

Instant Membership Profits



By Calvin Woon & Jonathan Teng

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For more information about the IM Buzz Creators' latest products & services as well as to grab a ton of free resources to help you get started making money online, check out:

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Introduction

In today's economy, more people are turning to the Internet to make purchases of all sort of products. **This means there is a real need for more suppliers to offer these products and services online.**

This is a good thing for YOU.

Why? **Because you can get in on this type of Internet marketing and create a revenue stream that will help make life a lot more comfortable.** One of the best ways to do this is established an opt-in type of membership site and sell products to your members.

Here are some of the reasons why you might consider running your own membership site:

- You are tired of your dead end job and want to work for yourself.
- **The idea of an Internet business really appeals to you.**
- You need a steady supply of revenue other than your day job, but don't have time to commit to a second job.
- **You want to have more control of your daily schedule.**
- You desire financial independence.

If any or all of these reasons apply to you, congratulations! **You've come to the right place to learn how to create and run a profitable membership site.**

Over the next several pages, you will find information on all the basics of what running a membership site entails.

You will learn about:

- 1. Market Research** – how to select products for sale, based on data you gather from the Internet. At the same time, you can get a handle on the level of competition you face in a given market.
- 2. Market Focus** – which is better, physical products that are shipped to a customer or digital products that are delivered instantly? You'll find some food for thought on this point.
- 3. Making the Site Attractive** – yes, the look of your pages is just as important as your content and your products.
- 4. Content** – what to do and what not to do. There are reasons to choose your words carefully.
- 5. Driving Traffic to Your Membership Site** – it may not be as hard as you think.
- 6. Customer Service** – yes, it matters. You will learn why.

While setting up and running a membership site takes some effort, it also has great potential.

If you set up the site properly, you will soon have a substantial membership that generates a steady flow of income, without having to spend a lot of time each week caring for the site.

Just What is a Membership Site?

Before any discussion of how to begin the process of creating a membership site, it is important to establish what is meant by the term.

A membership site is simply an online location that allows people to browse through products, services, forums, and other online functions by signing up with the site. By opting into the site, the user becomes a member of the site and thus can have limited or full access to all the services offered through the site.

It is important to note **there are two types of membership sites:**

- **Free membership sites require no fee of any type from the end user.** Sites of this type usually generate income either by subscribers clicking on ads for goods and services, or by the members or subscribers purchasing electronic or physical products from a store operated on the site.
- **Fee-based membership sites charge some type of fee in exchange for membership.** The charge may be a one time fee to join, or be an ongoing monthly charge for as long as the membership is in force. In this scenario, the site owner earns revenue from the sign-up fees as well as from the products sold on the site.

It is NOT unusual for a membership site to **create a hybrid membership site using both these scenarios.**

Instant Membership Profits

A free limited membership offers access to anyone who signs up as a free member. Basic privileges are extended. However, by paying a fee, the member can upgrade the membership to gain access to a number of additional services that are considered quite desirable.

With these thoughts in mind, **let's move on to what you need to know about setting up your site.**

Your first issue is to decide which sector of the online buying community you want to target.

Finding That Hungry Market

Hungry markets are simply consumer markets **where there are needs that are NOT currently being met by other suppliers.**

You want to find a hungry market that has room for you to come in and make an impression quickly.

To this end, **you need to keep the following in mind:**

- **Hungry markets don't materialize out of thin air.** You will need to do so digging to find them.
- **Not every hungry market will be right for you.** That means you have to evaluate each one you come across and decide if you can work within that market over the long term.
- **There is not necessarily room for someone new in every hungry market.** The market in question may be hungry simply because the expressed needs cannot currently be met by anyone. Unless you are a creative inventor, learn to tell when this is the case.

In other words, don't arbitrarily select a hungry market just because it seems like a fun area.

You want to make sure there is a realistic chance that you can tap into and meet a need in that market. This will mean **engaging in some research on two fronts.**

1. Market Research

Before you spend a lot of time and effort on any given market, **you need to learn as much about the online function of that market as you possibly can.**

Here are some of the things you need to look into:

- **Keywords.** Use tools like Google AdWords or Wordtracker to get an idea on how popular various keywords related to the market are with online searches. Both these tools not only give you information on a specific keyword, but also related keyword phrases. What you want to see is consistently high search volume using keywords related to the market in question.
- **Check activity on selling sites such as ClickBank and Amazon.** What products related to the market are selling well via these sites? Find out what you can about the sales volume to see if there is a consistent flow of revenue realized from selling products related to the market you are researching.
- **Search for forums relevant to the market under consideration.** If there are quite a few, join some of the larger ones. Not only will you get some idea of what consumers are saying about the market in general, you may also pick up a hint or two of a need that you can meet with some type of electronic product.

- **Don't forget social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace.** These sites have become very popular ways to promote different online businesses. See how many references you can find on sites of this nature that relate to the market you are investigating.

2. Competition Research

It isn't enough to research the state of the general market. **You also want to know what your potential competitors are up to.**

That means you need to find out the following:

- **Who are the three major players in your hungry market?** How much of the market share do they control?
- **What type of products are they selling?** Which products sell the most units?
- **Are sales seasonal in nature?** That is, do the major players sell more units certain times of the year and go through slight slumps in between?
- **What products or services are they NOT offering?** Is there an opportunity for you to fill the gap?

Essentially, **you want to find a hungry market that:**

- **Is established** and thriving.
- **Has clear leaders in the market** who are setting a standard you can identify.
- **Has the potential to generate steady revenue** throughout the year.
- **Has current needs not being met** that you are sure you can meet.

Don't think you can find out all this information in a couple of hours. Set aside a reasonable amount of time to do a thorough investigation.

Doing so will make the rest of the process of creating and establishing your site a lot easier.

Laying Out The Plans for Your Membership Site

Once you've decided which hungry niche market you want to pursue, **you can move on to other matters, such as what types of products you plan on offering to your members.**

No doubt you began to get some ideas while checking out the competition. That's a good place to start, but you are not ready to begin creating product just yet.

Before you begin to line up your roster of products and perks for your membership site, **you need to take a good long look at how you are going to deliver your products to each member.**

You have two basic options:

1. Digital (electronic)
2. Physical.

Here are some advantages to both.

With digital products, you:

- **Have very low development costs**, which translates into more net profit per unit sold.
- **Never have to worry about storage issues.** Remember, its an digital product; it only takes up room on a hard drive or server.

- **Can adapt the product to meet a changing market;** upgrades are easy to manage and are instantly in place.
- **No worries about lost parcels, high shipping costs, or damaged products** showing up at your member's door.

With physical products, you:

- **Have a product you can market offline at conventions,** craft fairs, etc.

If it seems like the benefits of digital products outweigh the advantages of going with physical products, that is because it is very true.

Let that sink in for a moment - **digital products are cheaper to produce, easy to deliver, and can be updated at a moment's notice!**

Think about it – which option is better for someone who is just starting out with his or her first membership site? Which one will provide the immediate satisfaction that people tend to expect when they pay to join a membership site?

**Without a doubt, going with digital products
is bound to be your best approach.**

Now, let's get into some of the important aspects of your digital products.

Deciding What Kind of Digital Products to Offer

You are probably already know all about ebooks and how easy they are to purchase and download. **But that option is only one of many different digital offerings you can create and have available to your loyal members.**

Here are just a few ideas to get you thinking.

a. Videos

Ever spent any time on sites like MySpace? Notice how many videos are being shared? There is a reason for that.

People love to watch videos. They like funny videos, music videos, happy videos, sad videos, and car crash videos, just to name a few.

They also like informational videos.

Suppose for a moment you decided to put together a membership site that is all about restoring cars. You are able to create a great fifteen minute video that takes the viewer through the basic steps of cleaning the carburetor of a 1965 Ford Mustang.

How much traffic do you think you could drive to your site with a how-to video like that? And how much you think your members would pay to download that video for future use?

Whatever the subject of your membership site, **there is a good chance you can produce a video presentation that will draw attention and generate plenty of downloads.**

And **if you charge just the right price**, you can make a pile of money on the product, since it classifies as an “evergreen” – that is, the subject matter doesn’t grow stale with time.

Formatting your videos is important too. To make sure you cover all the bases, offer at least two formats:

1. One will be formatted specifically for **slow connections**, like dial up services.
2. The other can be formatted to work on **more robust connections**, such as DSL or high speed wireless.

Folks who can only have dialup in their remote locations will appreciate the fact you too the time. People who normally use high speed but are reduced to using dialup when traveling will also be happy they can still access and download the videos even if they are not at home.

Take a minute and think about the market you’ve chosen.

Come up with at least three basic ideas for videos that you know you could create with very little cost.

You may be surprised how easy the ideas begin to flow.

b. Audio Files

While video is huge, **there is still a place for an audio file as well.**

Here are some reasons why:

- **Your hungry market may include potential members that are still using dial up services.** Ever tried to download a movie on dialup? It takes a long, long time. But an audio file can download with relative ease even on a 56k connection. Just about anybody can download and store an audio file.
- **Audio is super cheap to produce.** You will have next to nothing in the development costs, making it very easy to begin turning a profit with just a few sales.
- **Audio takes very little space on your server (compared to videos).** That means you can have lots more options to choose from and pay less bandwidth costs.

When it comes to format, stick with something that will work with the media players most people have on their computers. That will save you a lot of trouble.

Also, remember the trick about offering your videos in more than one speed? Do the same thing with your audio files. **Offer a slow connection transmission that will work well on dialup, and at least one more option that will work well with a DSL or other high-speed connection.** That way you give your members options, which they will appreciate.

Since audio files are so easy to create, **you can easily add to your library of offerings periodically and earn some repeat business from your members.**

And if there is fresh product going up now and then, they are very likely to spread the word to their friends.

c. Text Products

While ebooks are the first thing that comes to mind when you think of digital text products, they are by no means all there is.

In fact, **depending on the nature of your membership site, there is a whole world of text products you can offer your members,** like:

- **Letter templates.** Everybody needs help writing some type of letter now and then. You can create a nice downloadable package of basic templates that will address this need.
- **Event Planning workbooks.** Whether organizing a cookout or planning a wedding with five hundred guests, there are certain things you need. Lay out the steps of planning different types of social events. Include checklists and other valuable helps.
- **White Papers.** So many people in so many different lines of work can make use of white papers that have to do with topics related to the market your membership site is focused on. Plus, they are not that hard to produce or to update if the need arises.

- **Business forms.** Resumes, invoice templates, and other common business forms may be a good fit for your membership site. They are just as easy to produce as the rest, and can also be bundled into a single download for ease.
- **Of course, there is the ebook as well.** Even though there are electronic books scattered all over the Internet that does not mean you can include a few as part of the perks your paying members can access. Just make sure they are original, timely, and are relevant to your audience.

Keep in mind that you want to offer these text products in formats that anyone can use. **Many of them can be created and saved as PDF files; people can still fill in the blanks, but they won't be able to modify your proprietary format.** Even if someone does not have PDF creation software, they can download a reader free of charge.

d. Access to Live or Canned Seminars

This type of product delivery can be huge.

Live presentations often have the advantage of allowing attendees to actively participate in some manner, such as text messaging questions to the speakers.

But don't rule out creating a nice bank of canned seminars on different subjects. The advantage there is that **members can access and download the seminar when they have the time to enjoy it,** rather than having to rearrange their schedules to attend.

Whether providing a portal to attend a live seminar or simply allowing access to archived seminars from the past, this can be a nice perk for your members.

e. Consultations

If your membership site is aimed at providing advice on matters that are of some importance to your members, **offering consultations with an expert can be a great way to go.**

Your members get ideas from experts and also get answers to questions that are bothering them.

Remember that a consultation is essentially a two-way communication in real time. You can provide the consultation using messaging software, or do a VoIP application to carry voice communication over the Internet.

That way, **your expert and your member can discuss matters related to the subject matter of the consultation with ease.**

f. Tools and Software

It never hurts to **consider adding a few simple software programs that your members can download.**

You can go with games that are have a theme that dovetails with the focus of your membership site, or maybe offer simple programs that can seek out adware and spyware and remove it from a hard drive.

Even something like a registry clearing tool would probably be a big hit with just about any membership site.

As you can see, **there are all sorts of options of what type of products you can deliver to your members.**

When considering these and other product options, keep these three questions in mind:

- Would I use this product if I were a member of this site?
- **Is this product interesting enough to make me want to download it?**
- Will this product be something that can sell any time of year?

If you can say yes to these three questions, then chances are you have a winner.

Developing New Products Along the Way

While you may have a great roster of products when you launch the site, there is always room for a little more.

You want to periodically develop and offer new products from time to time for two very good reasons:

- 1. People like to see something new.** Just as you will freshen your content from time to time, you want new products to feature. They will keep members coming back to see what is new and what they may want to download.

2. You can use the new products in your promotional campaigns. If people know you just developed a great new video on how to save a bundle under the new tax laws, they are likely to sign up for your site and pay the monthly fee or buy the privilege of downloading the video on a one-time basis.

One good way to keep yourself on track with the development of new product is to set up your own schedule ahead of time.

Also **put together a basic list of action items to remind you when the time is right to launch a new product.**

Over time, both you and the members will get in the habit of expecting new products to pop up.

You can even do ahead and **brainstorm ideas for new products in advance, then work on them at your leisure.**

This approach ensures you always have something in the pipeline that will make the site bigger and better.

Deciding How Often to Deliver New Products

Along with deciding what type of products you want to deliver to your members, there is also the matter of **how often you will make new products available.**

The trick is to have something new on hand often enough to keep the members coming back, but NOT so often that they can't muster up any excitement when you offer yet another new product.

Many membership sites choose to go with new offerings on a weekly or monthly basis. Both approaches are perfectly workable, depending on the focus and purpose of your web site.

To help you make a decision on how often to deliver product, **here are some questions you need to ask yourself.**

- How often would a new deliverable generate some buzz among the site members?
- **How often can you develop and launch a new deliverable without taking away from other essential matters related to managing the site?**
- Does your hungry market normally need some advance publicity before actually unveiling a new deliverable?
- **What type of consistent schedule do you need to release something that is really good, rather than just something released for the sake of being released?**

As you can tell by the questions, the type of frequency you choose to release new deliverables rests on two specific criteria: **what is best for your members and what is best for your business.**

It is up to you to find that perfect balance between keeping the interest of your members – and attracting new ones – and making the best use of your resources.

Along with doing a little self-examination, there are a couple of other tools you can use.

- **Take another look at the competition.** Make it a point to check back every few days and see what is new. If several similar sites are releasing some new type of deliverable on a weekly basis, you may want to consider doing the same.
- **Put message boards and forums to good use.** Find a few that seem to have a steady flow of postings each day. Make it known you are putting together a membership site that has to do with your particular focus and ask them for suggestions on what to include.

Bonus for using these two resources: **Not only can you get some idea of how often to release a new deliverable, but you may also get some good ideas on what kind of deliverables people are looking for.**

Keep in mind that the deliverable frequency you choose during the first months of your membership site is NOT carved in stone. As you begin to build up your membership, **make sure there is a mechanism for them to submit suggestions.** You may find that you need to adjust the delivery time on new products a little one way or the other.

Setting Up the Delivery Process

One of the main problems with many membership sites is that going through the process to claim a deliverable is so convoluted that the member actually gets disgusted and loses interest. That is a problem you want to avoid.

Your choice of hungry market will influence how you set up the delivery process. Depending on the level of technical savvy and how likely your clients are to use something other than dialup, you will want to consider several different methods of delivery.

Here are some ideas:

- **Take advance orders for new digital products.** Create a splash page that can be accessed from your home page. Let your members place their orders and then do a mass send at the end of a specified period.
- **Use autoresponder software to manage immediate delivery.** When a member places the order, it is immediately processed and the member is rewarded with a quick response.
- **Use automated downloads.** As part of the delivery process, have a processed order immediately take the member to a page to initiate a download. This will work for both software and for documents such as ebooks.

- **Attachments.** Alternatively, you can have the transponder generate an email with an attachment to your member at once. The advantage here is that your member does not have to wait for the download. Instead, the file sails into the Inbox and the member can open and load the new deliverable at his or her convenience.

Keep in mind **there is no right or wrong way to set up your delivery process.** What works very well in one environment and with one market sector will not work at all with a different one.

You may need to try a few different things before you hit on the best approach for the type of digital products that you intend to provide via your membership site.

Whatever means you use, **always remember to do the following:**

- **Keep it simple.** It is okay to use a lot flash and fanfare while promoting the new deliverable. But once it gets down to entering the order information, make sure the order page is relatively clean and unencumbered. The faster the order page loads, especially on slow connections, the less chance that the member will get frustrated and leave the page before it is ready to submit.
- **Consider auto-fulfillment for some fields on the order form.** If you really want to speed things up, have such fields as the person's name and delivery information appear fulfilled. This, of course, assumes that the item is ordered by members who are logged into the site.

- **Always provide the member a chance to review the order before final submission.** This is a nice touch that your members will appreciate. It will also save you time and effort, since it gives members a chance to double check and make sure they ordered the item they really wanted.
- **Always have the delivery system designed to confirm receipt of the order and to thank the member for placing the order.** Again, this is one of the little things that will set you apart from others and help generate rapport between your site and the member.
- **One final exercise to try before you start building your order fulfillment process.** Think about a member site you visit frequently. If you are there often, you probably like the site and have request products from them before. What did you really like about the ordering and fulfillment process? What did you not like?

Your own experience with being the recipient of a delivery provides you with the ideal chance to avoid including some of the factors that caused you heartburn in the past. At the same time, it also gives you the opportunity to include anything that really made the order and delivery a positive experience for you.

While there is really no one component of your member site that does not depend on the others in order to be successful, **your ordering and delivery process is one component that can either make you a rousing success or close doors forever.**

Plan your delivery process with a great deal of care, and it will be an asset rather than a liability.

Creating Content – Who Does It?

The bottom line is that you cannot delivery product unless someone is coming up with the content. This is true for ebooks, seminars, audio and video presentations, and a number of other digital products.

So who is going to create all this content?

There are several possible answers to that question. Here are some possibilities:

a. You

Maybe you have a way with words. If so, there is no reason you cannot craft your own content. After all, you know your vision for the membership site better than anyone. People who are very creative will find this one of the most fulfilling aspects of putting together the site.

Of course, **you do need to take a few things into consideration:**

- **Time may be a problem.** There are a quite a few action items to address during the development, launch and operation of a membership site for the first several months. Will you be able to carve out enough time to put together deliverables that will be of the quality you want to present on your site?

- **Ideas may become difficult to come up with.** At first, you are very likely to be bubbling over with concepts and ideas. But after you reject the ideas that are not feasible, you may be left with a small pool to work with. Once you exhaust that first set, you have to come up with more ideas, or the site will suffer.
- **Creative burnout.** No matter how much you love crafting content, there will be days when it is just more than you brain can handle. Your pride and joy may become a burden, one more task you have to make your way through.

Not everyone who decides to create his or her own content has these problems. In fact, some site owners have a great time with this part and never grow tired of it. Just be sure you are up to the task.

b. Freelancers

If you want to focus your attention on other matters related to the web site, outsourcing your content needs to freelance writers and other professionals with the technological know-how to create what you need is the way to go.

Advantages of this approach include:

- **Quick turnaround.** Where you have to divide your time between developing content for your site and deliverables, the freelancer can work on the project while you see to other matters. Chances are you will get everything done a lot quicker.

- **Fresh perspectives.** By using more than one outsource professional, you are not limited to just your ideas and your approaches. There is a good chance a freelancer will think of approaches and ways to present information that never occurred to you.
- **You still have control.** Ultimately, you are the one buying the content. As such, you have the ability to change it any way you like. This means the final product will still reflect your style, your goals, and your purposes.
- **Outsourcing to a freelancer is often cost-effective.** Think it costs you nothing to write your own content? Think again. The time you spend developing content could be spent on other aspects of the operation. The sooner your site is up and running, the sooner you start making money. Until then, you are losing opportunities while you try to do everything.

If you think about it, bringing in someone else to help out is the way to go. However, you can choose to go a different route than freelancers.

c. Joint Venture Partners

Another way to maximize your efforts is to take on a joint venture partner. This does not necessarily mean a partner for the entire project.

A JV partner may be focused on handling tasks and responsibilities that you prefer to not do yourself.

The right joint venture partner can take your basic ideas for content, develop them into viable projects, and then handle the details of the final product creation. In exchange, your JV partner gets the chance to share in the profits.

While that means less money for you in one way, **it will probably make it possible to generate more revenue** than you would have done otherwise.

Because you get to work on tasks that are really your niche, and your JV partner is focused on matters that make good use of his or her talents, everyone wins.

d. Independent Contractor

If you have the resources, **consider hiring one or two people who become part of your permanent staff.** They can focus on creating content based on your ideas, as well as pitching their ideas to you.

This is a little different from outsourcing your content needs. You may outsource your project to a company who in turn has several people working on your account at any given point in time. However, you do not communicate with the worker bees; **instead you are communicating with the business owner.**

Setting up your own independent contractor agreements allows you to and the people who ultimately create the content to develop an ongoing relationship.

This benefits you in two very important ways:

1. Working with the same creative people **allows them a chance to get to know your needs.**
2. At the same time, **you have the chance to get a better handle on what your contracted employees can do**; this information may come in handy later on.

And just to sweeten the pot, consider this: You don't have to withhold taxes on independent contractors. You simply file a form and submit it to the government each year to show what you paid. That's it.

Keep in mind that content creation is not an either/or situation.

There is no reason you can't develop your own content when you want, outsource the task at other times, and may be keep one independent contractor around to take up any slack.

The important thing is to choose the method or the combination of methods that will work best in your particular situation.

Defining your USP – What Sets You Apart From the Pack?

One of the reasons you spent so much time investigating the competition is that **you want to do something other than simply replicate what others has done.**

True, you want to identify features and products that help them reel in new members, **but you want to be more than just a clone**.

**You want to match the best
and then go one step further.**

In other words, **you want to have your own “Unique Selling Proposition” (USP)** in place.

The “Unique Selling Proposition” or USP is nothing more than that which makes you stand out from the competition. **It is what makes people stop and give your site a second look instead of moving on to the next guy.**

Your USP is what compels people to take the plunge, join your site, and pay membership fees and maybe even buy a digital product or two.

There are many different ways to establish your USP.

Here are some examples of what could make your site unique in your hungry market:

- **The look of your site.** Maybe you make use of graphics, images, and other tools to make it clear you are a much friendlier place to hang out than your competitors. If people see things they like, and those characteristics cannot be found elsewhere, they are much more likely to join your membership site.

- **Various bells and whistles.** Maybe the other guys do a great job with offering downloadable ebooks, but they have yet to put together how-to streaming videos that are relevant to your chosen market. Use technology to offer something different in the way of digital products.
- **Offer additional incentives to become a member.** Maybe the other sites don't offer affiliate opportunities that allow members to make a little money. You can stand out from the pack by putting together a simple affiliate program that allows your members to earn points toward purchases when they bring new members into the fold.
- **Make the interface very user friendly.** Many of the look great, but require the member to jump through hoops to get where they want to go. If your site is easy to navigate while your main competitors seem to make it harder with each new release, you are sure to gain a lot of support from potential members.

There is no one strategy or tool that is considered the ultimate USP. **What is very unique in one market is commonplace in another.** Your job is to know your competition well enough to see what is falling through the cracks.

Remember **you want to match them all the way down the line in the really important stuff. But you also want to do one better and create content, services, and digital products that take the current standards up a notch.** Doing so allows you to do everything they can do, and still offer members a little something extra.

Customer Retention – Holding On to What You Have

While your focus is more along the lines of launching your membership site and drumming up members, **it is not too early in the process to think about customer retention.**

The fact is that members do come and go. Sometimes it is due to life changes. When that is the case, it really has nothing to do with you or the quality of the site.

However, it is far more common for members to abandon a membership site because somebody else make them feel wanted and needed. Even if the site is really great, people tend to go where they feel like their presence is appreciated.

Your job is to make sure your members feel appreciated from the moment they sign up all the way through to the day they die.

In order to get off on the right foot with your customer retention efforts, there are few things you need to understand:

- **Customer retention begins the moment a prospect becomes a customer.** This means you have to make sure a member feels wanted and needed immediately. Otherwise, the relationship will never have the chance to gel.

- **Customer loyalty does not just happen.** It has to be earned. If you want to hang on to your customers, you have to take steps to cultivate it.
- **Remember that every negative experience a customer has with your site will cancel out at least ten good ones.** People remember the negative longer than they do the positive.
- **It is harder to win back a lost customer** than it is to keep them happy in the first place.

Let's look at each of these points in more detail.

a. Customer Retention

One of the reasons many companies experience revolving door syndrome is because once the initial sale is complete, they turn their attention away from the new customer and are off seeking more new customers.

Just like a newborn baby, that **new customer needs to be nurtured and cared for until he or she is fully at home with your site.** Otherwise, any initial enthusiasm they had for your membership site will quickly dissipate.

At that point, **they are likely to go out the door and never come back.**

In order to prevent new customers from coming in the front door and immediately leaving through the back, **you need to develop mechanisms that convey to the customer that he or she is considered a valuable part of the site.** There are several ways you can go about doing this:

- **Get the customer involved.** People tend to hang around if they have something to do. Add a forum, chat feature or create some type of interactive game that allows members to gather and exchange ideas or just pass the time of day.
- **Make it easy to submit feedback about the site.** One way to do this is add an icon to every page of the site that allows the member to submit ideas while they are still fresh.
- **Consider adding a blog to your membership site,** if you don't already have one. Make it possible for members to add a comment (make sure you have to approve them first – that cuts down on spamming).
- **Create a newsletter that goes out to all members.** Once a month is likely to be enough. Set up an automated process for the new member to receive the latest newsletter no matter what time of the month they join.

There are other ideas that can be implemented to convey to your members that they matter. **Take a good look at your hungry market and make a list of at least five more ways you can make members feel welcome** and needed on a continual basis.

b. Cultivate Customer Loyalty

Loyal customers are far less likely to stray, no matter what incentives are dangled in front of them. Of course, **customer loyalty does not miraculously appear the moment a new member joins the site.**

“You” have to earn it. Here are some pointers on how to do that.

- **Live up to your promises – always.** That means delivering on time, responding to queries and comments, and really listening when members have something to say. If you get a reputation of being a membership site that really cares, people will stay.
- **Recognize your customers.** Begin with making it a point to officially welcome them to the site. This can be accomplished by creating an autoresponder message that is emailed as soon as the new member completes the registration for the site.
- **Give an anniversary present.** When a new member has been with the site for a month, three months, or six months, take the time to recognize them in some manner. Maybe you can send free ebook or offer a special buy one get one free deal as a way to show your thanks for their continued participation.
- **Keep members apprised of upcoming product offerings, expansion of members only services, or even a change in the look of the web site.** Knowing these types of things in advance helps members to feel like a valued part of the club.

Cultivating customer loyalty is well worth your time. If you are familiar with the viral marketing approach you already know this.

For those who are not familiar with the idea, keep this in mind: **Loyal customers not only come back again and again to buy things; they also tell their friends, relatives, and associates to come do the same.**

Later in this ebook, there will be a discussion of viral marketing – what it is and how to use it effectively. So don't worry if you are a little fuzzy on the concept right now. All will be made clear shortly.

There is no easier selling opportunity than to someone who knows someone that is already affiliated with your site, and has heard nothing but good things.

c. Keep It Positive

Nobody likes to go to a membership site and have one negative experience after another. **Your job is to make sure your members have a good time every time.** Or if they don't have a good time, you find a way to minimize the negative experience for your customer.

Here is what you need to do:

- **Have everything backed up.** If the server hosting the site goes down and loses data, you can replace it easily and quickly. This minimizes inconvenience to your members.

- **Safeguard against downtime.** Many companies with servers on site actually have two servers operating at any given time. When the main server has a problem, the secondary server kicks in. Customers experience either nothing or a delay of no more than fifteen seconds. If you are housing your site on your own server, this is well worth considering.
- **Never try to sweep things under the rug.** If something doesn't go right, don't pretend it didn't happen. Don't even try to minimize the problems that resulted for your members. This sends a clear signal that you don't care what they think or that they were inconvenienced. Acknowledge the problem and let your members know what you are doing to correct or overcome the problem.
- **Offer apologies for their inconvenience, even if the issue was something outside your control.** Sure, it may have been your web host that went down, or something the programmer did to disrupt the chat feature. But ultimately, you are accountable to your members when they don't get something they are paying for. Apologizing to a customer, no matter what the origin of the issue, sends a clear message about how much you value your members.

There are plenty of great resources available that get into the intricacies of competent customer care. Many of these resources are easily adapted to creating and maintaining a solid customer support ethic with a membership site.

Seek out some of these resources and put them to good use.

d. Winbacks – The Hardest Thing You Will Ever Do

Sales professionals often refer to a lost customer as a “winback” opportunity. **The goal is to bring a former client back into the fold, while at the same time helping them to forget all about whatever caused them to leave in the first place.**

That is NOT an easy thing to do. In fact, it is very hard to accomplish. Here are a few reasons why:

- **Former customers have a bad taste in their mouths.** Something happened to make them sever the previous relationship. With a new prospect, you don't have that type of baggage to clear away before the sale is complete.
- **Former customers have probably found another vendor to meet their needs.** If nothing is going wrong, they are much less likely to give you a chance to make your plea to come back.
- **Former customers now look upon you with suspicion.** They were done wrong once; what is there to prevent the same thing from happening again? Winning back a lost customer involves restoring their confidence.

Just because you are running a web site instead of selling widgets, that does not mean you can't use some of the same strategies sales people use in the real world to get a lost customer back.

After all, your site members are customers, and you do want them back, right?

Here are some ideas for winning back lost customers that translate well into your online environment:

- **Find out exactly how the former member perceives the events that led to the end of the membership.** The key word here is “perceives”. How humans see things is not always exactly how things are. But until you know how your former member views the relevant events, you can do nothing to help correct the perception.
- **Look at the events that led to the member choosing to leave.** What can reasonably be done to change things so that the same problem will not happen again?
- **Give your lost member a reason to give you a second look.** First and foremost, that means correcting the issue that made him or her leave in the first place. However, you may also offer some type of discount, or maybe free membership for a month. During that time, make sure things function as they should.
- **Convey that you value the lost customer and feel diminished by the loss.** If your member gets the idea that they are more than just a statistic to you, they may soften a bit and give you another chance.

If you are of the mindset that one lost member doesn't really mean anything, **here are some points you need to ponder:**

- **Popular thought has it that for every customer who leaves and tells you why, there are ten more that quietly slipped away and said nothing.** So a so-called "isolated incident" may in fact do a lot more damage than you thought.
- **Former customers talk – a lot.** If you do not at least make some attempt to reconcile with a lost member, you never have the chance to defuse the situation and there is a good chance you will be badmouthed to anyone who will listen. That shrinks your pool of potential new members.
- **Since every member of your site is a potential salesperson for the site, you really can't afford to lose anyone.** Word of mouth is one of the most powerful selling tools you can cultivate. When a member resigns, you lose something that has a lot of potential to help you grow.

In other words, **winning back that lost customer, or at least being able to minimize the damage done, is definitely in your best interests.**

Keeping your members happy is a lot of work. **But it also can make a big difference in whether your site grows or whether it stagnates.**

Before moving on to other important aspects of running a membership site, **here are a few random ideas for things you can do to cultivate customer loyalty, reduce the chances of losing customers, and hopefully resolve issues before a member becomes a former member:**

- **Offer ongoing incentives.** Every now and then, throw in something extra. If a member orders an ebook on managing employees, offer a set of business letter templates at no extra charge. People like to get something extra now and then.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** If your members feel they can alert you of problems they are having and are assured they will be heard, that goes a long way in defusing a bad situation.
- **Resolve issues quickly and decisively.** Even a member who is angry for some reason will begin to cool off if they see you are taking them seriously and are moving to take care of the matter.

Remember that customer retention is hard, and it is often a thankless endeavor. **But in the long run, you are likely to receive some great benefits.**

Setting Up Your Membership Site

Now that you've identified your market, know who you want to reach with your site, and have some idea of what type of deliverables will help turn your membership site into a money maker, **you are ready for the next step.**

It is time to **actually begin building the site.**

While it helps to have some knowledge about designing web pages and writing code to various services and functions, you do not have to be a computer science major to set up a functional and attractive membership site. **What you do need is vision and a few simple tools.**

"All In One" Membership Site Scripts

One approach you can use is known as the "all in one" scripting method. This is not uncommon for many different types of membership sites across a wide range of markets. **There are several benefits to going with the all in one strategy, including:**

- **One stop shopping for everything you need** to create a great look for the site.
- **Includes behind the scenes features that you need to run the site**, like easy upload of new content and an easy payment solution that allows payments to be processed quickly and efficiently.

- **Makes setup of navigation by members much easier**, as well as allows you to instantly establish services such as a password protected forum, chat ability, and other tools that will draw the attention of potential members.
- **Provides tools that you may not need today**, but are likely to need as the site membership continues to grow.
- **Makes it easy to turn up and turn off various services**, if the need arises.
- **Is usually far more cost effective** than acquiring individual tools.

It is possible to get everything you need to set up your site in one of these “all in one” membership site script packages. But do you really want to spend the time and the extra money running around looking for first one tool and then another?

This all in one approach will save you a lot of time, money, and frustration, especially if you are not a computer guru and are just starting up your first membership site.

Getting the Basics and Doing It Yourself

If you really think that an all in one strategy is much more than you need in the foreseeable future, **you can just go with a few tools that allow you to create a simple but completely workable site.**

For this approach, you need to make sure you gather tools that:

- **Provide security for the site.** This means keeping your member's information confidential, including credit card or bank information, login credentials, and anything else that could be considered proprietary.
- **Process payments easily.** This is necessary for both you and your members. Unless you want to go to the trouble of receiving payment information and processing it manually, use software tools to create a seamless and automatic process for receiving and registering payments.
- **Lock your deliverables from prying eyes.** You want to make sure there is no way for anyone to break in and grab your offerings right out from under you. This means you want to be able to limit access to them, and have the ability to lock them down if you are alerted to attacks on your site from any direction.
- **Something to engage the members.** It may be a members blog, a chat feature, or a forum. Regardless of what hungry market you are entering, chances are one of these three will help draw in the members.

Once your tools are gathered, you can get down to the business of putting together the membership site. **While the software tools will do part of the work for you, there are a few things you will need to structure yourself:**

- **Your sales page.** This is where you offer the chance to join the site and lay out all the reasons why someone would want to become a member. Keep it simple, easy to scan, but also informative, so people want to know more.
- **Member's foyer.** There needs to be a destination that members go to when they log in. Ideally, this could be a page that includes access to all the different services the member can utilize. In a sense, the foyer functions as a home page for your members.
- **Autoresponder.** You need this to confirm receipt of payments, generate email responses to questions, and any other function that is needed to let members know they are recognized and their request is in process.
- **Content for your pages and your digital products, as well as text for your sales letters.** Even if you outsource the creation of these products, you will still need to review, edit, and approve them before they go live on your membership site. Failure to do so could lead to some unpleasant interactions with potential members.

Other key tasks may also be necessary with setting up your membership site. Some will be unique to the market you are going after. Others will be relevant to offering extra features for different levels of membership (free, basic, silver, gold, etc).

The more tiers of membership you have, the more tools you will need to entice people to go for the next available level.

Time to Generate Some Traffic

While it may be okay in the movies to believe that "*if you build it, they will come*", that doesn't work when it comes to spreading the word about your new membership site. **You will have to spend some time proactively getting your site in front of people who are candidates for membership.**

Fortunately, there are all sorts of opportunities to market your site to your target audience.

Many of these resources will cost you nothing more than some of your time. To compliment the free marketing resources, there are also some paid options that you will want to consider.

Let's take a look at the options that are likely to result in traffic generation quickly.

Free Traffic Generation

You may be a bit amazed at how many different free avenues for marketing that you have at your fingertips. **Many of these are easy to use, and take no time to begin making the most of.** Here are some options you want to seriously consider.

a. Joint Venture Partners

Remember the discussion earlier about joint venture partners? **The right JV partner can bring a lot to the table when it comes to**

publicizing your site. Your partner can alert everyone on his or her mailing list that a new membership site has been launched and it is well worth taking a look.

Along with employing that in-house resource, **your JV partner can also be your gateway into connecting with other marketing resources that you never knew existed.**

In exchange for all this help, your JV partner will of course receive a share of the generated revenue. **Also, you will be expected to make use of your network to promote his or her deliverables as well.**

b. Affiliate Programs

An opt-in affiliate program can also be an effective way to spread the word.

Affiliates sign up to effectively act as your sales force and beat the bushes for potential members. In return for their efforts, they receive a commission that comes from the revenue that you collect as a result of their efforts.

In order to set up a working affiliate program, **be prepared to create portals that your affiliates can use to direct people to the site and still get credit for the sale.**

Advertise your affiliate program on your own web site, as well as mention it in forums you belong to.

Don't forget to post a notice of the affiliate program on any free news boards and classified sites.

Like JV partners, **affiliates cost you nothing up front and only receive some type of compensation when their efforts produce results**. That means you are never out even one penny as a result of these relationships.

c. Search Engine Optimization

"Search Engine Optimization" (SEO) involves making prudent use of **keywords and key phrases that are likely to make your web pages and advertisements rank high on various browser searches**. Ideally, you can choose the right keywords and work them into your content so all the major search engines pick up on your pages and thus catch the attention of a lot more people.

There are **two main types** of search engine optimization you should engage in:

1. On Page Optimization
2. Off Page Optimization

With **on page optimization**, you need to keep the following in mind:

- **Optimize the content on every one of your web pages**. That means use both primary and secondary keywords that are likely to be used in searches relevant to your membership site.

- **Beware of using keywords gratuitously.** Neither search engines nor Internet surfers like to read text that has words inserted for no apparent reason.
- **With the primary keyword, you want to make sure it is present on the page several times.** A good rule of thumb is try work the primary keyword into the text of the page roughly once every one hundred words.
- **Secondary keywords help to boost your place in search engine results.** Use them two or three times throughout the text on each page for a decent return without making your content seem choppy or disjointed.
- **Associate popular keywords with your site in general.** This can be done for free by submitting your site and a list of descriptive words to each of the major search engines. It is a lot of work to do yourself, but you can do it for free.

Off page optimization is simply the tools you use to create links or ads on other web pages.

These links in turn direct interested parties back to your membership site, ideally to a page where they can quickly become acquainted with all the reasons why they should sign up and pay you a fee in exchange for membership.

With **off page optimization**, you need to keep the following in mind:

- **Use every free classified web site you can.** Focus on the ones that allow you to include links in the ads. You can either have the link redirect to your site or go to a splash page you have set up to make your pitch to prospective members.
- **Set up a splash page.** All this page really does is make a direct pitch to prospective members, get them interested enough to want to learn more, and then take them to your signup page. Splash pages are easy to create and can really help generate traffic. Like your web site pages, optimize the keywords on your splash page.
- **Create a branded link to your site that you can use in your email signature.** You never know who might click on the link and find your site to be just what they've been looking for.

Having these tools in place make it possible for you to be prepared to make maximum use of another important avenue for generating traffic: writing content that appears on other web sites.

d. Article Directories

You've no doubt seen them from time to time. **There are web sites that contain articles on every conceivable subject you can imagine.**

What you may not know is that many of these sites allow anyone to create an article on a given subject and publish it. Once it is published, you have created another page that can begin to show up in search engines and ultimately direct people back to your site.

When evaluating an article directory, there are several things you should keep in mind:

- **How visible is the article directory?** You want to zero in on the ones that get a lot of hits each day. That increases your chances for being noticed.
- **Are there already a lot of articles that relate to the market you want to reach?** If so, that is a good thing. Chances are people visit that site often who would be ideal candidates for membership.
- **Are you allowed to include a byline and a link to your site on the page with your article?** This is absolutely crucial. While you may be able to mention the name of your web site, people are far more likely to pay you a visit if they simply have to click on a link. While some surfers may be curious enough to paste your site name into a browser window and initiate a search, don't bet on it.
- **Does the site operate with ads placed alongside your article?** If so, you may not only generate some interest in your membership site, but also earn a little PPC (pay per click) revenue at the same time. Use the ad revenue to go buy a hamburger or put it back into the business.

It may take a little effort to find the best article directories for your purposes, but some investigation with the right keyword searches will point you in the right direction.

e. Blogs – Yours and Others

Along with article writing and placement, **contributing to a blog on a regular basis can help move some traffic to your membership site.**

You essentially have two options here:

1. Start your own blog
2. Contribute to blogs that have some relationship to the subject matter of your membership site.

If you choose to contribute content to other blogs, keep these factors in mind:

- **Blog entries serve the same purpose as articles.** They still inform and also promote your site in some fashion. Sometimes this is accomplished by referencing your site at the end of your blog entry. At other times, it is finding a creative but logical way of including the link in the body of your entry.
- **Go for blogs that have some connection to your hungry market.** If your blog entry has nothing to do with the main purpose of the blog, people are much less likely to read it.

- **Keep the entry simple.** People tend to read in short spurts. Get your message out with as few words as possible – just make sure to get in enough about your site that people can have a chance to get interested in what you have to offer.

Setting up and maintaining your own blog is also a viable way to publicize your site.

In some ways, it is considered just as important as participating in more established blogs.

If you set up your own blog, keep the following in mind:

- **Resist the temptation to shamelessly promote your membership site.** Do so in a manner that puts the link in clear view, but does not interfere with the quality of any blog entry.
- **Use the text of each entry to call attention to the link over to your site.** You can do this by noting that if the reader wants to know more about the subject of the entry, it can be found on the “Services” page of your membership site.
- **Write fresh content on a consistent basis.** People who can count on something new to read once or twice a week are much more likely to bookmark your blog and come back repeatedly. They are also much more likely to pass the URL on to their friends. More about that a little later.

f. Forum Marketing

Participating in forums and message boards often helps to draw attention to you and to your membership site. But you need to observe a few rules:

- **Make your posts relevant** to the discussion you are joining.
- If you are creating a new topic in the forum, **make sure it is relevant to the basic subject matter of the forum or the category.**
- **Go for forums that encourage you to post commercial links and to include a link to your membership site in your signature.** Forget about forums that discourage this sort of thing. Finding creative ways to slip the data into your post is not worth the effort.

g. Web 2.0 Services

There is no doubt that it is possible to do things online that were not possible a few years before. These newer innovations are sometimes known as Web 2.0 applications/services. Consider trying these avenues to generate traffic:

- [Yahoo! Answers](#). This one allows you to respond to questions that are somehow associated with your membership site. Best of all, you can easily include a link to your site in your response.

- [Del.icio.us](#), [Digg](#), [StumbleUpon](#) and similar linking sites. These allow you to create an account and then share some of your favorite web pages with other members.
- [Squidoo](#) and [HubPages](#). List all your articles among your favorites. With a little luck, you will get a lot of traffic to your articles which in turn leads to more traffic for your web site.
- [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#) and other social networking sites. Here you get to set up a profile and include text, videos and/or links back to your favorite online habitats. With these, you can shamelessly promote your articles and your membership site.

h. Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is simply utilizing marketing tools that are passed on from one person to several others. **The approach makes it possible to tap into vast resources that often are overlooked by more traditional methods.** In effect, everyone who thinks your membership site is a good thing becomes a conduit for spreading the word.

In order to make your content appealing for viral marketing, you need to address the following:

- **Your content needs to be concise and focused.** Tell just enough to tweak the interest of anyone who reads it in not only visiting your site, but also passing it on to at least a few more dozen people in their social or work circles.

- **The content needs to be easily sent** as a link or pasted into emails for quick distribution.
- **All viral content needs to have a real purpose** that makes it obvious that visiting your web site is worth the time and trouble.

The nice thing about viral marketing is that you can use just use this approach to draw attention to all sorts of products. You can:

- **Create reports.** These build a case for the reasons why your membership site is something people need to visit and join. At the same time, they also inform readers about the subject matter you cover on your web site and provide frequent hot links that will take them over to the right place to sign up.
- **Emails.** One of the easiest ways to use viral marketing is good old-fashioned emails. Send a viral message to everyone on a qualified email listing, such as your private list of friends, family members and others in your business or social circle that you know. Make sure they are not likely to get upset about receiving an email about your new venture. Make your pitch to the recipient as well as challenge them to forward the email on to people they know.
- **Videos.** You can make use of these on your own web site, as well as several other sites, such as YouTube. Since the videos on these types of sites are either downloadable or allow you to email a link to the video page, it is easy for folks who enjoyed the video to pass it on to other people they know.

Of course, launching a viral product takes a little work. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Choose sites that are a good fit for your viral marketing tool.** For instance, a video on your membership site where you sell adult products is not likely to be acceptable content for a site focused on religious discussions.
- **Use the same range of methods you are using to promote your web site to also promote the availability of your videos and other viral products.** This will let people know where to find them in the first place.
- **Keep them simple and easy to digest.** Forget the fifteen-minute video; go for five minutes or less. You are much more likely to hold attention all the way to the end when you flash the URL for your site at the end of the presentation.

i. Offline Traffic Generation Strategies

Traditional marketing tools may also work well for you. Depending on the subject matter of your membership site, consider the following:

- **Direct mail campaign.** Use only qualified lists. Make sure to include the URL for your site.
- **Chamber Meetings and Local Business Conferences.** Participate in them. Give a speech on a relevant topic if possible. You will get to pass out a lot of business cards this way.

- **Press releases.** Send them out to the local media to announce the launch of your site.
- **Offer a free workshop.** This will draw in a few people and give you the chance to include information about your web site in the subject matter.
- **Flyers.** Take advantage of community bulletin boards and post a flyer about your site. If local laws do not prohibit it, hand out flyers outside a sports arena or slip them under the wipers on automobiles in the parking lot.

Look around for local opportunities to spread the word. These sometimes pay off in a big way.

Paid Traffic Generation

To compliment the free traffic tools you can use, **try these three options if you have some extra money:**

- **Pay Per Click Marketing.** Remember how you can pick up some ad revenue on your articles if ads are included on the page? You can also sign up for programs by all the major web browsers. An ad is designed for your web site and is placed on various pages around the web where there is a good chance it will be noticed and investigated. You can use programs crafted by Yahoo, MSN, Google and several others to accomplish this. Best of all, most programs require you to only pay for the actual clicks.

- **Buying Ezine and/or Banner Ads.** Other online PR professionals can design a publicity campaign built around placing ads in top of the line ezines. You can also contract to have banner ads show up on selected websites. While more expensive than PPC, the ads can be more elaborate.
- **Utilizing Offline Advertising.** You can also make use of glossy ads in print magazines, billboards, and other tried and true marketing outlets. You can even make use of a two step ad system; this is simply an advertisement that requires not only reading, but actually responding in some manner. An ad based around a question and giving contact information is one example.

While paid advertising may be outside the budget right now, there is no reason you can't prepare and make use of these methods at a later date.

Choose both the free and the fee based advertising methods that work best for you now, and add to them later.

Conclusion

Successfully launching and making money with a membership site is not the easiest thing. But **you now have all the basics to start making money with “your own” membership site!**

With some work, some imagination, and commitment to the cause, **you can turn your membership into a solid revenue source and achieve the financial security you want.**

Get busy today!

Calvin Woon & Jonathan Teng

IM Buzz Creators

Make Instant Cash With This Report!

You can easily make some INSTANT cash – in minutes. You get paid 100% commissions instantly into your paypal account for every sale you generate. Because of the low price, it sells very well! You can easily make back your investment 10, 100 or even 1000 times!

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And whenever someone clicks and buys from your link, you pocket the full \$7 – no strings attached. The money goes directly to your Paypal account.

If you wish to make money online, having a Paypal account is essential as many of the affiliate programs pays out commissions via Paypal. The best thing is, it's free! And you do not have to wait for months to clear as you can withdraw funds into your bank within a few days.

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Recommended Resources

1) How to Get A Domain Name

- [NameCheap](#)

2) How to Get A Hosting Account

- [Hostgator](#)

3) Autoresponder Account

- [Aweber](#)

4) Affordable Killer Graphics

- www.InstantKillerGraphics.com/discount.php

5) Affordable Sales Letters

- www.InstantCopyBox.com

6) Killer Videos For Your Websites

- www.InstantKillerVideos.com

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