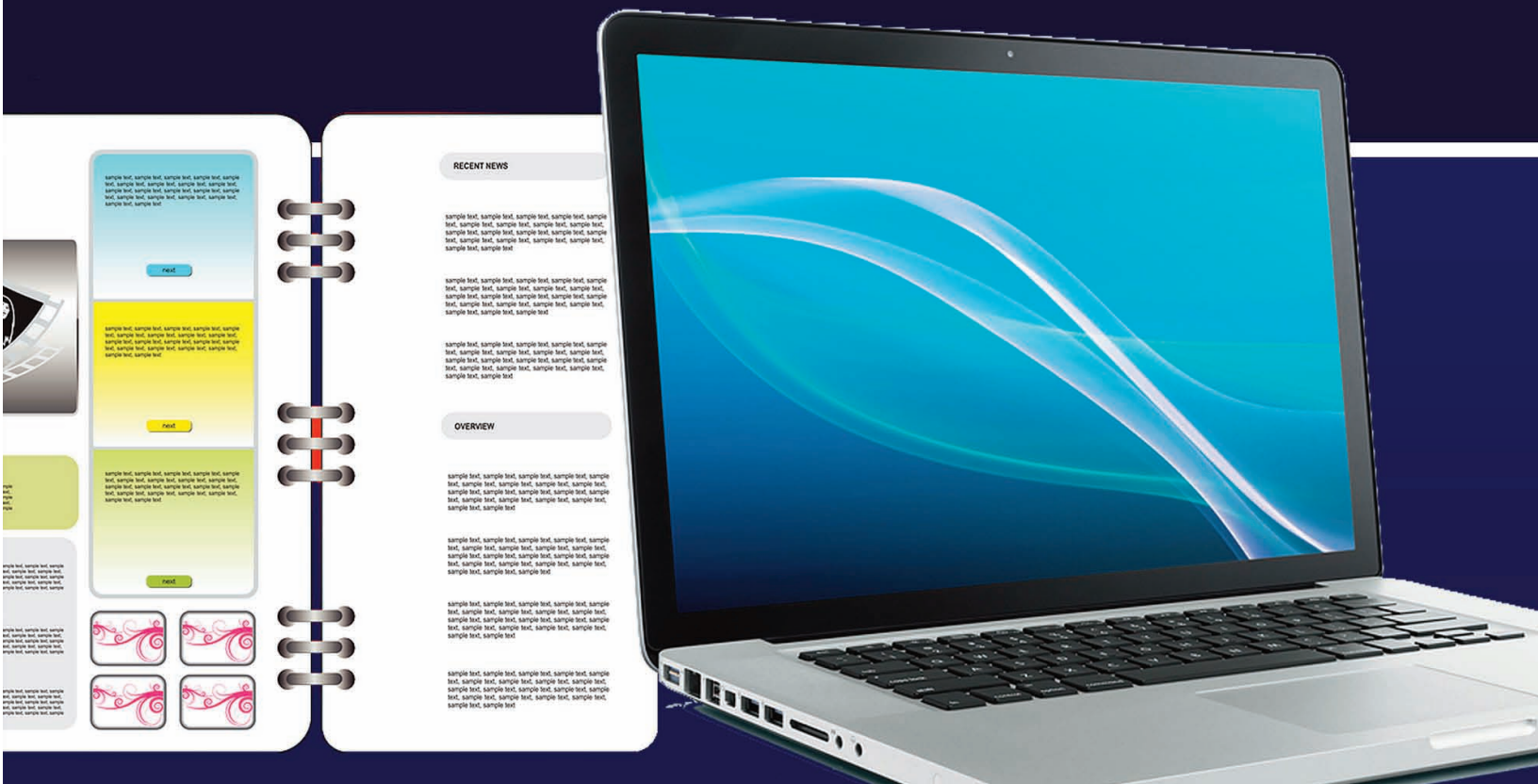


SETTING UP Your Membership Site and Getting Started



**30 Days to Your Own
Money-Making Membership Site**

Presented by Marty Marsh

Lesson 3

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Lesson Three: Setting Up Your Membership Site and Getting Started

This lesson is packed full of practical tactics to help you get your Membership Site out of the “idea” realm, through the planning stage, and ready to launch!

Remember, it doesn’t matter if it isn’t perfect yet... what matters is ***that you’ve done the best you can to position yourself to attract paying members*** who deeply, desperately ***need*** your Membership Site — and who will ***thank you for it!***

Even if your research is solid and you’ve confidently picked the content management format and scripts that you’re sure will work best for you, there’s more to positioning yourself for success than simply deciding which script to use.

You also have to position your Membership Site so that it ***feels natural*** and ***easy to navigate*** to every typical member.

In addition, it has to...

- **Be memorable**
- **Provide the solution** to their problems
- **Excite them** so they can hardly wait for their next visit
- **Feel like a community** where they fit in and are welcome (yes, even if you’re “just” providing a Subscription Newsletter)
- **Stimulate their creativity**
- **Fill them with optimism and confidence**

Let’s look at some concrete elements that can help you achieve these goals...

Your Membership Site Name

There are two schools of thought with this particular aspect of your Membership Site business:

1. Base your Membership Site Name on your best, long-tailed keyword

OR

2. Choose a name that is punchy, clever and easy to remember

Of course, you do realize, it goes without saying that the best keywords are:

- a)** Usually taken (the .com and .net versions, that is)
- b)** Not that catchy
- c)** Often difficult to remember

But the process itself is worth honoring: Do your best to find a name that is both **memorable** and **keyword-based**.

If you have to choose, this is one instance where the Membership Site name is more important than simple Search Engine Optimization, so go with “memorable”. After all, you’re going to be boosting your SEO by other means and methods. (In Lesson 4, you’ll also learn more about promoting and marketing your Membership Site.)

On top of that, your affiliates and members are going to promote your Membership Site and if you’ve done your homework and come up with a great name, it will help your Membership Site stand out as a brand in its own right.

We’re going to talk a little more about your Membership Site name (as well as look at two strong site name examples) in “Lesson Four: How to Market Your Membership Site” in conjunction with another key strategy, so don’t rush off to register it yet (unless you’re already positive it’s the perfect domain name for your Membership Site).

Allowing for Multiple Sites

When you're picking your site name, consider the fact that **a high percentage of Membership Site owners go on to create more membership sites**, once they see how successful this form of recurring income can be — anywhere between 20-100 extra Membership Sites is not unheard of!

Just check out your top niche authority figures, and you'll see for yourself just how many sites they have.

Think about this, if you had 10 membership sites working for you and you had just 100 subscribers in each one paying you \$10 per month, you'd be looking at an income of \$10,000 A MONTH!

But before you get all crazy and excited like I do about this sort of thing, slow down. You've got to create the first one. After you've done that, then the only limit will be your imagination and willingness to work.

If you can choose a name with **one word, element or characteristic that adapts to any niche**, you can create a **series** of Membership Sites, all cloned on the original model, as far as setup and delivery go. Human beings thrive on **repetition** to help stamp habits into their brains, so each new Membership Site you create containing the identifiable word or element reinforces its own authority by instantly becoming identified with its creator — true branding.

Claiming the Name

As soon as you have a name for your Membership Site (or Membership Site series) that you feel happy with, test it out.

Do this by verbally telling family members or immediate physical acquaintances what it is... and asking them to write it out. (Caution: Don't spread it about online – it would, unfortunately, likely be stolen.)

You may be surprised to see your family members consistently spell your site name differently from the way you envisioned it. For example, say you wanted

to call your site “DigitizeMe.com”... you might get four of the six people you’re testing it out on to write it out “Digitise me.com”.

Can they spell? No. But if more than one person does the same thing, it’s a possible source of potential customer loss, when a member of your target group is typing the name into Google search boxes or trying to find your site (whose URL he can’t remember) by logical guesswork.

Now take another six people (even two or three will do) and try the reverse: Write out your site name, without the capitals: “digitizeme.com”. Then ask them to say the name out loud. If you’re getting: “Digitize-eeem dot com” instead of “Digitize Me dot com”, you’ve got a “problem name” your target may not be able to remember. (What happens with these: the spelling, when all in lower case, reads as something else completely different in most peoples’ brains.)

A good example of the URL of a worthy profession that often confuses people at first glance: www.johnmortimertherapist.com.

One other thing to **avoid** when choosing your domain name is to have two of the same letters follow each other. Example: martymarshcreativeenterprises.com. That’s the legal name of my company. Many folks might leave off the “e” in enterprises since it follows the “e” in creative, so I’ve registered the domain both ways: with the double “e’s” and with just a single “e”.

So if you can’t avoid having the double letters like that – at the end and the beginning of two words adjacent to each other – be sure you register the misspelling, too. Same goes for any URL you discover that is frequently misspelled. Register the misspelled version, too.

Remember that people are going to be seeing your name ***in print*** more than listening to others *say* it, so “tricking” the eye by throwing in a capital letter ***will actually work*** on your readers’ minds (even though it is unnecessary for the search engines).

In fact, show the same name to your same test subjects — the ones who read your Membership Site name as “Digitize-eem” the first time. Include the capital “M” (DigitizeMe.com) and this time, watch them get it right.

Note that www.MartyMarshCreativeEnterprises.com becomes much easier to read when I add the capital letters of each word.

Keep in mind that affiliates and webinar hosts and people that introduce you are going to be saying the name out loud, so do make sure it’s a name that:

- Has impact
- Mirrors the personality and feel of your Membership Site
- Rolls naturally off the tongue

Don’t rush through this stage (one of the most common mistakes). Take your time and get it right — after all, you’re going to be “wearing” that name format for a long time, and you want a name that will grow with you and become identified with quality!

I can’t tell you how many domain names I’ve registered because I thought it sounded good and I wanted to “grab” it, doing that without any thought how I might actually use those domains in a real situation. Some things that sounded great when I had the idea, just didn’t work out. Wasted money!

Your Content

What you include in your membership site will have a direct bearing on how successful it becomes, so when you think of content, don’t just think “information” in written format. The more resources and tools you include — especially ones your members will be tempted to use on a daily, habitual basis — the lower your cancellation rates... and the more solid your Membership Site’s reputation!

Let's take a look at different resources and media you might want to consider including:

- Download Library
- Apps
- Checklists
- Templates
- Archives
- Software
- Themes
- Graphics
- ClipArt they can use
- Work Sheets
- Flow Charts
- Calendars
- MP3s
- Transcripts
- Video instruction (screenshot and live video)
- Physical DVDs or CDs

And, depending on your niche, you're probably able to brainstorm even more types of content. (For example, sewing or knitting patterns, recipes, sheet music, guitar tablature, etc.)

Apps that Enhance Your Member's Site Experience

Make use of plug-ins and apps that enhance your Membership Site's usefulness and usability — especially ones that speed up their access to information they need.

Your site should be enabled with RSS Feed and, if you're using WordPress for content management, comments should also be enabled.

Support your reader interaction with friendly emails containing tips and links to the membership site (as well as a mix of other offerings, if you have these ready). But above all else, be sure you respond to any comments you receive.

The Art of Membership Site Interaction

Chances are you're one of two types:

- You hate interaction and prefer to lurk behind the scenes. (ANY scene!)
- You love helping people and tend to be on the chatty side.

Believe it or not, ***neither is ideal*** if you're going to run a successful Member Site that includes interactivity.

If interaction bores you or gives you a nervous breakdown, you simply aren't going to enjoy a forum model. And if you're a natural "rescuer", no matter how helpful and enthusiastic you are, you're soon going to be burned out (after discovering your helpful, detailed posts, comments and emails are "never enough").

There's an art to Membership site interaction — one which helps you maintain a strong relationship based on trust (and often gratitude) without draining you like a bottomless pit sucking away your time and energy.

Here are ***4 vital Best Practices***:

- 1.** Answer only what is asked. And then stop.
- 2.** Don't volunteer information unless it's excruciatingly relevant and would negatively affect the quality of your answer, should you withhold it.
- 3.** If you must be chatty, keep it relevant to your niche's specific interests — don't ask them about the concert they went to (even if they actually talked about it first). Don't go off on tangents. Keep your personal comments to a minimum: just enough to show you're human and you identify with them, but not enough that they run, screaming, from your 12-page letter all about your childhood school bus experiences.
- 4.** Get into the habit of using "closed" phrases and questions that don't invite further comment.

An example of an "open" comment, inviting response:

- "Thanks for writing, Charlie, and I hope you're not finding the module on Budgie Training too difficult?"

An example of a “closed” comment, relieving your member correspondent of the obligation of answering:

- “Thanks for your feedback, Charlie. Your comments are much appreciated and have been noted.”

Some Membership Site owners and moderators choose to ignore really inappropriate posts (“inappropriate” as in seriously rambling and off-topic, not “inappropriate” as in actually offensive). Others don’t answer unless a direct question is asked. Still another group likes to have a system — say, answering every fifth and seventh comment, alternating them. Whatever floats your boat (as my mama would say), tactic-wise, be sensitive to your member correspondent’s:

- Level of expertise
- Communication style
- Reason for writing
- Expectations
- Real or perceived need

Being able to identify these while not “caving in” to unreasonable expectations is a useful skill to develop. Informed communication is far more effective (and appreciated) than merely reactive communication.

While it’s good to be able to read between the lines, don’t attempt to mind-read or transfer your motivations and experiences onto your members. It’s important to set your boundaries right at the beginning of the relationship.

TIP: Providing a more formal option such as a Help Desk or an actual email address for members who are having a problem they’re not comfortable discussing in a comment box, can prevent comments from going out of control.

If you're the gregarious type, some of these suggestions may make you nervous, but ignore them and you'll see how quickly you start to feel overwhelmed by the floodgates of communication you've unleashed!

And anyone who has worked in any type of customer service has had the inevitable "problem" customer – you know, the one who asks you why you can't solve his car heater problem when your forum deals with home decorating (as well as the one who has decided you're his next Best Friend, which means they're going to unload all their personal problems on you). Quietly observing the 4 guidelines on the previous page and honoring your own boundaries should go a long way to keeping your forum or blog comments section positive, enjoyable and focused.

And if you're the type who dislikes interaction, having such guidelines can remove the cause of your unease. (Talk to anyone who's "not a people person" and you'll usually find there was someone who "dumped" and "leaned" excessively on them in the past.)

Remember — "boundaries" should be your watch word, until you and your members have gotten into a real rhythm.

Outsourcing -- How Much Should You Do?

One other way you can increase your own enjoyment (and the ultimate profitability) of your Membership Site is to outsource parts of it — especially ones that you lose money on (i.e. they're real time drainers or you find these areas difficult to manage without making mistakes or causing problems for yourself and your members!)

Decide in advance which elements of your business you'd prefer to outsource, then immediately — even if you're starting out doing everything yourself — factor it into your budget, allowing for a gradual increase, until you've reached the degree of outsourcing you ideally want.

Remember that outsourcing works best when you outsource **tasks** — anything that doesn't require your personal touch.

Common types of tasks you can outsource:

TASK	OUTSIDE RESOURCE
Writing content	Ghostwriter; copywriter; VA who specializes in content writing; PLR company with paid content you can download and customize
Video and MP3 and 4 creation	Specialist VA; media specialist
Transcription of MP3s	Specialist VA or transcriptionist
Graphics	Graphics designer; VA who specializes in handling graphics
Script set up Payment Processor integration, troubleshooting and handling Website design and troubleshooting Theme customization, etc.	Qualified staff at your script or software company's home site; programmer who specializes in your site's content management system (e.g. Joomla, WordPress, Drupal) or scripting language (JavaScript, PHP); specialist VA; qualified web designer
Customer service	"Help Desk"-type subscription software; "Help Desk" format software installed on your own site; VA who specializes in customer support and who is prepared to align herself with your business identity
Tracking and testing	Specialist VA; data analysis company

As your sites grow, you should realistically plan to grow your support team along with it. (Take a look at any of the top movers and shakers in your niche, and I guarantee they'll have support staff!)

A good, core support team — even if that's still on an "as needed" basis — is both a comfort and a necessity. I was in business for myself for more than a decade before I sought outside help and boy what a difference having that help has made to my bottom line and my peace of mind. (That peace of mind is priceless.)

Your Download Library

It doesn't matter what type of content management system you opt for — WordPress Blog, download pages on your own site, or a fully integrated mastermind forum — you should plan to maintain a permanent download library of

archived resources that is always available to members at the appropriate level.

After all, one of the biggest reasons your members will return to your site, again and again, is to access their favorite content or resource.

In other words, your Membership Site is definitely **not** the place to post a “this content will only be available for 24 hours” sign!

Top Ten Tips for Outsourcing Content or Hiring a Freelancer

- 1. Be specific — but don't go into detail.** What you are asking for (e.g. “a 20-page report, with a slant towards general entertainment, on the history of cross stitch” is sufficient for the purpose of interesting a contractor. Don't discuss specifics of the outline until after you've agreed to give him or her the project!
- 2. List the skills you're looking for.** (E.G. “Must have a background in writing for Health Care. Will require writing sample.”)
- 3. Set and post a deadline.** Specify the time as well as the date, if it's important. (E.G. “Must be submitted no later than midnight E.S.T. on February 21”) Even if you're flexible, posting a deadline protects you, to some degree, from chronic procrastinators
- 4. State what rights you expect to purchase.** Indicate if you're commissioning a work-for-hire (where you keep all rights) or you're prepared to accept creative professionals such as writers and artists retaining copyright to the original work (standard copyright law). I prefer to always keep all the rights to any work I outsource. That way, I can use whatever I get in a variety of ways without having to pay extra or go to the hassle of getting additional permissions.
- 5. State your budget.** (And be realistic — don't expect to get a top artist for \$5 per illustration!)

- 6. Ask if your freelancer has a standard project spec form or contract** he wishes to use, once you've expressed an interest in negotiating further
- 7. Don't abuse your freelancer's time** by failing to provide the project specs he will need before the time frame you agreed on.
- 8. Start out with a very small project**, to "test the waters" and ensure your freelancer delivers.
- 9. Remember to thank him** (preferably with a referral or testimonial) for a job well done, if he delivers exceptional service. Don't be afraid of someone "stealing" him: If you operate with integrity, classiness and an understanding of the principle of professional reciprocity, he'll move heaven and earth to service your business
- 10. Find out if he works on retainer** (non-refundable amount you pay up front) or deposit (refundable if the work is cancelled within a reasonable time frame). Find out also if he requires complete payment up front or is content to invoice you. Some freelancers prefer half up front, the balance when the job is delivered.

Larger companies will often agree to invoice you, after your initial deposit or retainer has been paid. Individual freelancers usually require all or part of their fee up front.

Backup

One area many Membership Site owners ignore (until it's too late, unfortunately) is that of Site Backup.

Your scripting software will most likely provide options for backup integration (though you may have to ask their Support Team or access their online Help System to find out how to do it). Check out the training videos and articles the originating companies provide.

If you're using a simple WordPress blog, you can use a backup plugin (there are a plethora of choices available through the "Search WordPress.org" function on your WordPress dashboard — all changing rapidly as developers vie to outdo each other.

You can also back up your simple website through your website's basic cPanel, by creating a CRON job (or paying the web techs at your Web Host company, your web designer or your web-specializing VA to do it for you).

Finally, learn to use the tracking options available with your installed script systems or software. Check the simple site use data available through your cPanel. And at the very least, make use of Google Analytics.

And make sure that whatever systems you've decided to use, you've allowed for your success!

Time to Take Action!

This lesson has given you a lot to think about, but taking it one step at a time and planning in advance will help you avoid overwhelm.

Use a calendar to plan out concrete steps such as researching your content management system, looking for VA's who specialize in various site management aspects, etc. Contact Marty at [marty@30DayMembershipSite.com](#) for recommendations on people who can help you with all aspects of your membership site.

Decide how many days (or hours) to allot each task, and enter that into your calendar.

Gradually you'll see your Membership Site take shape and by the time you've completed this assignment, you'll be poised on the threshold to launching it.

Taking concrete steps and planning your system will help take your Membership Site out of the "some day" dream realm and get you excited about your new proactivity. Go with it. Take it one step at a time, follow your plan and you won't succumb to overwhelm or confusion.

Expect the occasional glitch in your scheduling or with one or two aspects of your Membership Site-building experience: this is all a normal part of the process. Learn to develop patience, especially if you have a habit of rushing off after “new things”. Stick with it. As the alien leader in the movie *Galaxy Quest* was prone to say: “Never give up. Never surrender.”

In Lesson 4 you’re going to get a peek at a young mother who did it exactly the way outlined above, step by step, growing along with her members.

Running a profitable, successful, prestigious Membership Site ***can*** be done — and you’re ready to do it!

And you can start right now with this lesson’s assignment...

Your Weekly Assignment: Covering All the Bases

- 1.** Hone your Membership Site name even further. Consult a trusted, offline friend or family member and “brainstorm” with any and every idea that pops into your heads.
- 2.** Conduct the test outlined in this Lesson with at least two or three other offline acquaintances, friends or family members. Check your name choice for:
 - ease of reading aloud
 - ease of remembering in its written form
- 3.** Use whatever system you find most comfortable — spreadsheets, text editors, physical notepads, your favorite Worksheet template or Mind Mapping software — to brainstorm types of content you’d like to include on your Membership Site.
- 4.** Create another simple survey (via the app or online service you used for your first survey) and ask your potential market for feedback on:
 - their favorite method of content delivery
 - the top 3 (or 4 or 5) methods they’ve accessed over the last year

5. Plan your outsourcing budget for:
 - immediately
 - 6 months from now
 - 1 year from now
 - 2 years from now
6. Decide on your backup, security and tracking system. Have an idea of how you plan to handle them
7. Make a list of who you want to hire — specifically (e.g. “Jean Smith”) or by general position “VA specializing in Customer Support and Help Desk software”)
8. If your budget is limited, decide on your most important hiring choice to start with.

If this seems like a lot of work, either work on it ***one step at a time*** at your own pace... or decide which items can be “tabled” for later on.

And now the fun really starts. Once you’ve got your site up and running, you need to start filling it with members. And in Lesson 4, we’ll cover some of the best ways to attract members to your new membership site and then keep them coming back month after month for more.



This lesson contains some technical information and you may be feeling quite overwhelmed with all the choices right now.

Relax.

If you need professional help in getting the technical aspects – or help in developing any aspect – of your membership site up and going, contact me to arrange a private consultation.

I will be happy to coach you through this decision, and can make recommendations — based on your needs — of people who can help you at rates you can afford.

Send an email to marty@martymarsh.com and put in the subject line:

Need Membership Site Development Help

About Marty Marsh...

Marty Marsh, Soul Proprietor, has been happily and successfully self-employed since 1995 helping his clients discover their business and marketing strengths and then helping them apply those strengths toward creating a business that brings them both joy and profits.



Marty's expertise in the world of small business marketing is balanced by his ability to connect deeply with people on an intuitive level, so that he can assist his clients and students in deliberately creating the kind of business they want.

His marketing students and coaching clients say he has a gentle, yet persuasive manner when it comes to helping them learn and implement new concepts and ideas. As a business and marketing coach, Marty has the ability to recognize areas that need improvement and to capitalize on the strengths of solo-entrepreneurs so they can spend more time doing what they love to do. Marty's students see immediate results by applying the principles they learn.

As a long time small business owner, he knows first-hand the trials and tribulations, joys and triumphs of running a successful business. A life-long student, Marty has an insatiable appetite for learning as much as he can in this lifetime — and not just about marketing. He says he teaches the things he most needs to learn about himself.

Marty calls himself — and his clients — soul proprietors because they approach business as a means for helping people solve their problems and believe that marketing is all about creating relationships with real people and should be done with a high level of integrity and honesty.

For Marty, being self-employed is all about the freedom to create a livelihood by helping people solve their marketing and business problems and allows him to live his life from an RV while traveling around the United States.

You can learn more about Marty and how he can help you to discover your own business and marketing strengths at martymarsh.com.



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