



What Type of Membership is Right for You (if Any)? - The Membership Series

Many online business owners are looking to earn recurring income by selling a membership. But what's the right type of membership offering for you?

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James Schramko and John Lint

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness. This is Episode 839. I have my friend, [John Lint](#), here. Welcome, John.

John: Hi, how are you?

James: Good, thanks. We're talking about memberships today. Today, we're sort of going to go into, is a membership actually right for you? We're going to see what type of membership might fit your scenario, if any, or if you could basically come to the conclusion that you're just not a good fit for a membership.

The stop-start way of doing business

The story that comes to mind is a client that I had, who was doing these events. And he was running events, sort of on a semi-frequent basis, he was putting in a big marketing campaign behind them, he was booking a venue, he was flying out there, he was charging big ticket, he'd run the event, he'd use all up his energy and all the cash, pay out everyone for the venue and the food and everything, and then go back home, and then he'd be in that dip between the next event.

And then the stress would build up, and then he'd have to go through the post-event follow up and then the pre-event process of selling another event. And that's a sort of a stop-start way of doing business. A membership fixes that. So if that's the way you're doing business right now, then a membership could really be a great solution.

And I was speaking to someone today, actually, when I was having a surf, and he was saying how his wife does a launch twice a year. And I said, Tell me about that. And he said, Well, she builds up the launch, she's got a big waiting list. And then she sells it, and she gets to bring in lots of money at once. And you know, it's paid for a while, it's just cream for a while then. And then they wait until the next one and build up the thing.

And then I said, Hey, one of our friends has a friend, who would probably be a good fit for that course. And my friend who I'm surfing with says, Oh yeah, but they're not open now for four or five months. I'm like, Why not be open all the time? And he goes, I don't know, it's like, you know, you've got to build up that waiting list.

So there's someone who has the type of thing that you could sell as a membership. But it's currently sold as a launch model and a big spiky input. So I see cases like this, where people don't actually realize that a membership might be right for them. And I help them out, get through it. But there are people who it's not right for.

So we're going to cover that today, we're going to cover the different types of memberships. And I've tried a few different types. And we'll sort of decompress some of the phrases or terms that we use in the industry.

Courses and the membership model

So John, have you ever found someone who's started a membership, who didn't think they were going to have a good market for membership, but were pleasantly surprised?

John: Yeah, I mean, do we have a lot of members in 10XPRO.io that they experiment with either, they don't think about memberships, and they just create courses. But then we also have the other guys. We have the other guys who are focused on membership and then they don't realize that there's a lot of power in also creating and selling individual online courses.

So we have a mix of everybody, really, in 10XPRO, but absolutely adding a membership component, [we talked about this last week](#), is a way for you to get out of that sell-do, sell-do cycle that you described, where you're always stuck, always trying to do the same thing, always selling, selling hard for a period of time and then nothing happens.

Then you wait, then there's no money, and you try to do another type of sales campaign to get some money, and you're stuck; you're stuck in the hamster wheel, just always trying to do the same thing, repeating the same thing.



But adding a membership component to your business is one of the greatest weapons because now, just like your friend that you just described in your surfing session, adding a membership component to that setup, where maybe you're selling an online course, and maybe that can be a masterclass while allowing people to join your ongoing coaching, or your ongoing community, or your ongoing support that might come from selling that online course, is a beautiful thing, because, let's say you do those two launches per year, great.

And yes, you're going to be driving a lot of traffic, you're going to be doing a lot of promotion, you're going to add a lot of urgency and scarcity, which is a great thing for that type of campaign, for that type of product. And usually that works really well for a single type of product. I mean, like a course or a masterclass, meaning it's a class that I pay, I get access to, I go through the lessons. And at the end of the four weeks or eight weeks, hopefully, I'm done with the course, and I got the result that I want.

And that's fine as a finite product. But of course, we're leaving a lot of money on the table if you're only doing that. That's why, what we teach in 10XPRO, that's what we help our members with, is that, to add, think about, okay, those guys who bought that course. And maybe you're selling that course twice a year, three times or four times a year, that's fine. That's based on a specific type of campaign.

But you can absolutely use those sales, use those new buyers, those new customers, as a source for your membership site program. Your membership site program is really meant to be an ongoing community, ongoing support, ongoing coaching from you. So they go through that course, they get the result that you promise in that course.

But of course, in life, there's always more. Maybe that course was how to get bigger biceps, or how to lose 10 pounds. Okay, you go through that course, you've got those results. What's next? Well, what's next is maybe be more healthy, get more results. Now you want to focus on the chest, or your legs, or whatever, you want to learn new recipes, or you want to be able to talk to the coach and say, Hey, man, I'm losing focus here, I'm losing motivation, and you're talking to the community.

And that coach, that is part of it. And to be able to do that, to be able to get access to that, then you join the membership component of that online business. So yeah, I see those guys who have either only online courses and they don't see the potential of a membership site. I also see those guys who are only doing membership sites and they don't see the power of creating some unique online courses to attract people to their brand, right?

But absolutely, like we talked about last week, last time we recorded, the ultimate online business will come down to having a subscription-based model, a membership site that people will pay you every single month, every single year for access to ongoing content, ongoing support, ongoing community, ongoing coaching, because now you're getting that money that comes every single month, pretty much clockwork on autopilot, it's predictable.

It's a business that is now working for you, and it's a business generating that income. You know that, maybe I'm going to take off this week, I'm going to go surfing, or I don't feel like working. That's okay, because you know that you have those members in the membership site that are going to renew. And you know that you can expect X amount of money per month. So that's the ultimate goal, really.

Why the lifetime membership isn't the best model

James: Yeah, well, that's one of the types of memberships. So we'll cover the different types. I think my membership, ideally, is a highly valued, recurring solution. But you can't always get recurring, and that's really one of the things. So what factors are going to come into play? One might be the lifetime customer value.

If you could get the lifetime value upfront, then maybe you'd be looking at the onetime membership. And a lot of people have made sales this way. They sell \$2,000 or \$3,000 programs. And they put people in a group or whatever. And that's lifetime. [I don't like lifetime](#) because how long is the lifetime? Is it the lifetime of the product? Is it the lifetime of the customer? Is it the lifetime of the owner?

If you go 10 years down the track, you'll find very few people have still got old stuff. I will give you an example. One of my first memberships was a lifetime membership. About 2006, when people paid me a fee for my information product, rather than just give them a PDF, I would also run webinars for them.

I got a GoToWebinar subscription. I've had it for about 12 years, or 15 years now actually. I would run webinars for them, I would upload templates, I would give them special bonuses on other people's products, I would get people to give me things to give to my members. And I looked after that membership.

Now one of the plus sides of a lifetime membership is people keep subscribed for the updates, and they're there and accessible. One of the downsides is that they're likely not to be buying anything else from you unless you branch out into other areas. So I had someone last week email me and asked me if I still have templates for this website software that they purchased in 2006.

Not from me, but from the website company. And my bonus at the time was a cheat sheet on how to use the software and some templates. I couldn't find my templates from 15 years ago. So if that was pitched as a lifetime membership, they might be saying, Hey, you said it's for the lifetime. I never sold it as a lifetime membership. I just called it a member's area.

So be careful with your positioning. There are plenty of people out there, and I'm thinking specifically like [John Lee Dumas](#), who went from a one-time product to being able to turn it into a recurring subscription program. So you may not think you've got it.

There are also other big launch gurus who have turned their products; they actually resell it over and over again now to people for the new updated version that's not included in the original. And there's a fine line between how far you can push that needle.

Certainly with software, you're going to have to pay for certain upgrades. I just upgraded ScreenFlow, for example, and I had to pay to upgrade to version 10, because it moved from version nine, and they put extra things in. So you can do that with information products. But it is just a little bit difficult at times. So be careful.

One of the best ninja moves I have for my members is they have an upfront product, and it could be low ticket, medium ticket or high ticket, it doesn't matter. And I say build it, give them that product and a year's worth of support. And then have it recurring, the support component recurring. Because I have lots of products like that.

Even the original platform for my membership, which was Xenforo, I still pay every year to have a license extension. So I got my platform upfront, but I still have to pay. And frankly, there's a big difference between software, and I've just mentioned two, where you pay for ongoing support versus where you pay once and you never have any more payments.

Often that thing just falls off a cliff. So it's pretty tempting if you get your lifetime customer. You get all that money upfront. And then two years later, you want to get your nose pierced and go to Burning Man and throw in the towel and decide you're going to go into marriage counseling as a business instead of whatever else you're doing. And you leave all your customers wondering what happened to you.



And I got this long email yesterday from a client saying of all the people she's followed and tried courses of, I'm the person that has been consistent and ongoing delivery. But I've also had an ongoing recurring payment there to support those people. So big point here is, if you can come up with a recurring solution, and support people on an ongoing basis, you'll find that it's relatively easy to have an ongoing fee for that. And you'll have very happy customers. Your comments, John?

Four main components of a membership site

John: Yeah, I mean, it's very easy to actually set up a membership site program. A lot of people get too bogged down in trying to come up with amazing things. And that's something that we teach inside the [10XPRO Academy](#), the courses that you and I have created. At the end of the day, there's four main components of a membership site.

Basically, to answer the question, why would someone pay you every single month? What are they going to get for paying you 10 bucks, 90 bucks, 200 bucks, \$1,000 per month? What are they going to get in exchange for that money? They might get four types of things.

Number one is more content, maybe special training that you create about specific topics. So depending on your niche, you might have a need to create more content. For example, we have clients and members who are into stock trading, crypto trading. For them, it's amazing. They can create videos every single day about the new charts, about what's going on in the market, with the trade that they can create, and that's a beautiful membership site, because people pay them every single month to get access to those videos that are going to explain, Hey, maybe you should buy now or sell now, whatever. Right? So that's an example. So it's content.

Another component is what you do brilliantly, James, is having some kind of community, a forum or what we call a social wall, a private group, just a way for you to be with other like-minded people. So you can support each other, you can ask questions, Hey, I'm not sure about that. What do you guys think? Get some feedback. And that's a very powerful thing.

And of course, it's something that you want to have access to, therefore perfect for a subscription-based business, because you renew your access, you get access to the community, and now you're part of the community. That's the second component.

The third component is some kind of coaching. So having direct access to the person in charge of their website. The guy that you have been following, maybe James. Okay, I want to have coaching from James. So I'm going to join the membership program. So every single month, I can maybe ask James some questions, or John some questions.

That's what I do as well as part of your 10XPRO.io member, you have access to me every single week, you can ask me any questions via our live Q&A calls. So there's multiple ways of doing that coaching. That can be via a chat, one-on-one chat, that can be via Zoom, if you really want to do that. You can do it either privately.

Or the fourth component is also a coaching component. But it's a way of doing group coaching, which is what I do, and you also do that as well. So you really, in your membership site, you have those four components. You have the content, the community, the private coaching, and the group coaching. And the group coaching is part of the community, people can get group coaching there.

But it's also something that you can do, for example, via a live event, a live stream, and people will ask you many questions, and you are helping many people at the same time. So that's another form of coaching right there. So that's basically the main things that you want to have.

And I believe that anyone who is pretty much listening to us, you are an information publisher, you are a coach, you are basically helping people solve a specific problem. So you are in that type of market, which is perfect for a membership site. Because yes, you can build a community around any of those niches - guitar, losing weight, stock trading, real estate investing, online businesses, whatever, you can build a community. Of course, people want to join those private groups, where you guys can talk about private things that other people are not going to get access to. It's very viable.

And that's super easy to set up. You don't have to create another course or anything like that. Coaching, yes, everybody wants to be able to ask their own private question that they don't dare to ask on websites. They want to be able to ask someone like James so I can get a feedback, Yeah, John, you're doing it the right way. Good job. That's what people want, right? Or if you want to be able to have that special type of training.

So I believe that all of us here listening to that call, if you think hard, you will be able to know that, yeah, your business, most likely, if you're a coach, if you are creating courses, if you are helping people solve specific problems by delivering some kind of video, audio or content on a page, then yeah, you can add one of those elements.

And now you have a membership site, and you have something that people will absolutely want to pay on a regular basis to continue their access to that special kind of content.

The fixed-term membership option

James: Well, another way, you know, if you want to test the waters, I remember when I wanted to see if I wanted to do the high-level coaching, I actually set up what's called a fixed-term membership. And that is kind of like an information product that is staged over monthly payments. So you can do it over three months, six months, 12 months.

And I set up that first three-month program because I didn't know if I wanted to do it after three months. I wanted to see if people were interested in it. I wanted to see if I was interested in it. So the perfect middle ground is, say, Okay, I'm going to start this program. Back then it was \$599 per month for three months. That was the commitment. And I took it out to my audience.

And they came back and said, Yes, we're in. I had 20 people say, Yep, we're down for that. So I ran two separate groups of 10 for three months, and at the end of three months, I resold it and I said, Hey, if you want to stay, you can rejoin for another three months. And then I went back to my audience and said, Hey, the first three months have been and gone. This is how it went, this is what happened. If you'd like to join, let me know.

And now I had 40 people. 40 people paying \$599 per month for three months each. And at the end of that, I'm like, Stop. Okay. I don't mind doing this. But I do mind having to resell it every three months. The people evidently like it because they keep wanting to re-join, and then other people want to come in. So that's when I re-tooled, and I set up [SilverCircle](#) the way that it went from about 2010 through to 2020.

So for 10 years, I ran it on a forever program. It's still there, actually, I've got legacy members. But it changed in price. And it morphed over the years, but it became a forever program. So it started as a fixed-term membership, turned into a forever membership. And that's my favorite, like, forever memberships.

There's memberships that I'm going to continue to pay forever, as long as they continue to solve my problem. And the beauty of the market I'm in, the business entrepreneur, is even if you're at the top of the hill today, you can bet by next year or the year after, there'll be a complete change in scenario. We're in a completely different environment than we were two years ago.



You know, I was just going through our financial year here in Australia, looking at the last financial year, I'm really lucky to be in the industry I'm in. Well, luck by a little bit of selective choice, I'll give myself some credit. Whilst a lot of people had a hard time. There will be constant change. And if you have constant change, people will seek out the right people to go on that journey with, people who can help them with the challenges that are going to come up.

Choosing your membership model

So whatever market you're in, have a think about this, this is sort of an exercise from this podcast - do you have a one-time membership, like a lifetime membership, where people pay you, and they get stuff, and they're always a member, and you might sort of top it up, and you get all the value up front? But their problem is solved.

For example, when I did a motorcycle course. I went and got my license 20 years ago, and it's the kind of thing I do once. I get taken through the course, I graduate, I get my license, I've now ticked the box. And on occasion, we top it up with some advanced training or refresher. But for the most part, I don't need to be in a membership for that, because I got my ticket, I got my stamp, and away I go.

But if you want to test the waters, maybe try a fixed-term membership. Just say, Hey, for the next three months, I'm going to take you from here to there. And you think about that journey that you often talk about, John, what's that transformation you can do? But here's what I learned, and this is really important, and it comes from group dynamics. You go to all that effort to form a group, then there's that storming of the group, the new people will come in and figure out who's who.

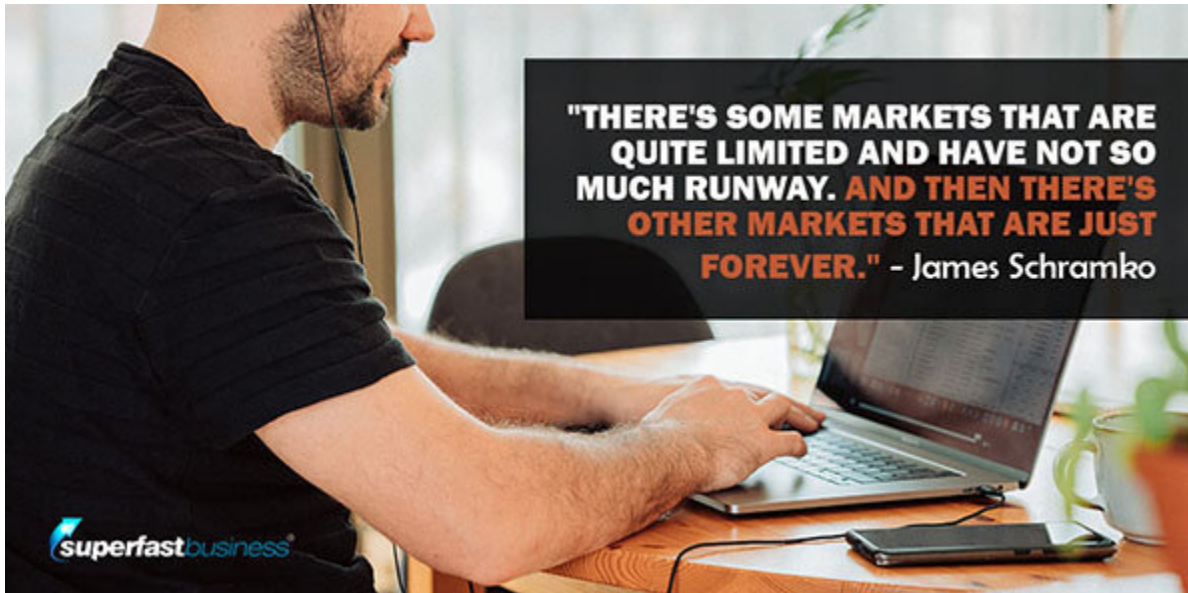
And then they start norming. So they normalize, so it gets flow. And then it starts performing, and everyone's getting great results, and then it ends. It's like summer camp, you know, and everyone has to cry, and they go back home and forget about all the great relationships they had. But if you have a forever program, it never has to end. You can keep that great harmony.

And that's why a lot of one-time memberships, or a lot of one-time course people, when they go to their audience and say, Would you be interested in sticking around and doing more stuff? A lot of people say, Absolutely. We want to. We're sad that it's going to finish. So the bottom line is, you may well be sitting on a goldmine of people who you've already sold to, who want to be a part of your club, your forever club. So that's who a membership is for.

If you've got that audience, and if they continue to look for you for guidance, and you can keep solving their problems and challenges, they will probably be happy to pay. Now it might be a step down, maybe you had \$1,000 program, and then they pay \$200 a year to maintain their membership status to the club.

And you think about this, people are members of golf clubs, they're members of yacht clubs, tennis clubs, Amazon Prime, Apple iTunes Match, Netflix, we're all members of these clubs and memberships that have ongoing services, and there's probably one within your little business catchment. So unless you've got a thing that if you solve once it's done forever, like an injury lawyer, right?

John: Like a wedding.



James: Yeah, a wedding. That's a tough market, or the baby market, the kid grows up, you sell all the stuff, and then you're into bigger problems and more expensive challenges. So far, it hasn't stopped. And I'm just seeing how far that can go. But anyway, yeah, there's some markets that are quite limited and have not so much runway. And then there's other markets that are just forever.

And I'm seeing great success in all sorts of markets. And we have them as [case studies](#) on SuperFastBusiness. A lot of them are 10XPRO members. You hear me talking about the program, 10XPRO.io. John is the founder of that. He operates it, does a great job of looking after all the members. And we're always talking about [memberships](#).

That's why we want to do this series. We're going to keep working our way through the stages of the membership, the ups and downs. And we're going to draw on our extensive knowledge. If you're listening to this episode, which is episode number 839?

John: Yeah, I think so, yes.

James: Send in your questions, if you've got a membership question, and we'll make sure we cover it.

So I'm here to say, it's kind of simple, the concept of a membership. It sounds easy, it's easy to sell, very sexy. It's easy to go and buy a course on it. You do have to do some work. And once it's set up, it's amazing. It's that locomotive that just keeps going.

So today's action step from this episode is, have a think about what kind of membership is good for you. Or, if you don't know, if you can't figure out if what you do is a membership or not, just flick me an email, james@superfastbusiness.com. Tell me about your situation. You can write it, or you can make me a Loom video. But please keep it under two minutes. Otherwise, I might not watch it. If you send me a half an hour video, I'm probably not going to watch it.

Ask me if I think that's a membership or not. And I'll either tell you I know of one and point you to it, where you can get inspiration. Or I'll tell you, I've never seen it before, and I'm not so sure, okay? Ultimately, I'm not going to know 100 percent, but there might be another mind on the job.

So send me an email, james@superfastbusiness.com. Tell me about your business or your idea. And I'll tell you if I've ever seen it. Or if I think it's got legs or not. If you've got technical questions or you want to ask about how the membership platform works, reach out to John at 10XPRO.io. His support team are on there. They do live chat in real lifetime with a human being most of the time, and they're very responsive.

So, John, thanks for coming along and sharing, if a membership is right for you. Hopefully, this has sort of narrowed the field a bit to get us into the next part, because in the next episode we're going to talk about the steps for creating a membership site, and I'm excited for that one.

John: Nice.



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