

- A paid membership website is an ideal fixed and steady source of income. Members pay fees on a monthly or quarterly basis, therefore you are assured of a set dollar amount in income every month.

Because paying members are likely to be loyal and consistent as opposed to free members, as long as you are providing valuable content, you can count on this income. Even if the monthly membership number does not increase, your monthly steady income will and can remain the same from month to month.

Targeting Niche-Audiences For Success

Once you have decided to start the membership site, simply find a market that is interested and passionate about the subject and market your paid membership sites to them. Make sure that the target market has a genuine interest before pitching your services or you will come across as annoying. Here are some places where you can find niche markets in your topic:

FaceBook™

FaceBook™ is a very popular social networking site where you can connect with other like-minded “friends” and use this base as a launching base for your paid members.

Build your friendship base by connecting and commenting on other’s pages, linking to pertinent articles that you’ve written online and blog entries that show potential members what kind of information they can expect to find on your site. FaceBook™ is more of a social networking site that is for personal information and fits into a style of “what I did today” types of conversations.

To make FaceBook™ work with building your paid membership base for your site, make a consistent effort to write and link to articles that your “friends” are looking for. Watch their pages to see what the topics is that they are talking about and the things that they are interested in. This will help you design topics that are catered towards their interests.

You can also create groups on your profile that are geared towards specific interests, hobbies or ideas. For instance, if your niche topic is gardening and you connect with friends that have this interest, you have the opportunity to share your expert knowledge and input with them and possibly even gain a following.

MySpace™

MySpace™ is similar to FaceBook™ for social networking and building customer bases. MySpace™ differs from FaceBook™ simply with the type of communities that are available on the sites. MySpace™ would be ideal for finding niche markets for music, software, computers and things that are more related to the arts community. Although there is a lot of standard social networking, these niche-communities are more prevalent and tightly focused.

MySpace™ (similar to others) will also allow you to upload music links and video links to your paid membership sites. This can be a selling point as a “teaser” and give the person an idea into what is offered on your site.

Twitter

Twitter is a mini-blogging site and a wonderful place to find a detailed customer base to build your paid membership efforts around. Twitter is ideal as a business-to-business site and can help you connect specifically with other Twitterers who are looking for the same kind of information.

To market your paid membership site on Twitter, be sure to follow others on Twitter who are in your niche area and comment on their Tweets. They will (likely) return the Tweets and you can start building a solid customer base.

Blogs

Use your own blog to drive traffic to your site to find paid membership registrations. If you promote your own blog, you can get people to become “curious” and look for more information from a recognized expert in the field.

Manage Your Site With A Script

A paid membership site doesn't just appear, but it has to be created. This is where you will need a script or a programming language to set-up on your hosting site so that you can operate your business in auto-mode and minimal assistance.

A membership site does not have to be overly technical. In many instances, many membership sites consist only of a forum. Depending on what your goals for the site are, make sure that the script that you get to manage it with is not overly technical to you and does not confuse or intimidate the member.

What kinds of things should you look for in a script? Ideally, look for automated scripts that do the bulk of the work for you, allowing you to have more time to manage the site and interact with your paying members.

Find software packages that are fully automated and run themselves so that all you have to do is to set up the initial settings so that things can run on "auto." Look for web designs that are template ready. This will allow you to "plug-and-play." The site will also look exactly the way that you want it to without guessing.

Make sure the site's feature gives you the option to capture automated backend sales. To enhance your sales you can also add a one time offer option with every paid membership addition on your site. This will help you to capture those members who may not ever buy any other additional products for the life of their membership.

Make use of the script that offers free, paid and referral membership types. Tracking these can help you target to whom you want to make additional offers for future sales.

Ensure that the script can be used with Wordpress blogs and forums and has the ability to upload and download videos, music, and other relevant technical material.

Manage Your Profits

After you have established your paid membership site, you want to be sure to manage it properly so that you can retain the maximum amount of profits that are available to the site. Without proper profit management, you may experience a loss of customers and poor quality content resulting in a site that does not fare well and offer quality services to the readers.

1. Perform online surveys, asking the readers if they are happy with the site's services, what they would prefer to see more of or less of, and if the site is satisfying their need for information.
2. Increase prices and fees when it is appropriate. It is not advisable to do this on a frequent basis, but can be done as needed. Appropriateness would be when there is a high demand for your site's information or when there are more requests to join the site.

In addition to price and fees for the site, offer an incentive like a "test-drive" for your paid site. Convert lookers to buyers by offering a trial run for one to two weeks for free or at a special rate. Convince the buyer to try by offering additional informational products, CD's, links to coveted resources or more materials by other guests on the site's speaker list. Test-drives are a big incentive because they let the member try-before-they-buy and they get to see what they are getting.

Pros And Cons Of Paid Membership Sites

Now that we've looked at all of the various reasons and ways that you can start a profitable site, let's review the pros and cons of this so that you can see what areas need concentration and management and just how realistic and easy this is to do. With a little planning and resourceful gathering of material, you can have a successful, budding, income-producing site up in no time!

Pros Of Paid Membership Sites

* A well-written site can bring in a steady and consistent flow of income on a regular basis. It enables you to enjoy a monthly recurring source of revenue. Simply decide how much you want to charge each month, keep it consistent and only increase it when your expenses go up.

* There is no need to keep "selling" to customers. You've already done this because they've signed up to your site. Simply keep providing **steady, reliable** and **valuable** content and they will stay. Any additional sales on the site will be in the form of back office sales where you will have links or infomercials on your site pointing to them.

* No need to maintain a high advertising budget. Word of mouth advertising is just as effective and may be all that you need to do to maintain an interest in the site. If you do find that you have to advertise, it will be minimal at best and will most likely be done through online forums, chat rooms and social media networks.

* No storage space is needed. Information is maintained all through technology and virtually. The only lengthy investment is time, for which the reward is exponential!

* Any “back office” informational products like ebooks, CD’s and software can be sold again and again without additional production costs. This significantly increases your bottom line and revenue potential. These items can be competitively priced or sold as a bundle in exchange for a 2 or 3 year membership sign up. There are many creative ways to increase your income potential with this method.

Cons Of Paid Membership Sites

* Ensuring that the site has fresh, relevant and timely information on a consistent basis. This can be a challenge from a time management and creativity issue. You have to work hard to make sure that the content that you are offering to your paid members is not recycled and common.

* Creating audio and video content can be time laborious and overwhelming if you don’t already have experience in that field. If you need to hire someone else to do it, it can become expensive and can cut into your profits. This can also apply to other freelance writers. Paying additional fees for content writing services can eventually become costly.

* You must consistently manage your site to make sure its producing revenue and enjoying profits. If your paid membership revenue falls below your expenses, you are in trouble. You have to constantly make sure that you have enough interested, paying members to keep you afloat.

* You must also consistently monitor the message boards and forums that are on your site to make sure that they are in line with your site's objectives and to watch any out of order behavior. This can be costly to maintain if you have to hire someone to do it, or it can be a time management issue if you have to do it yourself.

Conclusion

A paid membership site is just like any other business that takes time, effort, energy and passion to ensure its success. However, with the need for good sites and the availability of resourceful topics, this great idea can be turned into a money-making powerhouse and multiplied several times over. Once you are prepared to face the challenges and issues that can arise with starting this type of business, you will be better equipped to enjoy the benefits that result from it. It can be done and you can do it. Go start your paid membership site TODAY!