HOW TO START A
RECURRING REVENUE
MEMBERSHIP SITE

AND GET PAID
MONTH AFTER MONTH

Brought to you by www.JonAllo.com

Introduction

Membership sites can be extremely complex, or very simple. At its most basic level, you have a website with preloaded content, and that content is restricted to members only. Members pay monthly or annual fees, and they get instant access to all the content on the site. Nonmembers get access to free content, but your most valuable, premium content is hidden behind a pay wall.

There are membership sites which also "drip" content regularly on a recurring schedule. These sites tend to keep members for longer periods of time, since they have to wait each week, month or quarter for new content to be delivered. You may have taken an online course or paid for online training where video or text-based content was doled out in modules or chapters, and it's not uncommon for membership sites to offer different levels of access, with names such as Beginner, Entry-Level, Gold or Diamond.

In the days before the World Wide Web, if you wanted to become a member of a group, you met other members at a physical location. This type of membership offering has obvious restrictions, because the more members involved, the more space that is required. There were also travel concerns.

Thanks to the Internet, it's possible to set up a virtual hangout where members of a group can communicate with others with the same interests, instantly, even if they're scattered across the globe.

These type of community-based membership sites offer socialization, either for free or for a monthly or annual membership fee. There are also membership sites that don't have forums or chat rooms, and instead deliver content to paying members.

If you're an entrepreneur or blogger considering setting up your own membership site, you probably want to do so because of two words... ….passive income.

Also referred to as residual income, this is money which you receive on a regular, recurring basis for something that you do one time. If you write an e-book and put it up for sale on Amazon, you only have to write that book one time. Each time it is sold on Amazon, you get paid. Writing e-books and online courses is a great way to potentially get paid over and over again for a one-time effort.

A membership site can do the same thing for you.

This special report on benefiting from recurring revenue through a membership site model will discuss a few of the different types of sites you may want to create. There are pricing structures to consider, and you may want to add a community element to your site. This report will help you decide if you want to give immediate access to all your content, or send bits and pieces out over time.

You'll learn exactly how to build a membership site, and if you don't have the time, money or technical ability to create your site, there are some simple free and paid options which can handle the job for you.

When you are through with this report, you'll have the ability to build a membership site yourself or have one built for you, so that you can enjoy predictable and recurring income from once-and-done content creation.

Let's get started by discussing the different types of membership sites you may want to consider creating.

Some Popular Types of Membership Sites

The term "membership site" is extremely broad, and there are a number of potential setups under that heading. The one you'll choose depends on how you currently do business, and what your aims are in creating a membership site. Below, we'll go through the main types of membership sites, including the type of content they offer and how that content is delivered.
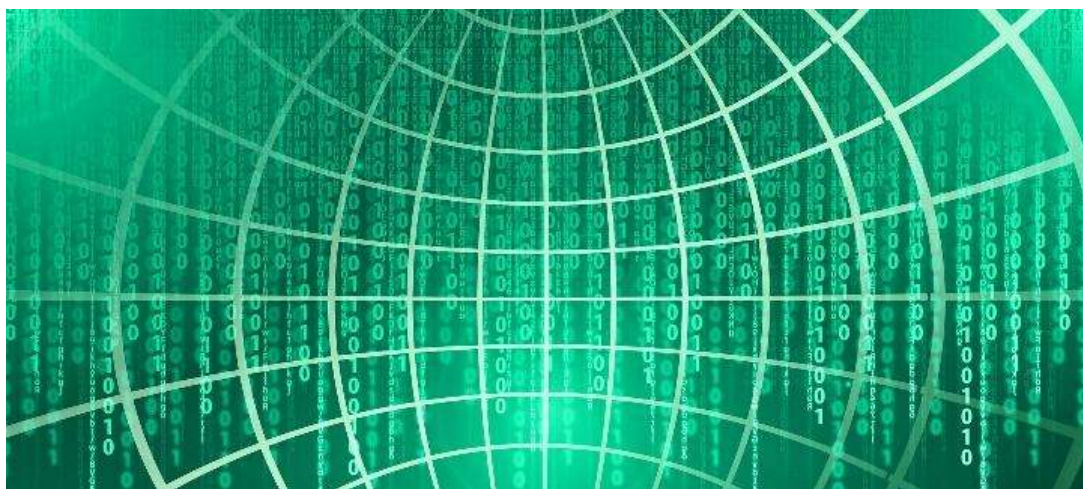
What is Software as a Service?

Software as a service (SaaS) refers to a business model where you deliver licensing to some type of software in return for payment. In most cases, there are varying levels of access which provide more value and features for a higher subscription fee.

This type of offering is perfectly suited to a membership site. Instead of paying a large, one-time fee, your members can pay a much more attractive and affordable monthly, quarterly or annual fee for access to a software suite.

Obviously, you'll have to purchase some type of software and a reseller's license, or create some software on your own, to run this type of membership site. Generally speaking, the more complicated the software, the more time-intensive and support-backed your operation is going to be.

Online Drip-Feed Course Delivery

Providing access to online courses is often done with a membership site. You can break a large course down into several smaller modules or lessons, and release each module on a recurring schedule. This means your members are more likely to continue paying a monthly, quarterly or annual fee, because they want to stick around to receive all the course content you are offering.

This works so well for online entrepreneurs and their customers for so many reasons.

First off, look at it from the point of view of a potential customer. You have created a course that teaches everything someone needs to know to raise skunks for fun and profit. The course includes 12 videos, several e-books, printable checklists and cheat sheets, and is well-known in the skunk-lover's community as the "must-have" course on raising skunks.

However, there's a problem.

Even though a potential skunk farmer knows your course is well worth the one-time payment price you offer, she just doesn't have the money available right now. She's really excited and ready to make a purchase, but she simply can't see how to spare the money. If all you offer is a one-time purchase price and immediate access to all your content, you may lose a sale in this instance.

You have to understand that even if Sally skunk-lover can afford your one-time payment, she may feel overwhelmed with having your entire course material dumped on her all at once. For the potential purchaser on a tight budget, being able to make small monthly fees as opposed to a larger one-time payment is very attractive. This membership site feature also appeals to those without the time or mental energy to tackle an entire course in one sitting.

By setting up a membership site and providing access to new material every week or month, you'll attract a lot more customers than by simply offering one-time content delivery with a one-time price tag. You can provide a discounted one-time payment option, in addition to the more affordable monthly or quarterly payment and delivery system.

The All-at-Once Membership Site

This type of site is exactly what it sounds like. Your members get immediate access to every piece of content you offer. This type of delivery system is attractive to people that want to get their hands on all your information at once.

Generally speaking, membership sites that offer this type of access do so in return for a one-time fee. If you have substantial amounts of content, you may also deliver immediate access to your content in return for a monthly fee, if it would take several weeks or months for someone to sift through your content.

Some people are impatient, and they want a one-time payment for right-now access. This type of membership site also appeals to people who may be looking for just one particular piece of content that you're offering. Instead of waiting for weeks or months for that one piece of knowledge or that one service they're looking for, they can pay in full for your content now, and find just what they need.

The benefit for you is a larger single payment as opposed to hoping your members will stay around for several months paying monthly fees so you can collect that same amount of money.

Community Sites

Facebook is the largest website in the world. It's a community-based site. Facebook does not charge for membership, but you have to give them your email address. As an online community, Facebook can be regarded as the largest membership site in the world. People love socializing online, and this is why social media networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are so popular.

You can create a paid or free site with a community feature to benefit from the inherent desire of human beings to socialize. In a later section of this report, we'll look at the ins and outs of creating a sense of community on your membership site.

Fixed Length

Maybe you have created some type of program or instructional content that is to be consumed once a day for 7 or 14 or 30 days. You charge members a set fee, and you tell them beforehand how long your program lasts. Content can be delivered digitally through webinars, video lessons or text-based content.

The Service Site

If you want to deliver coaching or some other type of service, you can set up a service-based membership site. Mastermind groups are often set up this way. Members can pay a single or monthly fee, and drop out of the program whenever they like.

Setting up Your Payment Structure

No matter what type of content you're going to be delivering or service you will be providing, you have one question you need to answer before you get started.

Are you going to charge for your content, product or service, or allow free access?

You may be shaking your head in disbelief at the idea of giving away content for free. However, this is an outstanding way to provide value for your members, and benefit from The Law of Reciprocity.

The Law of Reciprocity

In sales and psychology circles, The Law of Reciprocity refers to the mindset someone develops when you do something for them. When you give away great content, something that solves real problems and creates true value in the lives of your members, those people feel like reciprocating in some manner. When you continually offer them free information and knowledge which improves their lives in significant ways, your members will respond positively to a sales pitch you make in the future concerning a paid course or product.

If you want to create a membership site where people pay for access to you, your content or your services, you should consider offering a free version as well. If someone is thinking about joining your site but that individual is not sure if he or she wants to spend any money to do so, offering a free option makes a lot of sense. If someone has an interest in joining your site and they can get in for free, they're likely to do so.

You offer a lower level of access for a free membership, letting these members know how much more value and what other features they receive when they upgrade to a paid version.

Monthly Pricing

If you've ever joined a membership site, you may be familiar with the common monthly pricing structure. This seems to be the most popular pricing option for most membership sites, and it works well because most people are accustomed to paying recurring monthly bills. They pay their mortgage or rent, electric and other bills every month, so if you offer a monthly subscription fee, it will probably be well-received.

This allows members to join your site and see if they like what you have to offer, and they're only committed to 30 days. If you deliver a great experience and provide excellent value, then you have a chance for keeping that member for several months or several years.

If you decide to offer only a monthly membership fee, consider offering a reduced rate for the first month, as an incentive for joining.

Annual Pricing and Membership Levels

You should consider offering a discounted annual membership fee. This should be at a substantial discount to the option of paying for 12 months one month at a time.

For instance, a membership site which charges $29 per month could provide serious value in the eyes of prospective members if an annual fee was offered for $199. Offering and advertising a nearly 50% savings through an annual payment as opposed to monthly payments could drive up your membership numbers.

You may also want to create different levels of access to your membership site. If you're joining some type of membership site and you see Standard, Gold and Platinum membership levels offered, which one would be the most attractive to you?

Using words like platinum, diamond and professional to describe your highest level of membership is a pricing tactic that often works well. You then make those higher membership levels even more attractive by pricing them only a little bit higher than standard or beginner levels.

Another tip to offer concerning annual pricing includes allowing for several payments. Not everyone will have the money available to take advantage of your discounted, one-time annual payment option. Allowing them to set up their credit card or bank account for 3 or 4 separate payments will allow you to attract more members.

Why You May Want to Consider Adding a Community Component

Some membership sites are successful because people feel a natural need to be part of a group. There are chat rooms, forums and other methods by which the members can communicate with each other. You only need to look at how madly successful and huge Facebook is to understand the power of providing a platform where like-minded individuals can virtually hang out and interact.

In addition to providing a virtual or real product or service, a community-based membership site promotes socialization. In some cases, membership sites exist and charge a monthly, quarterly or annual fee, and they provide no product or service at all. People join the site just for the opportunity to speak with others on a particular topic, hobby or area of interest.

Think about your favorite hobby. What is it you really like to do, and would be doing if you didn't have to work for a living. Whether it is gardening, bass fishing, traveling the world or some other pastime, you probably wouldn't mind paying a nominal fee to spend your free time talking with others experienced or interested in your hobby.

Most people want to feel like they belong to something bigger than they are. Adding chat rooms and forums to your membership site and promoting regularly scheduled chats, conference calls or lessons is a good way to use word-of-mouth advertising to build your membership.

People enjoy talking about things that interest them with their friends and family members. After they spend some time enjoying the interaction on the community portion of your site, members will no doubt share that pleasant experience with those around them.

This is an easy way to have your members grow your site and your passive income, while also keeping them happy by providing them with a sense of belonging.

How to Build (or Outsource) Your Membership Site

Are you a talented site developer and code writer? Then you can possibly build your site yourself. This isn't always an option. You may not have the time or ability to build your own site. Never fear. There are companies and plug-ins that can do all the heavy lifting for you.

Let's take a look at some of the top membership website builders, popular membership site plug-ins, and finally, companies that allow you to make this an almost entirely hands-off process.

Membership Site Builders

The following site-building companies offer attractive monthly fees to build and operate your membership site for you. If you don't already have a blog or website, this could be an attractive option for you. Services and features vary wildly between the following companies, which are among the most popular membership website builders.

- DoodleKit
- Weebly
- SquareSpace
- Sub Hub
- SquareSpace
- IM Creator
- WebStarts
- Wix

DoodleKit provides both free and paid membership site creation, as do IM Creator, Weebly and Wix. WebStarts and SquareSpace provide free trial periods.

Membership Plug-Ins

The WordPress (WP) website platform is simple and versatile. Even if you have no technical experience, you can get a website up and running in no time. There are thousands upon thousands of free and paid WP themes, so finding one that looks good for your membership site is virtually guaranteed.

Once you set up a basic WordPress site, you can still install a piece of software called a plug-in that can handle all aspects of your membership platform for you. Here are a few of the most popular WP plug-ins that offer different levels of membership site features.

MemberPress

This plug-in is not free, but it's highly regarded in the membership site community. MemberPress offers a lot of features and abilities, many of which are not always found on other membership plug-ins, software and applications. Once installed on your WordPress site, you can restrict access to any or all of the content you create.

The MemberPress application allows for an unlimited number of members, and you can create limitless specifications or rules for access.

You can offer multiple pricing structures and subscriptions as well as several different digital products and deliver them effortlessly, and the software is integrated to accept payments through PayPal and Stripe. The customer service for MemberPress is excellent, and the system is set up to automatically give or restrict access as soon as your members join up or unsubscribe.

There are 3 annual prices offered, depending on how many membership sites you want to set up, and other factors.

Restrict Content Pro

There are a lot of membership site owners that call this the best membership plug-in for the WordPress platform. It was designed by a team of app developers with years of experience creating WP apps and plug-ins, so it integrates perfectly.

You can pick and choose from an extensive list of add-on features and functions, and there are 4 pricing options. You can pay a one-time, lifetime fee, and there are 3 different annual fees which include various extras.

It should be mentioned that several of the add-ons included in even the basic package are usually charged for on other membership plug-ins. Stripe, PayPal, and Braintree are provided for payment integration, and if you sell digital products with the Easy Digital Downloads platform, Restrict Content Pro integrates perfectly since it is created by the same development team. CSV export, integration with autoresponder services, and an excellent support reputation are also included.

Paid Memberships Pro

Paid Memberships Pro offers a basic free version. That means you can learn how to use the system and see if it is right for your needs, and in many cases, you'll never have to upgrade to the paid version.

The free version is limited in scope and features, but if you' simply delivering digital content on a set schedule and don't want to build a community or need more functionality, the free version may be right up your alley.

If you decide to go the paid route, there are two options. Each option requires an annual fee, with one plan offering the Paid Memberships Pro plug-in for up to 5 sites, and the second option allowing you to create an unlimited number of sites. You get more payment gateways than some of the plug-ins on this list, and they include PayPal, Stripe, Braintree, 2Checkout, Authorize.net and Cyber Source. Link-tracking, email autoresponder integration, drip content delivery and affiliate program set-up are just a few of the features you can choose from.

RainMaker Platform

This is really more like a "membership site in a box" than a plug-in. That's because the regular hosting requirements of a WordPress site are included. It integrates with all major email service providers, unlike many other membership site plug-ins.

You can build different sites with this software, drip content on a preset schedule, restrict or allow access to content easily, and create as many free or paid courses as you like.

To build a sense of community, this plug-in allows you to develop forums where your members can communicate and interact with each other. It's also easy to set up an affiliate program with the software, and you're allowed an unlimited number of members as well. This platform allows you to create separate membership levels, you can deliver a limitless number of digital products, and there are both monthly and annual pricing options.

Magic Members

This plug-in has drawn a lot of praise from members of the WP community. It's easy to install and get up and running, and is a simple and effortless way to restrict and provide access to an online course or some other type of content.

Drip feeding content over a set schedule is one of the features of Magic Members that's handled a little better than some other membership site plug-ins. If you would prefer, you can also make your premium content available at once, instead of sending it out over time.

There are several payment platforms supported, and integration with popular autoresponder services like Mailchimp and Aweber. Magic Members supports multiple payment structures in addition to the monthly payment feature most membership sites employ. You can accept one-time annual payments from your members, and daily, weekly or single-use payments. This application delivers a unique pay-per-view feature, which allows you to offer paid video viewing to your members. This is an absolute must have if you are offering some type of video course.

S2Member

A paid Pro version is available, as is free access. As is the case with Paid Memberships Pro, the free version is sort of limited in what it can do. If you are strapped for cash or would just like to give the software a test run, it is recommended to try the free plug-in first.

The free platform offers payment support only through PayPal. However, the paid plug-in version allows you to accept Stripe and Authorize.net.

The (Almost) Hands-Off Membership Site Experience

With the site-building services and applications just mentioned, you have some work to do. The popular WordPress membership plug-ins require that you have a WP blog or site already built. The monthly fee membership website builders require varying levels of time and effort on your part.

For the closest thing to a hands-off experience, the following companies will handle almost every aspect of membership site creation, promotion and management for you.

- Wild Apricot
- ClubExpress
- AMO
- Tendenci
- MemberLeap
- Member Clicks
- NeonCRM
- TCS Software

In most cases, a membership site application is the way to go if you want a simple and inexpensive (or free) option, and you already have a WordPress site or blog.

The recommended membership site builders do more of the work for you, and accordingly, they are usually going to be more expensive than apps.

Finally, the eight companies just listed are the way to go if you want to do the least amount of work, but they also require a more sizable investment.

Plan & Create Your Content

If you are a blogger, you probably already have a lot of content you can repurpose. Dust off your old blog posts and rework them, and you could have the makings of a multi-module course. You can alternately restrict access to your most popular blog posts, charging a membership fee for access. You may decide to write or create your own content, and if so, you need to develop a plan you are sure to follow to ensure your content is available, so it can be delivered on schedule to your audience.

Outsource Your Content Creation

Wouldn't it be great if you could create more hours in your day? You could get so much more done! The same is true if you could clone yourself. Thanks to the following websites, you can get a lot more done each day by outsourcing your content creation to talented video and text-based content developers.

- Fiverr
- PeoplePerHour
- UpWork
- Elance
- Freelancer.com
- Guru

Running Your Membership Site on Autopilot

Combining several of the recommendations previously mentioned in this report, you can set up your membership site so it basically runs without your help. You're still going to have to oversee the process. Even if you hire freelancers to create your content, a virtual assistant to make sure everything runs smoothly, and a company to manage your membership site for you, you still need to stay involved.

This site has you and your business reputations at stake. That means that even if you find a way to hand off most or all of your membership site to other parties, you still need to hold them accountable.

Having said that, the following formula makes for a minimal time and effort investment on your part.

> 1 - Choose Wild Apricot, ClubExpress or one of the other membership site management companies listed above.
>
> 2 - Find a reliable and talented content developer at Fiverr or one of the other freelancing and outsourcing websites we recommended.
>
> 3 - Hire a virtual assistant, which can be found at those same websites.
>
> 4 - Hire a freelancer to handle social media promotion and/or paid advertising through Google AdWords, Yahoo, etcetera.
>
> 5 - Create a schedule for content development and delivery, and have your virtual assistant coordinate between your content creator and membership site management company.

This formula requires very little actual work on your part. In many cases though, bloggers and entrepreneurs don't have the money required to follow that plan of action. If this is the case for you, you can hire a WP expert to build a simple site and install a membership site plug-in for very little money. These individuals can be found at Fiverr and the other outsourcing websites mentioned earlier.

You can handle content creation yourself, and use your membership application for delivery. If you go to the app route and will be creating and delivering your own content, start off small.

Learn the ins and outs of membership site creation and maintenance through a simple once-a-month membership and content delivery process. Once you feel comfortable with the experience, you can expand your offerings and features.