

7 Membership Site Models and How They Work

by Ken Gary and Ryan Healy

When most people think of membership sites, they think of paying a monthly fee for access to a private member area.

Certainly, many membership sites work like this. But there are actually many different ways to build (and profit from) membership sites.

In this special report, we'll cover 7 different membership site models and how they work. After you finish, you should have a much better idea of how to structure YOUR membership site, what you'll need to build it, and how you'll profit from it.

We'll even give you a few real-life examples along the way so you get a clear understanding of each model.

Let's dive in...

Membership Site Model #1: "The Publisher Model"

The Publisher Model is probably the most common form of membership site. Members pay a monthly fee for access to the protected content that has already been published on the site. Value is provided by the addition of fresh content on a regular, periodic basis.

The advantage of the publisher model is that it is relatively straightforward. And if you've not committed to any particular publishing schedule, then you can publish new material on your own time, whenever you feel like it.

The downside is that members may cancel their memberships if the site is not updated frequently enough for their tastes. Even if you have 100+ articles already published in your private member area, members still want to see new content.

For this reason, you will probably need a plan or a system for creating new content. Whether you create the content or not is somewhat irrelevant. The important thing is that new content is being created and published regularly.

Another advantage of The Publisher Model is that you can make the content fully protected... or... you can publish teasers on your site to lure in potential members.

What is a “teaser”? Well, let’s assume you’ve written a 1,000-word article. Instead of protecting the entire article, you may choose to publish the first 200 words publicly with a link to read more. Anybody can read the first 200 words, but only members can read the entire article.

Publishing teasers can be a good way to get more pages indexed in the search engines. It can also be a good way of luring in potential members who are looking for a specific answer to a specific problem.

When they start reading your answer -- but then realize they can’t get the entire answer until they’ve become a paid member -- you will then have the perfect opportunity to persuade your potential member to actually become a member.

An example of a Publisher Model membership site that uses teasers is Copywriting Code. Check it out at:

<http://www.copywritingcode.com>

An example of a Publisher Model membership site that does NOT use teasers is The Ultimate Online Swipe File. You can take a look here:

<http://clickora.com/swipefile>

Software needed to implement The Publisher Model:

Option #1 - aMember:

aMember	http://clickora.com/amember
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
aMail	http://kencinnus.com/amail
amProtect	http://kencinnus.com/amprotect
amReminder	http://kencinnus.com/amreminder
amSalesPages	http://kencinnus.com/amsalespages
amThankYou	http://kencinnus.com/amthankyou
amUpgrade	http://kencinnus.com/amupgrade

Option #2 - WishList Member:

WishList Member	http://clickora.com/wishlist
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
WP Drip Plugin	http://clickora.com/wpdrrip

Membership Site Model #2: “The Product of the Month Model”

While The Publisher Model requires you to publish new content on a regular-but-undetermined basis, The Product of the Month Model requires you to create and release a specific product or service every single month.

New members do not have access to products or services released during previous months -- only those that are released in the month they join and each month they maintain an active membership.

The downside of The Product of the Month Model is the need to create and deliver new material every single month. On the upside, you only have to do it once a month. :-)

Here are a few ideas for how you can use The Product of the Month Model:

Monthly Newsletter - Create a monthly newsletter around a particular topic or area of expertise. Deliver the newsletter as a PDF for digital download, or as a print newsletter sent via the post.

Expert Interviews - Are you well connected with experts in your industry... or could you be if you wanted to? If so, you might consider publishing a brand new interview each month for your members.

You can deliver your monthly interview by MP3 for digital download, or as a CD sent via post.

Training Videos - There are certain things that are best learned by video. For instance, how to crochet... paint pictures... and change the oil in your car.

If what you're teaching lends itself to video, then you may want to release a brand new training video every single month... maybe even a series of short videos every month.

These videos could be streamed over the Internet, published as MP4 files for digital download, or sent as DVDs via the post.

“Done for You” Content and Services - As the amount of information on the Internet explodes, more and more people are willing to pay for “Done for You” products and services.

They don't want to learn HOW to do things; they just want YOU to do those things for them!

Here are a few things that fall into the “Done for You” category:

- Private Label Rights (PLR) Articles
- Buy/Sell Trading Alerts
- Web Site Templates
- Sales Letter Templates
- Best Niches/Trends Based on Keyword Research
- Custom Email Promotions for Top-Selling ClickBank Products
- Wordpress Themes

And this is just a taste. I'm sure there are dozens more ideas I haven't even come across or thought of.

A good example of a "Done for You" membership site is Woo Themes. They publish Wordpress themes, and you can purchase any of them individually. But for a monthly fee, you can get access to ALL the themes they've developed, plus the new theme they release each month.

Here's a link: <http://clickora.com/woo>

The Product of the Month Model is relatively simple and straightforward. Protecting each month's content is also fairly simple.

Software needed to implement The Product of the Month Model:

Option #1 - aMember:

aMember	http://clickora.com/amember
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
aMail	http://kencinnus.com/amaail
amProtect	http://kencinnus.com/amprotect
amShipping	http://kencinnus.com/amshipping
amPhysical	http://kencinnus.com/amphysical
amReminder	http://kencinnus.com/amreminder
amSalesPages	http://kencinnus.com/amsalespages
amThankYou	http://kencinnus.com/amthankyou
amUpgrade	http://kencinnus.com/amupgrade

Option #2 - WishList Member:

WishList Member	http://clickora.com/wishlist
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
WP Drip Plugin	http://clickora.com/wpdrrip

Membership Model #3: The Fixed-Term Membership Model

One of the biggest problems of all traditional membership models is... *attrition*.

Every month, some members will leave.

It's like trying to fill a bathtub with the drain open: you've got to have more water coming into the tub than is flowing out through the drain.

And so to grow your membership base, you always need to be finding new members. And you need to be thinking of ways to slow down attrition and increase your average length of membership. The ultimate goal is to be bringing in more new members each month than are leaving.

In most cases, it will be easier for you to increase the average length of membership than it will be to find new members. And that's where The Fixed Term Membership Model shines. More on this in just a minute...

Every market is different, of course, but most membership sites will keep members for an average of 3-4 months. Four months is actually on the high side. Some sites have an average of under 3 months.

Let's assume for a moment that your average member stays for exactly 3 months. If you can increase this number to 4 months, you've just increased your business by 33%. And if you can increase this number to 6 months, you've just DOUBLED your business!

I share this with you so you can see the financial impact of reducing the rate of attrition.

Okay, let's talk about Fixed-Term Membership Sites.

When using a Fixed-Term Model, you limit the term of membership to a specific period time. Maybe that term is 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, or 12 months. Whatever term you decide to use, it will probably increase the number of months each member pays you.

Why is this?

It's because of a simple quirk of human nature that makes us want to finish what we start.

If we collect the first of five collectible coins, we will also want to collect coins #2-#5. Likewise, if we get the first month of content in a 12-month membership program, we will also want to get the content in months #2-#12. And we will probably stick around to get it!

With that in mind, Fixed-Term Membership Sites are ideal when you want to:

- * Teach a sequential-but-limited body of knowledge over the course of specific period of weeks or months. (For instance, a 6-month course for landlords about how to increase the cash flow of the properties they own.)
- * Increase the average number of months each member remains an active paying customer.

The simplest way to create a Fixed-Term Membership “site” is to simply start processing payments and deliver all the content via an autoresponder email sequence.

But, while fast and simple, content delivered by email is not protected and can be easily shared.

The more secure way to build a Fixed-Term Membership Site is to use aMember with a drip content plugin. This will allow you to create all the content up front and then “drip” it out on a predetermined schedule.

A good example of a Fixed-Term Membership Site is Jimmy D. Brown’s Membernaire training: <http://clickora.com/membernaire>

Another good example is Robert Plank and Lance Tamashiro’s Membership Cube: <http://clickora.com/MembershipCube>

Software needed to implement The Fixed-Term Membership Model:

Option #1 - aMember:

aMember	http://clickora.com/amember
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
aMail	http://kencinnus.com/amaill
amProtect	http://kencinnus.com/amprotect
amSalesPages	http://kencinnus.com/amsalespages
amThankYou	http://kencinnus.com/amthankyou

Option #2 - WishList Member:

WishList Member	http://clickora.com/wishlist
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
WP Drip Plugin	http://clickora.com/wpdrrip

Membership Model #4: The Software as a Service (SAS) Model

Before the Internet, software was always sold in computer stores (remember CompUSA?). You paid the store for the software, then used a disk or CD-ROM to install the software on your computer. No further payments were required unless you took advantage of a paid upgrade a few years down the road.

The Internet has changed everything. Now it is quite easy to provide software via a membership site and charge a monthly fee for access to the software.

When you stop paying, you no longer have access to the software.

There are a few advantages to this model, both for the creator of the software as well as the customer.

For one, software as a service is usually accessible on the Internet from any computer, anywhere in the world. This provides the customer with great flexibility. Even if their computer crashes, they can still use your software and haven't lost any data stored in it.

Secondly, since the software is hosted online, upgrades can be rolled out automatically and seamlessly, invisible to the customer. This eliminates the need for customers to upgrade.

Thirdly, the monthly fee provides the software developer with the cash flow to invest in continuous upgrades and improvements, which creates a better user experience for customers.

Fourthly, if your software stores or manages data for the member, then it will be very hard for him to cancel after he starts. Every time you sign up a new member, you may have a member for life.

Some of the world's most successful businesses have been built using the Software as a Service Membership Model.

Take, for instance, 37Signals. All of their products are SAS products. Their flagship product is called Basecamp, which is a product management software system. You can check it out at <http://basecamp.com>

Here are some more examples of Software as a Service membership sites:

- Unique Article Wizard - <http://clickora.com/uaw>
- Jonathan Leger's 3-Way Links - <http://clickora.com/3waylinks>

Software needed to implement The Software as a Service Model:

Option #1 - aMember:

aMember	http://clickora.com/amember
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
aMail	http://kencinnus.com/amaill
amProtect	http://kencinnus.com/amprotect
amSalesPages	http://kencinnus.com/amsalespages
amThankYou	http://kencinnus.com/amthankyou

Option #2 - WishList Member:

WishList Member	http://clickora.com/wishlist
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
WP Drip Plugin	http://clickora.com/wpdrip

Membership Model #5: The Single Transaction Model

Digital piracy is a big problem on the Internet.

If you sell a digital product and deliver it on an unprotected download page, it will only be a matter of days or weeks before somebody posts the download page on a public forum. In some cases, your product may end up on peer-2-peer file sharing networks.

Protecting your product behind a membership site is one way to help prevent piracy.

You don't have to use recurring payments to use membership site software. You can just as easily configure it to charge a person once and then give them access to the private member area where the product is delivered.

If you're selling a PDF or MP3 or video that is available for download, you can configure your software to give access for just a few days -- enough time to give new members to download their product.

You can even make extra money by offering an extra year of "download insurance" for \$10 (or whatever you think makes sense in your situation).

You can also break up your product onto individual pages inside the member area.

Perhaps you deliver articles, audio files, videos, PDF templates, forums, and/or online tools. If this is the case, you will probably want to give lifetime access to all new members who pay the one-time membership fee.

One advantage of doing it this way is that there is no single file that contains your entire product that can be uploaded to file sharing networks.

A good example of a Single Transaction Membership Site is, of course, my own web site. You can check it out here: <http://www.membershipsiteplugins.com>

Software needed to implement The Single Transaction Model:

Option #1 - aMember:

aMember	http://clickora.com/amember
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
aMail	http://kencinnus.com/amail
amOffers	http://kencinnus.com/amoffers
amOneClick	http://kencinnus.com/amoneclick
amProtect	http://kencinnus.com/amprotect
amSalesPages	http://kencinnus.com/amsalespages

amThankYou	http://kencinnus.com/amthankyou
amUpgrade	http://kencinnus.com/amupgrade
amUpsell	http://kencinnus.com/amupsell

Option #2 - WishList Member:

WishList Member	http://clickora.com/wishlist
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
WP Drip Plugin	http://clickora.com/wpdrip

Membership Site Model #6: The Private Coaching Model

Do you provide private 1-on-1 coaching services to a small group of clients? If you do, you might want to consider using The Private Coaching Model.

Here's how it works:

First, you create a different membership level for EACH client you have. Then you publish custom content and advice for EACH client.

The beauty of it is each client can see only his or her content. They can't see any other client's content.

This allows you to provide customized content, advice, and downloads to a small group of people from a single membership web site.

Obviously, this would not work well if you were using this system to coach hundreds of clients. Chances are, you will get the best results if you only use this for 30 or fewer active clients at a time.

Keep in mind, too, that 30 private coaching clients would be paying premium fees, so a "small" coaching business managed through a membership site could still produce a healthy monthly income.

An example of a Private Coaching Model membership site is Jennifer Davey's site. You can take a look here: <http://jjscoaching.com>

Software needed to implement The Private Coaching Model:

Option #1 - aMember:

aMember	http://clickora.com/amember
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
aMail	http://kencinnus.com/amaill
amProtect	http://kencinnus.com/amprotect
amSalesPages	http://kencinnus.com/amsalespages
amStrategy	http://kencinnus.com/amstrategy
amThankYou	http://kencinnus.com/amthankyou

Option #2 - WishList Member:

WishList Member	http://clickora.com/wishlist
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org
WP Drip Plugin	http://clickora.com/wpdrrip

Membership Model #7: The Frankenstein Model

If you get creative, you'll notice that many of the elements I've described in the previous six models could be combined to create a sort of "Frankenstein's Monster."

It's probably also easy to see how the Product of the Month model could be combined with the Fixed-Term Membership Model. Just deliver a product a month for 12 months.

Or if you have a very simple piece of software that won't require ongoing development, then combine the Single Transaction Model with the Software as a Service Model.

Or you might even consider luring in new members with the Software as a Service Model, then keeping those members by adding the Publisher Model on top of it.

As you review each model in this report, think about how you could combine it with another model to make your own unique, high-value membership site.

One last idea...

Private member forums can be added to just about any membership site model to help create member loyalty.

As many membership site owners have observed, new members come for the content, but then stay because of the community.

Forums create community.

But a word of caution... Some membership site experts say you shouldn't add a forum to a membership site until your members ask for one. This is because a dead forum looks bad to new members and could actually increase attrition.

New members may think, "What? There's nothing happening on the member forums? I guess this site isn't as good as I thought..." And just like that you could lose new members all because of an inactive forum. Not good.

The point is, a member forum is one of those things that can add extra value to just about any membership site if and when you think it's a good idea to add one.

An example of a Frankenstein Model with excellent forums is David Moskowitz's Membership Academy: <http://clickora.com/MembershipAcademy>

It's Time to Get Started...

In this special report, we've covered 7 different membership site models. We've provided real-life examples and even told you the exact software you'll need to get started.

But you'll never make a nickel if you don't actually decide on a membership site model... and... actually build your membership site.

So decide. And then make it happen.

If you need help deciding or setting up your membership site, please remember that I'm here to help.

I've been building websites for more than a decade, and I've specialized in building membership sites for the last 3+ years.

I'm especially experienced with aMember software, and I'm also a certified WishList Member Developer.

All of which means that I can help design and implement just about any membership site you could possibly imagine.

To schedule a consultation, please visit:

<http://kencinnus.com/buy/consultation/>

To browse the plugins I've created to enhance aMember functionality, please visit:

<http://membershipsitaplugins.com>

And may all your dreams of recurring monthly income come true!

-Ken Gary

Membership Site Expert

<http://membershipsitaplugins.com>

-Ryan Healy

Direct Response Copywriter & Creator
of the Paid On Time Affiliate Trust Seal

<http://paidontime.net>

Appendix A - Membership Site Resources

- aMember - <http://clickora.com/amember>
- WishList Member - <http://clickora.com/wishlist>
- Membership Site Plugins - <http://membershipsitplugins.com>
- Membership Site Analytics - <http://kencinnus.com/buy/msa/>
- AWeber (for email list management) - <http://clickora.com/aweber>
- Membership Academy - <http://clickora.com/MembershipAcademy>
- Membership Cube - <http://clickora.com/MembershipCube>
- WishList Insider: <http://clickora.com/WishListInsider>