

★ JOBCRUSHER HOME SEMINARS ★  
*Presents*

# Monetizing With Membership Products

SESSION #5







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## Introduction

Conventional blogging strategy says once your site has some articles and products published, the main goal must be to boost your website traffic, but we're about to discover that's not the only way to go about it. Sending lots of traffic to your site can take plenty of work and, depending on your market and the tactics you use to reach it, you may also need a substantial ad budget. If you shift your strategy a bit, a high traffic volume isn't always necessary to provide a substantial income.

One way to achieve this is to change how your blog is monetized. Make no mistake; your blog will still require some traffic volume so that customers will see your content, but consider the effect of improving your content and monetization strategy to make the

most of every visitor. Then imagine what would happen if you match that increased conversion rate with a recurring income from membership products.

By shifting the way you monetize your traffic, it's possible to break free of the constant, sometimes desperate, scramble for more traffic

In this book we'll take a high-level view of monetizing your site with membership products. There are plenty of different tools to achieve the form of membership and other functionality you may want on your site, but those are beyond the scope of this book, as that technology is constantly changing. The best choice of membership software even depends on your website platform; what works for a WordPress-based site will be different for another website platform. For our purposes, the goal is to outline the steps and considerations, in general to design a st

## Video Training Goes Hand-in-Hand with This Workbook

As with our other JobCrusher Home Seminars, you'll find video training that accompanies this guide at our website:

**<http://www.jobcrusher.com/membership-monetization>**

It's important to follow along with the video seminar as you complete the lessons in this workbook. The two go together and combined will get you the best results.

IMPORTANT: While we realize it is common sense, it's important to know that the results we share with you are not average or typical. We're sharing extraordinary results because it's important to showcase what's possible, but in no way should that be considered a promise of similar results. Your results may vary.

## Who Does This Membership Method Work For?

Membership product monetization can work as a supplementary product for existing websites with an established user base or it can become the central product to replace many of the other offerings on your site. Membership products can also be a perfect opportunity for a newer site that has just reached the stage when it's time to decide on what to offer the audience. As long as you offer your particular audience something

which they find valuable to receive or access on a schedule, there should be a way to design a membership product to fit.

Here are just a few examples of sites or businesses that can adopt a membership monetization strategy:

- Bloggers
- Coaches
- Social Influencers, such as YouTubers
- Brick and mortar businesses with an online presence
- Online stores with an existing product line
- Ebook authors

Practically any business with any type of audience can produce a membership product to suit their needs.

Since the Membership product and its associated area are separated from the rest of the site, it's also possible for membership monetization to coexist with other monetization strategies, such as ecommerce or affiliate products, all on the same website.

## Research Is Key

As with any other product, research is important. The more you know about the likes and dislikes of your audience, the better choices you can make about what to offer. Naturally, this means that established businesses may have plenty of useful research available, but there are techniques to adapt and evolve a product in response to user feedback, so even a new business can dynamically develop a membership product to meet the needs of a relatively unknown audience.

None of this is to say that plenty of passionate, targeted traffic is a bad thing, but, as an example, a site with about 100-200 visitors per day, with a modest email list of about

4,000 subscribers generated over \$2,400 on a single product launch in one of its membership areas, and that is after paying 20% to a partner to help with the product!

## Types of Membership Sites

There are several possible different types of membership site structures:

### Single Product

Normally a single product-style membership site offers lifetime access to a specific piece of content or a small group of related bits of content.

One reason to offer a membership product in an area on your site containing only one specific piece of content is to help isolate it from your other products. This can be important, particularly if you are working with other partners or affiliates. This type of membership product is still valuable to your audience, but it's organized to be separate from your other products and this makes it simple to track performance metrics, like engagement, sales, and earnings, without other parts of your site having too much direct influence.

Another important advantage is that this is one of the simplest types of membership products to make. You create valuable content for the audience and then buyers gain exclusive access to the membership area.

### Monthly/Recurring

Also known as a continuity product, this can be a very popular type of membership site, both for the audience, and for the owner/administrator of the product. With a monthly/recurring membership product, members pay a monthly fee for access to the content in the membership area. This fee can be almost anything that matches the perceived value of the content. It is also possible to bill at other intervals, such as quarterly or weekly, but monthly is the most common interval, by far.

There are some challenges to face with the continuity membership site.

You must keep generating new content with a good perceived value to retain members. Otherwise, your customers will abandon their recurring payments. The members will evaluate how much new and valuable content they perceive being added to the membership area versus how much the membership costs them each month.

If part of the perceived value of the recurring membership is related to community participation in some sort of social group or forum, then it is vital to quickly reach a 'critical mass' of members, or else nobody will participate, and the value of that community aspect diminishes.

Although many people see the pressure of operating a continuity membership site as a negative, the forced structure of needing to produce and publish new content on a schedule can sometimes be helpful.

The strongest benefit of a continuity membership site to you, the site owner, is the regular monthly income.

Keep in mind: Selling continuity courses *is very different* from selling one-off courses!

One option that may work with some continuity products, in some markets, is to offer a one-time payment alternative to the monthly payment structure. Often, if you offer lifetime access for \$99.00, people will prefer that option to a \$20/month recurring fee.

#### À La Carte/Multiple Product

With this type of membership site, members pay for permanent access to whichever products they want from your catalog. Then with a single membership area login, they gain access to whichever products they have purchased.

Obviously, this works best once you have developed a longer list of products. New membership sites wanting to offer this type of membership product must develop the products first, otherwise, this is similar to the single product type membership site. A clear benefit of this sort of membership site structure for the user is that it is convenient to access everything with a single login. A less obvious benefit to you, the site owner, is that with a multiple product site, it can be easy to add a new product and then market it to a group of users who are already familiar with your brand. It is easier to sell to people who know, like, and trust you already!

With the à la carte type membership sites, it is also common to see lots of cross-sales. A person who buys access to one of the products is more likely to buy other products they can see, but not access yet.

Another feature of à la carte membership sites is that the site owner can work at their own pace. The pressure to release on a schedule is much different than it may be for a monthly/recurring type membership site.



It is possible with the à la carte style site to launch a new product as often as every month, if you want.

Not only is there a high chance that members will buy other products, just due to good site design, their access to the members area offers you some opportunity to sell any new products to a warm audience. Cross-selling in this way is a very powerful technique!

Cross-selling and continuity payments are two of the primary reasons that you do not need lots of traffic to your site to make a profitable business.

## How to Integrate with Your Blog

Website layout and design choices are important for selling membership products. Your visitors must see a cohesive platform and users must be able to easily can tell where they are. Of course, the exact look and feel will vary from site to site, depending upon the audience expectations and the type of subject matter, but you definitely want to offer a seamless experience between the look and feel of the blog and the membership area.

At the same time, members must be instantly able to tell where they are, in order to avoid disappointment of their expectations.

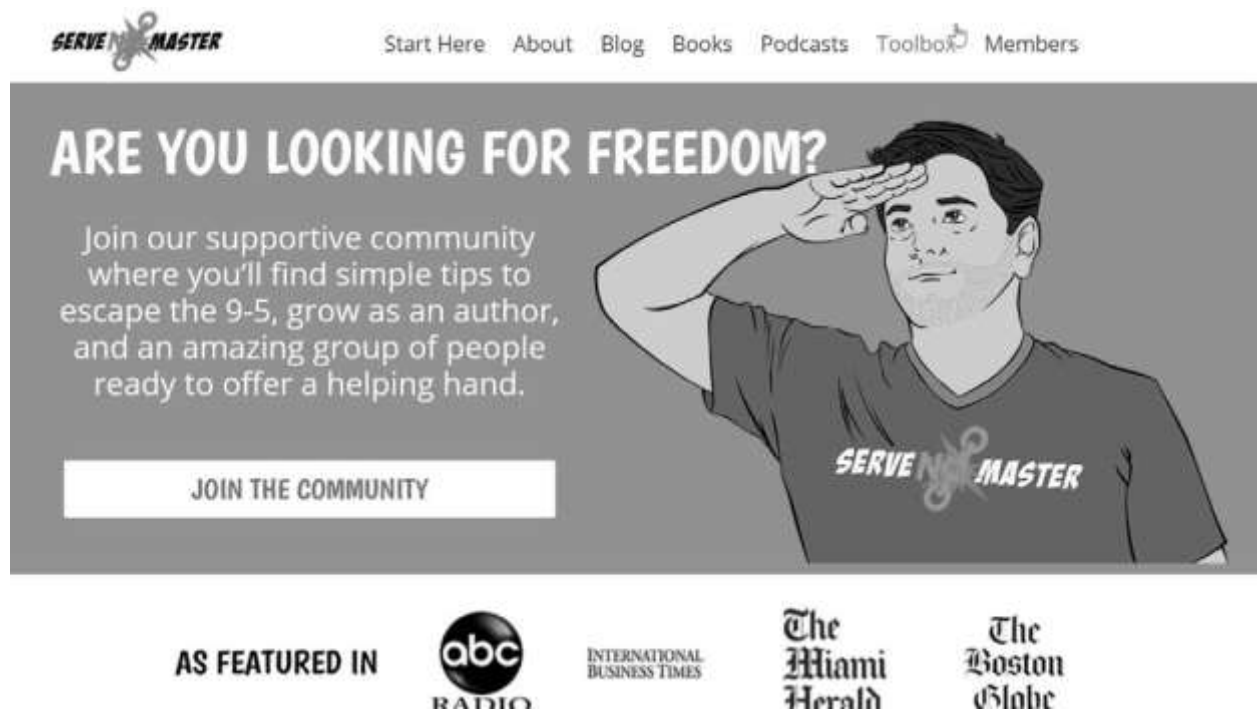
In short, the best membership integrations observe:

- Branding Policy
- Consistent Design
- Consistent Voice
- Easy Tech

If visitors log into the membership area and it is difficult or confusing, that will create a tech-support burden and may also result in refunds and chargebacks with your payment processors, due to the shaken trust of your buyers. Making things easy to understand and easy to find, regardless of browser and device will minimize this issue.

The most common complaint on most membership sites is not related to dissatisfaction with content, but difficulty logging in and finding what the customer purchased!

Here is an example of an à la carte type membership site's home page. It's really just a blog, but the home page establishes a style, a look and feel. That style then carries throughout the rest of the site...



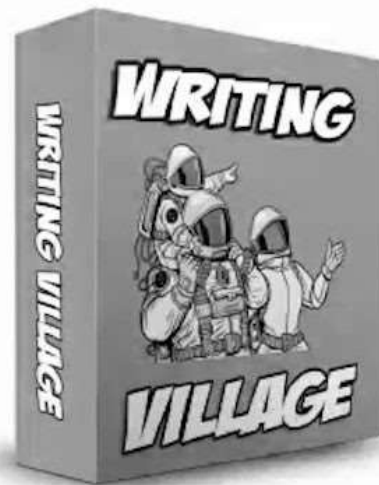
Here is the main page inside the members area. It's clear we're in a different location in the site, but elements of the design from the homepage carry over onto the various cover images for the different à la carte products available in the membership area...



Also, note that the calls to action in the members area, and indeed, on the home page, are very clear. This makes it very simple for the visitor to see and purchase additional products on their way to or from items they have already bought access to.

Every time members log in to the members area, they're taken to the main membership area where they can see the full catalog of products – ones they own and can access – and the products they have not yet purchased.

Here are close-ups of the design choices including the font and image style from the homepage and the product image, showing the importance of keeping a consistent look to the brand:



## Branding Sync

Taking a step back from that specific branding consistency example, note that maintaining the look and feel, even through the marketing process is important. Even elements of your site, like the opt-in form on your blog can contribute to the branding:



Keep the same branding elements in mind when driving sales by other means, too. The voice of your writing can have as big an impact on consistency in the long run as the general look and feel of the imagery you choose, so try and maintain that consistent ‘flavor’ throughout the marketing process, whether it’s in an email sequence to your existing subscribers, a sales page aimed at new customers, or even a video sales page.

## Sales Process: Engage Your Audience to Learn What they Crave

Whatever your branding choices, it’s important to learn what interests or problems they have which you can help solve. Since the monthly/recurring and the à la carte type membership sites require new products and content, your interaction with your community and subscribers offers a perfect opportunity to ask questions to help you develop new products and to improve what your site already offers.

Members will sense this attention to their concerns and will respond to that attention. This is one way to create fanatical followers who will help spread the word about you.

Driving website traffic to become email subscribers can be the quickest way to establish and maintain that communication with your audience. It is certainly possible to sell using a sales page (short or long form, or with a video sales letter), but whichever methods you try, aim to get some engagement with your ‘tribe’ to better learn how you can serve them.

Don’t underestimate the power of a well-managed email campaign in selling your membership products. Even high-quality traffic landing on a sales page is unlikely to convert as well as a list of passionate email subscribers you can reach out to several times to tell them about a promotion. The rapport built through contact with email leads will be much more effective than ‘cold’ traffic to product sales pages. Sales pages are still useful, but you’ll find that your own subscribers will convert on those pages better because your research from engaging with the email list, from asking people what they want, and from answering their questions, reinforces your positive relationship and understanding of your audience.

As you develop more of a relationship with your email list, it may even be useful to send your email subscribers to a simplified sales page that focuses briefly on the purchase link or checkout method.

Prospects from cold traffic will require more of a sales process to build up some of the trust and understanding you already have developed with people on your subscriber list. Cold traffic will most often require a long-form sales page with thousands of words and lots of testimonials to help build the understanding and trust to make a sale.

A VSL (video sales letter), consisting of 30-40 minutes of video material taking the viewer through an emotional journey toward your eventual sales pitch can also be effective on cold traffic. But to sell your membership products to prospects who do not yet know, like, or trust you or your brand, you'll need one of these more extensive sales processes.

If you want to make sales with the short and easy promotional pages, then work hard to get your website visitors to become your email subscribers and sell to them on the email list after they have consumed some of your content that way.

So far, we've considered the two extremes, but there is actually a third method. What about people who are not yet committed subscribers to your email list, but are also not completely new to your site? Let's consider the value and power of your blog article readers.

## Leveraging Trust from Blog Posts

Between the close relationship created between you and your email subscribers and the rather distant relationship between you and new visitors to your site, there is another group: your blog readers.

If your email subscribers tend to have a high level of trust and your understanding of their needs lets you develop new products they'll buy in response to a few emails, readers of your blog posts will also tend to have a higher level of trust than cold traffic will. A short-form sales page, consisting of about a magazine-page worth of text and maybe some imagery will often be enough to convert your blog traffic, so it can be well worth developing and maintaining great blog content for just this reason. Even if you do not have a current launch to promote, you can leverage the initial trust and confidence created by reading your blog post by encouraging readers to join your email subscriber list.

By focusing on building your passionate subscriber list in this way, your site won't need the incredible traffic volume you might expect in order to make a good level of revenue.

## Create Fanatics!

The strongest proponents of you and your brand will be those who started off without a relationship, but who grew to know, like, and trust you because you listened and responded. If these people perceive your response as a personalized, effective remedy to their problem, that will lead them to become one of your strongest fans.

## Product Ideas for Membership Sites

What makes a good product for a membership site? There are several methods that will lead to solid ideas for a membership product. Begin by making a list of product ideas and then choose the one that seems to be strongest. It does not have to be a long list, but it's better to brainstorm a few options and choose the best one first.

The last two methods that help with generating product ideas rely on having engagement with some kind of audience, so they'll work better once you have your site and email list under way. Even without an audience, the first two methods can be effective:

### Solve Your Own Problems

List some challenges you face, which you research, solve, and can explain to others who face similar challenges. This method is powerful because it includes built-in understanding of the 'pain point' solved by the solution contained and explained in your product. It's also effective because you have fresh, up-to-date knowledge of the difficulties and costs associated with the research, including the various alternatives and perhaps the blind alleys you went down to solve the problem, which did not work. There is huge value in showing people the short-cut to solve a problem, when you have direct and recent knowledge about that solution.

### What You Wish You Knew When You Started

If you have knowledge about a topic that you can share from a position of authority after long experience in a field, that is also valuable to consumers. Where the first method comes from a perspective of your recently discovered solution to a problem, maybe you can share some older, more established experience to guide people to solve a problem.

List all the things you wish you knew when you started learning about a topic and that will have its own sort of value for your membership. You can help your members avoid costly or time-consuming research, but your members may also learn from your mistakes, or mistakes you avoided through research and experience.

### Watch What Your Blog Visitors Buy

Depending on your market, you may be able to do some stealthy market research and make money at the same time. If you promote affiliate products on your website in articles relevant to your audience's interests, you may be able to compare the performance of those products to help guide you to create different products. If you spot great earnings on an affiliate product in one review article you write, compared to poorer affiliate earnings on another product, that is a clue that something about one of those could lead you to make an interesting product. If you're unsure what the numbers tell you, craft some poll questions to try to zero in on the real answer. Maybe the sales were the result of effective branding on one product versus another. Perhaps the price sensitivity of your audience was a factor – it could be many different things!

Just keep in mind that when people vote with their wallets, that information can be more valuable than a Facebook post like or an anonymous poll response.

### Ask Your Audience

Once you have even a small audience you can engage them with questions and develop products based on audience responses. Quick polls or surveys are an easy and effective way to get these results. In some cases, you may be able to do this effectively without an email audience! Add a poll widget to your site with a clear and simple question so that your blog traffic can see the poll and respond.

Naturally, this will be more effective the more traffic you have, but polls are a possible alternative, even without an email list.

## **1. Ask Your Audience What They Want**

## **2. Make the Product and Sell It to Them**



## Track Engagement

Use your blog audience engagement metrics to seed product ideas. As you add various blog posts to your site, you can watch for patterns among your visitors. Is one article getting lots of visitors? Are visitors leaving useful comments on a particular post that leads to clues you can follow up? Look in your website visitor metrics (Google Analytics or Clicky or whatever tool you use) to see which posts are your most popular.

Sometimes these clues will seem ambiguous, but you can quickly do further testing to confirm your idea. Ask your email list about their interest in the topic. Use a poll, like in the previous example, to find out more from your website visitors about their interest in the topic. Write other blog articles on similar topics to see if the interest and engagement seems to be consistent.

These clues can lead to a research-based path to creating a new membership product.

Even if you do not have many blog posts or your audience seems reluctant to respond to your questions and polls, you can do some very simple product testing on social media. For example, post a picture showing mock-ups of two quick products and ask the audience which they'd prefer to have.

This engagement-tracking process can also help you decide which products NOT to create! Once you have your list of ideas, before you do too much work in creating the product, use as much dispassionate data-gathering as you can to make sure you're going to spend time creating a product that will sell. If you ask the audience about interest in a product and the response is apathetic or even negative, let that guide you toward another product from your list of ideas.

Remember that, just as your list subscribers have more trust in you than those on social media platforms, or even strangers who have never heard of you, the same is true for poll results! The responses from previous buyers of your products may be more trustworthy and valuable than random, anonymous Facebook page visitors responding to a poll.

It's a good idea to even go beyond the polling/survey step before you commit to a full product. Run a small sales promotion for a product *before building the product fully*. You can lead the sales promotion to an email form for people to sign up for a discount coupon or simply for early notification and that commitment can be a good sign you should move forward with the product – there is no need at this stage to take money before creating the product, but having evidence of buyer intent can give you the

confidence to create the full product. A lack of buyer intent can give you the signal to try a different product, instead, so you can avoid a costly mistake.

In a sense, you can sell the product, then create the product.

## Fast Implementation Steps

Get your membership product up and running quickly, with a minimum of fuss and with maximum flexibility.

It is possible to get a membership site set up in just a couple of days, but there are some tricks to creating the content and delivering it to your members that will save you time and effort.

### Deliver Live Content AFTER the Sale

For your first product launch, after you have tested one or more of your product ideas, it is still a good idea to adapt as you go. For many kinds of content you can create some or all of the live content, such as video training via webinar, *after the customers have bought the product*.

If you have done the initial testing steps mentioned above, by asking your audience if they would buy and then by setting up a trial sales promotion where users can sign up for the first chance at the product, you have proven there's some buyer intent, but the best proof of all is through actual purchases. If only a few people purchase the product after you've spent a lot of time building the content, then that's a lot of wasted effort!

### Record and Reuse

With a product with live delivery, in the format of a webinar presentation, even if you have only a few people in the audience, knowing that people have covered your costs to create the product helps you determine that it is worth going ahead. You can take the recording of the live broadcast and add that to the members area as a replay for your future buyers.

But if nobody buys, then it's important to be able to step back and make adjustments to the process before you spend potentially weeks or months on the product. Maintaining this flexibility gives you the chance to add bonus content and adjust your sales material

to encourage more sales to perfect the product, rather than producing a relatively inflexible product before you know how much revenue your sales will bring in.

Provided everything goes well with sales, you can then repurpose the recorded live content and supplement that information:

- You can organize the archived replays in the membership area in bite-sized clips extracted from the longer live training.
- You can offer your members a transcript of the recorded live training sessions.
- You can provide infographics, diagrams, worksheets, or examples in PDF or other appropriate formats to supplement the live training.

Repurposing the main training helps to add to its perceived value and will reduce some of your after-sales support questions, since there will be a format of information to help clarify and reinforce it for everyone.

### Only Build After They Buy

Not only does building after the customers buy your initial promotion help avoid the waste of time and money from a failed promotion, it also means you can adapt the product, based on customer feedback. Let's say your product aims to demonstrate answers for a series of questions related to solving one main problem, but initial feedback during the purchase process reveals customers are expecting some additional information you hadn't expected. If all the content is created ahead of time, you may have painted yourself into a corner in some way. Not only could there be missing information, you may have delivered what claims to be a complete product and then need to figure out a way of adding bonus content that doesn't really fit.

## Turn Customers into Traffic Sources

Word of mouth is the best source of high-quality, passionate traffic. The best referral customers come from passionate buyers who become 'brand ambassadors' for you. Not only do these customers have interest in your product's benefits, they are also

prompted by the authority of their relationship with your brand ambassador – their contact who saw value in your product and pre-sold their friends for you.

With the right strategy, you can have customers who send their contacts and followers to buy. Here we are not talking about affiliates for your product, necessarily, but fans and buyers who are so delighted by their purchase that they encourage others to become your customer, so it's vital that those first customers, your potential brand ambassadors understand those benefits.

Having brand ambassadors is critical because it is what causes your business begins to self-perpetuate. Remember, we're trying to optimize the membership site so that, even with a relatively small volume of visitors, you can have a high sales rate and a good income. Traffic referred by your passionate buyers should out-perform nearly any other kind of new customer you could reach via advertising!

So far, we've been talking about an ultimate version of a brand ambassador, who goes out of their way all the time, consistently selling your product to the world. These are not unheard-of, but they are rare. More commonly, you'll inspire lots of fans with somewhat lesser passion, but who are collectively still very valuable. These are people who comment on your blog or your Facebook page, who share your content via social media or email to their own network of friends. Sometimes these people will have little discernable effect, but sometimes a few of these folks will have a good number for friends and followers who drop by your site or sales page at their recommendation. These are all things to encourage!

Reach out to your list, especially to buyers, via your sales follow-up emails and your thank-you pages. Many buyers will share their experience right after buying or after achieving some kind of milestone, realization, or success from the training. Those are powerful times to prompt them to help you spread the word.

Here are some useful things to encourage them to do:

- Share/like on social media
- Recommend your blog or products on forums. Many niches have influential presences on private forum websites not visible on Facebook or other more public forms of social media. Your ambassadors with access and authority there can make a huge difference!

- Comment on the sales promotions on your Facebook page or your website.
- Comment on or share your blog posts.
- Suggest to their like-minded friends and followers to join your email list, become part of your 'tribe'.
- Leave testimonials, either as comments on your article, or via email or other calls to action.
- Leave reviews on store platforms, if access to your product is sold elsewhere.
- Have them report their progress and successes, too.

### Reward Referrals

If you want to take the encouragement to spread the word about your product up a notch, you can offer some referral rewards. This doesn't necessarily have to be a complicated system. For example, you could just offer coupons or discounts or similar small rewards for other products, if people get folks they refer to tell you who sent them.

What rewards you offer and what you ask people to do to earn those rewards will vary depending upon your niche, your audience, and your product lineup. As an example, you might offer a flat \$10 discount for any customer who refers another person who buys your product. So, if someone refers 10 other customers they'd earn a \$100 course for free. Your referring customers will be happy, but it's ultimately a win for your business, because in that example, someone just helped you generate \$1,000 in sales.

Sales count for a lot, of course, but you could also reward other activities, if you choose to. Be sure to keep in mind the cost in time and labor to accurately and consistently follow up and keep track of rewards!

There are more advanced systems, as well, so that you can automatically offer bigger rewards to the ambassadors who refer the most sales.

At some point, you may wish to opt for an affiliate program, to ease some of the workload of tracking and managing the rewards, and to tie the rewards to performance in a systematic and logical fashion.

### Escalate to an Affiliate Program

If your rewards are cash or discount-based anyway, one alternative system is to set up an affiliate program. While there are lots of different software options to set this up, they mostly do the same basic task: users each have a unique link they can share that will record clicks and sales, so they can earn a certain amount of money or a certain percentage of each sale they refer.

Offering small discounts or even non-monetary rewards may work just as well for you, but when you decide to start awarding cash rewards for referrals, an affiliate program will help you track and account for the referral sales automatically. That can become especially important if you have a relatively large volume of referrals, but it also can automate some of the potential taxation you might be exposed to if you are paying out cash rewards.

If you find the right affiliate software or platform, the setup and execution can be pretty easy, but, just like with the other stages of selling and building your membership product, it's best to test a simple reward program first before committing to a more complex setup you may not need. Besides, while everyone likes cash, sometimes you can achieve the same results without paying money. There may be plenty of different non-cash rewards that get your ambassadors excited and engaged! Again, just poll your audience to learn what those might be.

# Membership Product Creation Checklist

Let's break down the overall process so you can review the essential choices in making your membership-site business. You can always go back to the relevant section earlier in the guide, but this point form list will help crystalize your choices:

Learn and evaluate the three general types of membership site to decide which one may best fit your goals:

- **Single Product** ○ Isolates a single, static product from other membership products on a website. ○ Best if the vested team may change from product to product on your site. ○ Access cost is usually a one-time payment for lifetime access.
- **Monthly/Recurring** ○ Content typically evolves, so regular updates are needed to continually add value for members.
  - Access cost is normally a monthly payment for month-to-month access. ○ Alternate, optional one-time pricing for lifetime access can alleviate pressure.
- **Multiple Product** ○ Many products in one membership portal. ○ Users pay one-time fee to unlock lifetime access to whichever products they want. ○ Each product inside the portal is its own, separate, static item. ○ Plenty of opportunity for cross-sales

Decide on Branding and Website Integration.

Plan a branding policy to maintain:

- ✓ Consistent design
- ✓ Consistent voice
- ✓ Easy tech

Saturate your sales funnels, even your emails with the same branding style.

Even various products in multiple product membership sites can share common visual threads.

To run profitable low-traffic membership site, engage with audience to learn their needs.

- ✓ Your loyal email subscribers are your best resource for future launches.
- ✓ Sales pages for 'cold' traffic need more complexity, may even require a video sales letter to convert.
- ✓ Use compelling blog articles to drive email list subscriptions, then focus mainly on growing and selling to the list.

Plan to cultivate fanatical brand ambassadors. Listen and respond to your members and they will bring in more business.

Develop a list of ideas for membership products to test:

- How you solved your own problems.
- What you wish you knew when you started.
- Watch what products your visitors buy.
- Ask your audience, using polls.
- Track user engagement for clues about topics they are interested in.

Techniques for Fast Implementation

- ✓ Prepare to deliver live content AFTER the sale
- ✓ Record, reuse, and repurpose content
- ✓ Build content only after they buy

Plan to turn customers into traffic sources (Brand Ambassadors)

- ✓ Consistently ask buyers and subscribers to spread the word about your brand & products
- ✓ Reward referrals to encourage your followers to bring in qualified buyers ✓ Escalate to an affiliate program once you outgrow a referral rewards system.

This overview should help you decide what kind of membership site is right for your niche so you can start designing the ideal membership business.