

# THE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO MEMBERSHIP SITES



Membership Building for Profits in  
the 21st Century for Ordinary Folks!

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# **THE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO MEMBERSHIP SITES**

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# Why Membership Sites are the Wave of the 21st Century?

Membership websites are the wave of the twenty-first century not for one reason but for several reasons. One reason is that the whole world has become computerized. Another reason is that membership sites make people feel safer and more protected.

Yet another reason why membership websites are the wave of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that people like to communicate freely with their peers.

There are other reasons why people love membership websites but one thing is for sure; membership websites really are the wave of the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Members of membership websites love them but the owners of membership websites REALLY love them!

We'll talk about membership website owners in a bit. Right now let's talk about why people do love membership website.

We who live in the twenty-first century live in a computerized world. Even those little old ladies who have never sat in front of a computer screen in their lives and probably never will do use computers.

They would never agree that they use computers but anytime they make a purchase in a brick and mortar store, they ARE using a computer when they use their credit card.

When they buy gasoline, the pumps that the gasoline is delivered from are computerized. There are computers in their cars. We all use computers every single day in hundreds of ways.

There is a prevailing fear of identity theft that seems to grip the land. Especially those who are not really computer savvy are concerned about identity theft and general online

safety. This is one place where membership websites have an advantage over others. People FEEL safe when they pay to be on a website.

They feel more secure than when they are out there surfing on the free web. People like the feeling of security but safety is not the only reason for the explosion of membership websites today.

Back in the distant past when the Internet was relatively new, communication was a one-way street. Those who owned websites communicated with the visitors to their website but visitors were essentially mute. Then the dot-com bubble burst and things changed dramatically. What we call Web 2.0 was born.

Web 2.0 is interactive. Communication is no longer a one-way street. Communication has most definitely become a two-way street. Website visitors don't want to just be talked TO they want to respond. They want their say. They want to put in their 'two-cents' worth, so to speak. People love two way communication!

Back during the days of Web 1.0 people did have blogs. You might not have heard of them. The old blogs were basically on-line journals that could be read by those who were invited to read them but the reader could not post to the blog. Boy! Has that ever changed!

Today you can not only read blogs but you can post to them provided that you are a member of the website. And, what do people discuss on these membership sites? The answer is everything from soup to nuts! The pros and cons of every subject imaginable are debated. And people love it!

People love membership websites, too, because they like the fact that the membership site has a limited membership. They like exclusive! Membership websites rarely allow foul language or flaming and people like that. On open websites there is not usually a monitor that forbids bad behavior or bad language and is there to enforce the rules.

Now let's talk about the advantages of actually owning a membership website and there are many, many reasons. One of the main reasons can be summed up in just two

beautiful words; recurring income. Every single month the very same people pay you. You don't have to sell them anything, they're already sold.

Recurring income adds up fast, too. For example; if you have a membership website that charges \$29.95 per month that means that over the course of one year you will make \$359.40 from EACH MEMBER and with NO additional overhead expenses. It's like a money tree!

Additionally, the owner of a membership website does NOT have to scramble for website content constantly. The members supply all of the content that is needed and they PAY the website owner to do it! What's not to like?

A membership website is a site that members find safe, interesting and satisfying and a membership website is a site that the owner finds profitable, cheap to run in both time and money. Membership websites are the wave of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because they work and they create a win/win situation for both owners and members!

# The Different Types of Membership Sites

There are membership sites and then there are membership sites. There is an old saying that nobody knows exactly where it originated that says, “*Different Strokes for Different Folks*”. The old saying simply means that as individuals we have different needs and different expectations for most situations in life and membership websites aren’t an exception.

That principle applies to both membership website owners and membership website members. There are many different kinds of membership websites. Some will appeal to some people and others will appeal to other people no matter which side of the fence you are standing on. There really isn’t a one-size-fits-all membership website. Let’s discuss the various options for membership websites.

## Web 2.0 Websites

One type of membership website that you are very likely familiar with is the Web 2.0 sites like YouTube and MySpace. These are social networking sites that provide tools for an interactive network of friends and include such user-submitted things as personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos.

Some of these social networking membership websites have come under fire recently because they have been shown to be play grounds for predators. Since these problems have arisen there is more scrutiny of members than there has been in the past. These sites are not likely to just ‘go away’ any time in the foreseeable future because they are very, very popular...not to mention profitable.



## Playing on Exclusivity

Then there are paid exclusive sites like the [NicheEmpires.com](http://NicheEmpires.com) (an undisputed industry leader when it comes to delivering info products with PLR and Master Resell Rights), Golf sites (which are owned by professional golfers and offer instruction that isn't readily available free on the Internet), etc.

These exclusive membership websites are designed for specific people and appeal to a group of like-minded individuals who are seeking instruction or information that can only be had on exclusive membership websites.

They call the Internet the 'information super highway' but these exclusive membership websites really do make the information super and the information that is provided is far superior to just the regular stuff that everybody gets for free.

## Getting Free Members – Going for Volume

Not all membership websites are not paid-for membership sites. Another kind of membership website is a membership that is free.

The objective of a free membership website is to acquire the names and email addresses of people who are interested in a specific topic in order to build an opt-in list. Still this IS a membership website and unless a visitor joins the site, they do not have access to some really good information that is not otherwise available.

## Community-Driven Membership

Yet another kind of membership website is what is known as a "community site". Sometimes membership in a community site is free and sometimes it is paid.

The idea of a community website is that there are a group of people who are all interested in the same basic topic but who go about accomplishing success in various ways. They get together at a community website and exchange information and ideas. Sometimes community websites will offer one-on-one training above and beyond the cost of membership in the community website.

## **One Thing All Membership Sites Have in Common**

Membership websites of all kinds have one thing in common. They allow for interaction between members. The old Web 1.0 was a one-way street but in this brave new world, communication flows in both directions.

You will notice that on all of the various types of membership websites there is a blog or a forum that affords a place for members to communicate not only with the owner of the membership website but also with other members.

The communication opportunities afforded by membership sites is one of the biggest reasons that membership sites are so very popular today and probably will be popular as far as the eye can see. People want to hear but they also want to be heard. They want to learn but they have information to share with others as well. Membership websites provide a place for the sharing of ideas and information.

There are different kinds of membership sites and different people will like different kinds of membership sites. If you are considering starting your own membership website, the good news is that there will be people who will like it and want to be members.

Membership websites are popular and membership websites are profitable. Recurring income is a very good thing!

# Ideas and Inspirations on Membership Themes That You Can Use

There are basically two things that you need to consider when choosing the topic of a membership site; **(1) your own passion about the subject** and **(2) the level of demand for information about the subject.**

## Following Your Passion

Unless you are really passionate about the topic that you choose to construct a membership website around, you are not going to be a happy camper. Passion is contagious and it is up to you to be a carrier of passion about your topic and to infect others with your passion.

But just being passionate about a topic yourself is not enough. The second part of the successful membership website formula is that there must be a large enough demand for information about the topic. The best way to determine the level of demand is to visit the blogs and forums that are dedicated to the topic that you are considering.

If you are passionate about the topic and there is a demand for information about the topic, you have the magic formula for building a successful membership website.

Many times eager entrepreneurs will see only the possibility of a nice recurring income and jump into a membership website without thinking it through completely. When you are choosing the topic for a membership website, the ideas are nearly endless but you must choose carefully.

## 10 Profitable Membership Ideas

Here are a few thoughts about topics that will very likely make for very successful membership websites:

1. **Fashion Tips:** Men as well as women are very concerned about their appearance. They want to look stylish without looking weird. They want to be 'today' but they don't really want to be 'cutting edge'. In short, they want to dress well and most people aren't confident about choosing clothing that is flattering as well as fitting.
2. **Medical Information:** You can't give medical advice as such. That would be called 'practicing medicine without a license' but you can report on the newest medicines and the newest procedures that are becoming available for a whole variety of human maladies. You can report on the results of studies and trials, too.
3. **Employment:** There are thousands and thousands of people out there who are looking for jobs. Employment ranks close to the top of everyone's list of concerns. Job hunting tips, job hunting information, resume writing, etc. are all topics of great concern to a great many people.
4. **Professionals:** There are national and international organizations for many professions like doctors for example but how about a website where those who sell gardening supplies can gather and discuss the trade or a site where beauticians can gather and exchange information?
5. **Relocating:** We live in a mobile society. People move from state to state and from country to country in pursuit of their professions or education. Relocating is a project that is fraught with problems. People who have relocated can help those who are about to relocate!

6. **Travel:** There are, of course, all kinds of sites where people can book flights and reserve hotel rooms but there aren't many sites where travelers can exchange information about their travels.
7. **Starting a Business:** Because of corporate downsizing and the exportation of jobs there are people out there who are almost forced to start their own businesses. They may not have ever considered starting their own small business but now that choice is becoming more viable. They want information and they want to talk to others who have 'taken the plunge' so to speak.
8. **Elder Care:** The baby boomers are reaching the age where they are caught between having teenage or college age children and elderly parents that all need their attention and their money. Some of these boomers have found creative ways of dealing with being the middle of a generation sandwich and they can share that hard earned knowledge with those that are just beginning the process.
9. **Parenting:** The most important job on earth that we are ever faced with is bringing a child into this world and guiding them safely to adulthood. New parents have questions and those who have been doing it for awhile have answers. Bring the two groups together and throw in some advice from grandparents while you are at it!
10. **Online Gaming:** There are those who are so 'into' online games that it seems to be the subject that demands all of their time and attention. The only thing that gamers like better than playing online games is talking about playing online games. Gamers like to exchange information about the online games that they play.

# How To Quickly Start Your Own Membership Site for Under \$500

It is a phenomenon! The Internet is simply packed with free websites. With a computer and an Internet connection you can access millions of websites for free and yet people very gladly PAY for access to membership only sites. The conservative estimate is that people spent 1.2 BILLION dollars on membership websites last year and that number just keeps going up and up and up.

People LOVE membership websites. There probably are as many reasons WHY people love membership websites as there are membership websites. I'm not really all that surprised at the popularity of membership websites. What does surprise me is that there not more membership websites out there on the Internet.

With that much revenue up for grabs, you'd think that there would be membership websites popping up all over the place but that just isn't the case. It isn't all that hard to start a membership website and it certainly isn't expensive. You can start your own membership website for under \$500. Yes! That isn't a misprint. You can start your own membership website for under \$500 and you can do it rather quickly, too!

## Getting a Domain Name

The first thing you need to start a membership website or any other kind of website for that matter is a domain name. Getting a domain name is not difficult and it certainly isn't expensive. There are no two websites with exactly the same name. A domain name is unique. It is your address on the Internet.

You can go to any one of a thousand different websites to get and register your domain name. Some examples of sites are GoDaddy, Register, Networksolutions, etc. Getting and registering a domain name will cost you no more than \$10 for a year.

(\*Note: It is better to register a domain name for 2 years because the search engines see domains that are only registered for one year as fly-by-night operations.)

- <http://www.godaddy.com/>
- <http://www.register.com/>
- <http://www.networksolutions.com/>

So let's allow \$20 for getting and registering a domain name. You've still got \$480 dollars left to get your membership website up and running.

## Hosting and Website

Now you need to build a website. There was a time back in the distant past when you only those who were technically inclined and HTML literate could build a website but that is just simply no longer the case. There are WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get) website building software programs offered that cost only a few dollars.

The Website Tonight software that is offered by GoDaddy costs between \$4.99 and \$12.99 per month depending upon the plan that you choose. There are site building programs out there that cost less and there are those that cost more. So let's say that you are going to take the middle of the road, so to speak, and spend \$120 for a website building program.

By the way, the GoDaddy program includes hosting and free email accounts as most website building programs do. So this \$120 also takes care of your hosting cost. You now have a domain name, a website and hosting and you still have \$370 left and you have only three items left on your list.

## Building Your Members List

You need an autoresponder. There are dozens and dozens to choose from. [Aweber](#) is the favorite marketers choice, due to its high deliverability rate.. The cost of an autoresponder is somewhere between \$0 and \$20 a month. We don't recommend using a free service.

Usually free autoresponder services include their own logo with each message you send and the number of messages that you can send is also usually limited. A paid service doesn't cost that much so go with a paid service. We will say that you are going to spend about \$10 a month for an autoresponder.

That means that your cost for a year will be \$120. You now have a domain name, a website, hosting and an auto responder and you have \$250 left. No sweat!

## Membership Software

Now you need a membership script. There are membership scripts that cost big bucks and there are membership scripts that cost little bucks. Since we are trying to build this membership site for under \$500, let's say that you are going to pay \$200 for a membership script and you can certainly find membership scripts for \$200 or even less that will adequately supply your needs.

You can get one [good membership software](#) for under \$150 which also has a shopping cart as well as secure and expiring download links.

OK...You have everything you need for your membership site and you still have \$50 left. Spend that on advertising. You will get some free advertising with your site building software but you will want to add to it.

Now you are the proud owner of your very own membership website!