SAMPLE

The Membership Site Income

Build Recurring Revenue Through Membership Communities

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Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

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Contents

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Introduction

Chapter 1: Why Membership Sites Matter Now

Chapter 2: Understanding the Opportunity

Chapter 3: What You Need Before You Start

Chapter 4: Choosing Your Membership Site Niche

Chapter 5: Finding Your First Membership Site Opportunity

Chapter 6: Building Your Membership Site Foundation

Chapter 7: Creating Your First Membership Site Content

Chapter 8: Choosing Your Membership Site Platform

Chapter 9: Pricing Your Membership Site for Revenue

Chapter 10: Building Your Membership Site Sales Page

Chapter 11: Launching Your Membership Site Business

Chapter 12: Marketing Your Membership Site Business

Chapter 13: Growing Beyond the First 100 Members

Chapter 14: Automation and Scaling

Chapter 15: Common Mistakes to Avoid

Chapter 16: Legal, Tax, and Compliance Basics

Chapter 17: Building for Long-Term Success

Chapter 18: Your 90-Day Membership Site Plan

Final Thoughts

Quick Start Checklist

Resources

Digital Income

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

A membership site is a website where members pay a recurring monthly fee for access to exclusive content, community, tools, or services. Instead of selling a product once, you collect a subscription — and revenue compounds every month as you add members.

A membership site with 200 members at $29/month generates $5,800/ month in recurring revenue. Add 20 new members per month and your revenue grows by $580 every month — automatically. After 12 months, you have 400+ members generating $11,600/month. This is the power of recurring revenue: it compounds.

This book covers the complete membership site business model: choosing a niche, building the membership site, creating content that keeps members engaged, pricing the membership, marketing it, and scaling from 0 to 500+ members.

- How to identify a profitable membership site niche - How to build a membership site without technical skills - How to create content that members stay subscribed for - How to price your membership for growth and retention - How to market your membership site and get your first 100 members - How to reduce churn and keep members long-term - How to scale to 500+ members and beyond

This book is for creators, experts, and entrepreneurs who want to build recurring revenue through membership sites. You might be a content creator with an audience who wants to monetize beyond ads and sponsorships. You might be an expert who wants to share knowledge in a community format. You might be a business owner who wants to add a recurring revenue stream.

You need expertise in a topic that people want ongoing access to — tools, content, community, or expertise. You do not need technical skills — modern platforms (Circle, Mighty Networks, Memberful) handle the technology. You need content creation skills and the willingness to engage with your community regularly.

Unlike one-time product sales, membership sites generate recurring revenue. A member who pays $29/month for 12 months generates $348 per year. A customer who buys a $97 course once generates $97. The membership site model produces 3-4x more revenue per customer over the same period.

This recurring revenue is also predictable. When you know your monthly churn rate (percentage of members who cancel), you can predict next month's

revenue within a few percentage points. Predictable revenue makes business planning easier and reduces the stress of the "feast or famine" cycle of one-time sales.

By the end of this book, you will have a framework for launching your first membership site: choosing a niche, defining the membership offer, building the site, pricing it, and getting your first members.

The membership site model sits between one-time digital products and active services in the digital income landscape:

Digital products (Books 3, 6, 18): Create once, sell repeatedly. High leverage but no recurring revenue. Each sale requires marketing effort. Revenue is unpredictable month to month.

Online courses (Book 56): Create once, sell repeatedly. Higher price per sale but one-time revenue. You need constant new customers to maintain revenue.

membership sites (this book): Create ongoing, sell once, collect recurring revenue. The member pays monthly for as long as they find value. Revenue compounds as you add members. The tradeoff is the ongoing content commitment.

Services and freelancing (Books 5, 22, 27): Trade time for money. Higher hourly rate but stops when you stop working. No asset value.

membership sites combine the leverage of digital products with the recurring revenue of services. You sell once (the membership join) and collect revenue monthly. Unlike a service, you can serve 500 members with the same content and community that serves 50. Unlike a digital product, you do not need to find a new customer every month to maintain revenue.

This combination of leverage and recurrence is what makes membership sites one of the most attractive business models in the Digital Income series. The tradeoff is the ongoing content and community commitment — you cannot build a membership and walk away. It is semi-passive income, not fully passive.

Understanding the economics of retention is critical for membership success. A member who pays $29/month and stays for 24 months generates $696 in lifetime revenue. The same member who stays for 3 months generates $87. The difference is 8x revenue from the same acquisition cost.

This is why retention is more important than acquisition. Spending $50 to acquire a member who stays 24 months generates a 14x return ($696 / $50). Spending $50 to acquire a member who stays 3 months generates a 1.7x

return ($87 / $50). The acquisition cost is the same — the retention is what determines profitability.

Every month you keep a member adds $29 to your revenue — permanently, until they leave. A membership with 200 members and 3% monthly churn keeps 97% of its revenue each month. A membership with 10% monthly churn keeps only 90% — requiring 20 new members per month just to maintain revenue. Low churn is the difference between a growing membership and a stagnant one.

This book is part of the broader Digital Income series by Aiman Sterling. While each book covers a specific income model, the membership site model connects with several others:

Online courses (Book 56) and memberships: Many successful memberships combine structured courses with ongoing community access. The course provides the foundation, and the membership provides the ongoing value that keeps members subscribed.

Digital products (Books 3, 6, 18) and memberships: Memberships can include digital products as part of the monthly content. A template library, resource pack, or tool collection adds tangible value to the subscription.

Newsletters (Book 12) and memberships: A paid newsletter can evolve into a membership by adding community and resources. The newsletter provides the content, and the membership adds the community dimension.

Affiliate marketing (Book 20) and memberships: Membership sites can generate additional revenue through affiliate partnerships. If your membership teaches members to use specific tools, affiliate links to those tools generate passive income alongside membership fees.

Understanding these connections helps you see how a membership site can be part of a broader digital income portfolio rather than a standalone business. Many successful digital entrepreneurs have a course, a membership, a newsletter, and affiliate revenue — each feeding into and supporting the others.

The membership model fails with a rhythm so consistent it can be described before you launch: a strong opening month, a quiet second, and by the fourth, a community that has quietly dissolved into a spreadsheet of inactive accounts.

The launch-then-abandon pattern is the engine of the failure: the site announced with genuine energy, then left to run on its own — while the members, who joined for momentum, discover that momentum was the

launch, and the launch has ended. The wrong promise feeds the churn: memberships sold on the strength of the library rather than the aliveness of the community, so members consume the archive in three weeks and cancel with the honest note that they "got what they came for." And the missing cadence completes it: no recurring events, rituals, or reasons to return, leaving nothing between the member and the cancel button except habit, which is not a retention strategy but the absence of one.

The memberships that retain are built like commitments rather than products: a promise that renews only if delivery does, rituals that give members a reason to show up weekly, and an onboarding sequence that makes the first month's value undeniable. That structure — not the platform, not the content library — is what this book exists to build.

Chapter 1: Why Membership Sites Matter Now

Three trends make membership sites a better opportunity than ever before.

Consumers are increasingly comfortable paying for subscriptions. Netflix, Spotify, Amazon Prime, and dozens of SaaS products have trained people to pay monthly for ongoing access. The mental barrier to paying $29/ month for a membership site is lower than ever because consumers already pay for 3-5 subscriptions.

This cultural shift benefits membership site creators. Instead of convincing people to pay a one-time $197 fee, you ask for $29/month — which feels more affordable even if it generates more revenue over time. The subscription model aligns with consumer behavior in 2026.

People are hungry for community. Social media provides connection but not belonging. membership sites offer a smaller, more focused community where members share interests, help each other, and build relationships. This community aspect is what differentiates a membership site from a course or a blog — and it is what keeps members subscribed.

Members stay for the community even when they have consumed all the content. The ongoing conversations, the new relationships, and the sense of belonging are harder to leave than a library of videos. This is why community-focused membership sites have lower churn than content- focused ones.

Building a membership site used to require custom development: user authentication, payment processing, content gating, community forums, and member management. Today, platforms handle all of this:

Circle ($49-$219/month): Community-focused platform with discussions, events, and member directories. Best for community-first membership sites.

Mighty Networks ($41-$98/month): Course + community combination. Best for membership sites that combine structured content with community.

Memberful ($25-$100/month): WordPress plugin that adds membership functionality to an existing WordPress site. Best for content creators who already use WordPress.

Skool ($99/month): Simple community + course platform. Best for creators who want simplicity and gamification.

These platforms removed the technical barrier. The only barriers remaining are content quality, community management, and marketing — skills you can develop.

The creator economy has produced millions of content creators with audiences but limited monetization options. Brand deals are inconsistent. Ad revenue is low. Course sales are one-time. membership sites fill the gap: a recurring revenue stream from an existing audience.

A YouTuber with 10,000 subscribers who converts 2% to a $29/month membership site has 200 members generating $5,800/month — more than most YouTubers earn from ads. The membership site model is the most efficient monetization of an existing audience available today.

Content creators face a monetization gap: their content generates significant audience attention but limited revenue. YouTube ad revenue pays $3-$15 per 1,000 views. A creator with 50,000 monthly views earns $150-$750/month from ads. The same creator could convert 2% of their audience to a $29/month membership and earn $29,000/month — 40-200x more than ad revenue.

This massive revenue gap is why creators are increasingly launching membership sites. The membership model transforms an audience from "content consumers who generate ad revenue" to "paying members who generate recurring revenue." The value extraction per audience member increases 10-100x.

The gap exists because ad revenue captures a tiny fraction of the value created for the audience. A membership captures a larger fraction by providing premium content, community, and access that the audience values more than ads reward.

The pandemic accelerated the shift to online communities. People who previously relied on in-person networking, conferences, and professional associations turned to online alternatives. This created a surge in membership adoption across professional niches.

Professionals who previously paid $500-$2,000/year for industry association memberships discovered that $29-$49/month online memberships provided similar value — content, networking, and professional development — at a lower cost and with greater convenience.

This shift is permanent. Even as in-person events return, online memberships offer advantages that in-person associations cannot match: 24/7 access, global membership, searchable content archives, and asynchronous participation. The membership market is larger now than it was before 2020, and it continues to grow.

The deepest difference between a membership and every one-off product in this series is not the payment schedule — it is what the schedule does to your

decisions. A course creator must re-launch; a freelancer must re-sell next month; a membership operator instead spends that same energy on a single question: how do I make the next month worth staying for?

That question compounds. Every retention improvement keeps paying you forever, every community connection members make with each other raises the cost of leaving, and every month of content you add makes the library more valuable than the month before. A business with 200 members at $29 a month does not need a viral launch quarter — it needs to be worth $29 next month. That is a calmer, more controllable kind of work, and it is why membership builders sleep better than launch- dependent businesses ever do.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io