BUILDING INFLUENCE *with*
FREE MEMBERSHIP *Sites*

Quickly & Easily Build Your Online Influence With Membership Sites ... Step-by-Step!

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Why Build Free Membership Sites?

What's not to like about a free membership site?

Internet marketers, email marketers, and Internet entrepreneurs of all stripes are quickly finding the many, many advantages to opening a free membership site for their customers and potential customers. Even savvy and well-established Internet marketers who have paid membership sites are jumping on the free membership site bandwagon because they can see the obvious advantages.

Paid membership sites are most usually **limited** to a specific number of members. This means that marketing is limited to that specific number. Limiting marketing possibilities is **never** a positive thing no mater what products or services are being promoted.

Of course, there are obvious reasons for limiting paid membership site memberships but the fact remains that a free membership site can be operated right along side a paid membership site and there is never any reason at all to limit the memberships available to a free site.

Three to six months is about the duration of a paid membership to most membership sites according to many paid membership site owners. Three to six months isn't very long in terms of Internet marketing. Once a paid member drops his membership, the site owner must then replace him and that can get expensive.

On the other hand, membership cancellations at free membership sites are **easily and cheaply replaced**. Marketing to the members of a free membership website is absolutely unlimited. You can continue to market to free membership site members for as long as you want to. Free membership sites are **easy to run** and they cost **almost nothing** and yet the owner is supplied with an almost unlimited number of customers and potential customers to market all kinds of products and services to.

Let's face it: Every Internet marketer must now have an opt-in mailing list in order to send bulk marketing emails. That's the law that went into effect with the passage and implementation of the CAN SPAM act. There is nothing anybody can do about it. If you send bulk marketing emails without the express consent of the recipients, you are subject to very heavy fines and the very real possibility of having your Internet business closed down altogether.

So... **why limit your mailing list to just a paid membership site?** Why not build a free membership site and gain an **unlimited** number of names and email addresses to which you have the legal right to send marketing emails? There simply is not satisfactory reason for NOT having a free membership site...at least not one that I can see.

Free membership sites are **easy to set up** and **easy to operate**. Of course, there must be fresh and timely content but that's a lot easier (not to mention cheaper) than constantly having to run PPC campaigns or paying for advertising in related E-zines to attract members to your opt-in list and thus gain their permission to market products and services to them.

We all know that **visibility on the Internet** is one of the basic keys to successful marketing. Getting visibility is one of the hardest tasks that most Internet marketers face from the inception of a marketing idea. All Internet marketers well understand the value of writing and marketing articles and E-Books, posting to blogs and forums that belong to others and doing PPC campaigns, as well as, exchanging links and paying for advertising in E-zines and newsletters.

With a free membership website, you can almost guarantee yourself, not only a **long list of customers and potential customers** but that **others will be willing to pay YOU for advertisements on your free membership sites** and advertisements in the newsletters that you send to your very impressively long list.

The shoe will be on the other foot, so to speak. Other marketers will be begging you to download and post articles and E-Books which they have written trying to gain that coveted Internet visibility.

Influence is another sought after and enviable facet of Internet marketing. When an Internet marketer gains influence over even a small group of consumers, they have a great deal influence among other Internet marketers, as well. When that pool of consumers is really large, a marketers influence with other marketers increases in direct proportion to the number of consumers that he has influence over.

With a free membership site, an Internet marketer gains access to an unlimited number of potential customers in his niche marketing area. By keeping his content fresh and timely he will gain influence over the purchases that the members of his free membership make and even when they make purchases and from whom. This is commonly known as 'clout'.

Paid membership sites usually have **limited** memberships. If the membership isn't limited by the marketer, it is limited by the number of people who are willing to pay an annual membership fee... and that number for any niche market IS a limited number.

On the other hand, a free membership site that **allows interaction** between the owner, as well as, with other members is affordable by everybody who might even be remotely interested in the products and services that the enterprising Internet marketer will be offering to his list.

The cost to members is a big fat **zero** and it just can't get any cheaper than then. Those who might well want to join a paid membership site but either don't think they can afford it or simply don't want to spring for the membership fees will certainly be able to join a free membership site.

Many Internet marketers who have paid membership sites also have free membership sites. Often those free sites are made up on customers or potential customers who will eventually become members of the paid membership site so it becomes a win/win situation for all concerned.

The bottom line here is that there is simply no reason NOT to build a free membership website no matter what niche market you are in.

You will have the potential of building an extensive opt-in list and there simply is no other way that is as easy or as cost effective out there!

What You Need Before Getting Started

Building a free membership website is just about as easy as falling off a log...well, maybe not quite that easy...but it IS easy. There are so many associated advantages to having a free membership site that the little bit of trouble and expense will be well worth the time and effort that are required.

To get started on building your free membership website you are going to need some tools. The first thing that you will need to secure is a web hosting service. There are actually two web hosting services that are excellent, reasonably priced and effective. You will have choices to make when you visit either of these two websites.

Web Hosting:

Host Gator
http://www.hostgator.com/

You will see that there are several choices of servers ranging in price from a measly $6.95 per month to a whopping $174.95 per month. The service that will most likely serve your needs for a very long time can be found under the fist choice of 'Personal Hosting'. When you click on the 'learn more' link, you will see that there are several choices beginning with a 'hatchling' account and all the way up to a Semi-dedicated account. The one that will most likely serve your needs is the 'Swamp' account. It costs only $14.95 per month and will serve your needs for a very long time.

Net Host
http://www.nethost.ws/

When you get to that site, click on the middle button that says '$14.95 more info'. You will see that you are being offered 500MB of disc space and a site builder for $14.95. Larger amounts of disc space are available for more money each month. I'd start with the $14.95 and then add additional disc space as needed. There is a Site Studio offered with all of the plans but it isn't free with any of them.

Domain Names:

Now you must have a domain name. Domain names are very specific and completely unique. When you type in a domain name, your computer takes you

to that website and ONLY to that website. To start with you should think up several possibilities for your domain name. Using your own name in the domain name will make it easier to find one that hasn't already been taken. You aren't very likely to find the simplest ones to be available so you are going to have to get a bit creative. There are others, of course, but here are two places that you can register your domain name.

Name Cheap
http://www.namecheap.com/

> Here you will see that it will cost you only $8.88 to register your domain name. There will be many offers for additional names and products. What you really need here is a domain name for no less than two years. You do not need to pay for anything additional that is offered.

GoDaddy
http://www.godaddy.com/gdshop/default.asp

> Here you will see that you can register your domain name for $8.95 per year. Again...you will be offered many extras but all you really need is to register your domain name for two years. The reason you need to register it for two years is that search engines really don't like domains that are only registered for one year. Spammers tend to only register for one year at a time because they won't be at the same location for anywhere near that long.

Membership Software:

If you are going to have a membership website, then you must have the software that will accomplish that. There are basically three sites that you should visit and look over the product offered on each site.

The first site is aMember at http://www.amember.com/. The package is $139.95.

The second site is Launch Formula Marketing at http://www.launchformulamarketing.com/. There is no price available without giving primary email address so check this one out for yourself.

The third site is Butterfly Marketing at http://www.butterflymarketing.com/. This software sells for $1497.00 plus shipping and handling.

Theme and Content:

As with every website, there must be a theme as well as content. There is a saying among Internet marketers that, "Content is King" and that's pretty accurate. The only way that you can keep members visiting even a free membership site is to keep it constantly updated and loaded with fresh and relevant content that pertains to the theme of your site.

There are many ways to get good content. There are article banks where you can download free articles for reprint. There are sites where you can get PLR material that will provide good website content. You can also hire ghostwriters to write fresh content.

One such ghost writing site Writing and Transcription Services at: http://www.writingandtranscriptionservices.com

Blogs or Forums:

Most hosting services (both of the ones mentioned above) have included a utility called Fantastico. This feature allows you to set up a blog or forum on your membership site. In addition you can install such things as customer support, content management systems, polls and a host of other things. You really need to poke around in your hosting service to see what all is available.

Help Desk:

Installing a help desk is entirely optional. It is, by no means, a required feature for a free membership site. The software can be found at the HelpDesk website at http://www.perldesk.com/. The cost of the HelpDesk software starts at $99.95. Although this is not required the HelpDesk software can be very beneficial. It will allow you to you to organize your companies customer relations to a database backed browser based help desk. This can save you a whole ton of headaches particularly if you have multiple businesses.

Okay, that's about it. You need a hosting service, a domain name registered, membership software, a theme and website content, a blog or forum and maybe a Helpdesk. This will be enough to get your free membership website off of the launch pad.

Building A Free Membership Site - Step-by-Step

Free membership websites can help Internet marketers in so many ways and they are relatively easy and inexpensive to set up that it's a wonder there aren't more of them. Don't ever underestimate the power of 'free'! Everybody loves 'free'. Those who don't have a lot of expendable income like free for obvious reasons but those who have plenty of expendable income LOVE 'free'... maybe that's why they have so much expendable income.

The fact is that people who are surfing the Internet are all looking for the very same thing... INFORMATION. Granted, they are not all searching for the same information but they are nevertheless searching for information... and they love nothing better than free information about whatever topic they are interested in and that is where a free membership website comes in.

There are two major parts to building a successful free membership website. The first one is to actually construct the website on the Internet. The second one is to get members to join the free membership website. Here is how to go about doing both of those tasks:

Building a Free Membership Website:

Building a free membership website is pretty much like building any other kind of website with just a couple of additions.

1. **Choose a topic for your free membership site.**

   This topic should be one that will attract the specific group of people to whom you want to market your products or services. In most cases you are advised to narrow your topic but in the case of building a free membership website, it is better to make your topic a bit broader.

2. **The next step is to register a domain name that reflects the subject of your free member ship website.**

   It is best to keep your domain under 20 characters if you can. Go to either Cheap Names (http://www.namecheap.com/) or Godaddy (http://www.godaddy.com/). Find a domain name that is available and secure it for yourself. Pay for two years.

3. **It is true that web hosting comes with a domain name but you need a web host that will allow you to have as many domains as you want on the same server.**

   Go to either HostGator (http://www.hostgator.com) or NetHost (http://www.nethost.ws/) and subscribe to a web hosting service.

4. **You will need a membership script for your free membership site.**

   Go to one of these three sites and buy the script: Amember at http://www.amember.com/, LaunchFormulaMarketing at http://www.launchformulamarketing.com/ or Butterflymarketing at http://www.butterflymarketing.com/.

5. **You might want to add a 'Refer a Friend' button, as well.**

   Two sites on which to get this program are http://www.sendtofriends.com/, and http://www.kcscripts.com/scripts/refer_a_friend/features.htm.

6. **You might also want to include a helpdesk option on your free membership website.**

   This is strictly optional but the site to get the program is http://www.perldesk.com/.

7. **You need content for your free membership website.**

   The name of the game for free membership websites, as for all websites, is content, content, content. There are many ways to obtain website content. You can download and reprint articles from article banks or you can join a PLR website and get articles that are much better. In either of these cases, you will need to do some rewrite on the articles to avoid the duplicate content problem.

   If you have the ability you can write your own articles or you can hire a ghost writer to write them for you. One good ghost writing service can be found at http://wwwlwritingandtransciptionservices.com

The above are the information and tools needed to build a free membership website (or a paid membership website for that matter). Now you either build your site or have someone build it for you. Your web host service will have features that will provide for you to set up a blog or forum on your website and you will need to include that when you

are constructing your website. Additionally, there are other features that will likely be included in your web hosting service such as polls or content management systems that you might also want to include in your website.

Promoting Your Free Membership Website:

Promoting a free membership website is done exactly the way any website is promoted. When you build any website the only person that is aware that it exists on the Internet is you so it is up to you to promote and advertise your site and let the rest of the world know where to find you.

You accomplish that task while you are building your own credibility. One will not exist without the other. A free membership website builds credibility and credibility builds a free membership website. There are several very well established ways to promote a website on the Internet...and the first three listed here are free.

1. **Write (or have written for you) short articles, 300 to 400 words, and put them into article banks for others to use.**

   Your resource box will include a link to your free membership website. The same is true for E-Book. Either write short 10 to 15 page E-Books or have them written for you. List these E-Books with E-Book repositories for others to use and be sure that there is a link to your free website on every page.

2. **Post to blogs and forums on other related websites after you join them.**

   Don't go in like gangbusters promoting your free membership site...that will get you kicked out. Simply include a link to your free membership site in your sig tag and post thoughtful and helpful information.

3. **Find link exchange partners and exchange links with them.**

   Since you are not actually selling anything it should be very easy to find link exchange partners.

4. **Buy advertising for your free membership website in related E-zines.**

   This is a very cost effective method of advertising. The cost of advertising in E-zines is usually less than $20 and the advertisement is sent directly to those

people who are going to be your best prospects for your free membership sites as well as for the products and services that you will be marketing to them.

Benefiting & Profiting From Your Free Membership Site

Okay, now that you have your free membership website up and running and you have promoted it sufficiently so that you have a very long and impressive list, you are ready to start reaping the benefits and profiting from your hard work. Your list should include the names and email addresses of those people who are vitally interested in a specific topic and the products and services that are associated with that topic. Remember that you want to promote ONLY products and services that are related to the topic of your free membership website.

If you have set up a blog or a forum on your free membership website, it will be a very simple matter to locate products, services and information that your members will be most likely to buy...they will have told you what they are interested in. They have not only told you what products and services they would be most apt to buy but they have also told you what kind of information they want. Let's face it...there really are only three basic things that can be sold on the Internet or out in the real brick and mortar world...products, services and information.

That impressively long opt-in list that you have built with your free membership website is an asset that can't be valued...it is invaluable. That long list will open doors that have been shut up until now. So let's start with joint venture projects that you will now be a welcome partner in.

Joint Ventures:

> The most attractive joint venture partners for all Internet marketers are those who have long lists of people who are the best prospects for buying products, services or information. Joint ventures can be used to sell any one of those three things. By engaging in joint ventures with other marketers, you not only have the opportunity to sell to your own list but to build your list to even greater proportions.
>
> If you own the product or service that is being offered in a joint venture, you, of course, have a greater opportunity for profit but even if you don't own the product or service, you still have a very long list of prospective buyers and you are an attractive joint venture partner so you will have more opportunities to sell products and services that are owned by others.

Marketing Products and Services that you <u>Own</u>:

Once you have built your free membership website you will have a long list of people who are interested in products or services that you own. By marketing to your list, you gain 100% of the profits associated with those products or services. You may already have a product or service that you have designed or constructed. It you do, that's great, but it isn't the only way to get one of either.

For example: you can have an E-Book written by a ghostwriter that, once you pay for it, will be your E-Book. You can list yourself as the author and even get a copyright on the work. It's yours! You can have an E-Book written for about $10 per page. The most normal pricing structure is selling it for $1 per 2 pages. So...if you have an E-Book written that is 100 pages long, you will have paid $1000 for the E-Book and you can charge $50 for it. Remember that you have a very long list. The first 20 sales covers your investment and everything beyond that is pure profit.

You can actually have a 100 page E-Book written for less than a thousand dollars but not a lot less.

There are services available on the Internet that will help you create audio and video products, as well. There will always be an initial investment, however, when you have others create products for you.

Marketing Products and Services that you Do NOT OWN:

You can find products and services that are related to the topic of your free membership website and of interest to the members of your site on such sites as Clickbank (http://www.clickbank.com) or Commission Junction (http://www.cj.com).

For those who don't know...this is referred to as 'Affiliate Marketing'. You can go to either of the above listed sites and sign up as an affiliate marketer for products and services that would be of interest to your list. You profit by making a percentage of the sales made through your website or newsletter.

Products or services for which you are an affiliate marketer can be promoted directly on the blog or forum on your free membership site, in a newsletter or E-zine that you regularly send to the members of your free membership site or through a specific marketing email that you send out.

Marketing Teleseminars and Webinars:

Remember that your list is made up of people who are deeply interested in a specific subject. There are experts that are associated with just about every topic under the sun and those who are interested in that topic know exactly who there experts are. They will gladly pay to hear what a knowledgeable and well-known expert has to say about a subject that is near and dear to their hearts.

It isn't hard to organize a teleseminar or a webinar. Both events can be organized and executed without a lot of expense. There is, of course, time and effort involved in organizing them.

Teleseminars are less expensive and easier to do than a webinar. The only thing you really need for a teleseminar is an interesting subject, a well-known speaker and a bridge line. You may want to include a recording and then you might want to have that recording transcribed so that you can sell it as another product.

A webinar requires a bridge line as well as some kind of demonstration such as power point and a way for participants to access the demonstration so they are a bit more expensive to do but you can usually charge a little more for participation in them.