

Nicheology's Membership Academy

Lesson #12

5 Things That Might Be Holding You Back

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Introduction

For the past couple of weeks I've asked members to submit their questions about what we've covered so far so I can clarify or expand upon key points in the FTM model.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed questions! I've compiled the 5 "most asked" from among the entries and will be answering them in today's lesson.

There were also several "interesting" questions that were only asked once. I picked 2 of them to answer in this lesson as well.

Note: In almost every instance there are future lessons (sometimes NUMEROUS future lessons) which are centered on the topics of these questions. I will answer them today, but want you also to know that additional information is forthcoming as well.

So, let's dive into the goodies. (Don't be afraid, the pool is full! 😊)

Question #1: My largest question is how to consistently find new intriguing content to keep members subscribed for the long haul.

There are several different "idea hangouts" that I refer to over and over again for brainstorming topics for lessons. We will talk about many of these in featured lessons in the future. For now, let me make mention of three of my favorites, including THE BEST one of them all...

1) Magazine cover stories. One of my favorite "idea hangouts" is magazine covers. Find as many different magazines (one will suffice) related to your topic and identify the topics of the cover stories. Successful magazines are almost always tapped into the pulse of the industry. They have staff members and professional writers who research to find out what the demographic wants to know. And they push these "hot buttons" on their cover to attract attention to the magazine. You can capitalize on their research by simply following their lead.

2) Ezine article topics. Another great place to find ideas for your content is to review the latest and most popular ezine articles. What are others writing about? Specifically, you can visit article directories (such as

EzineArticles.com) and search for articles related to your FTM site. You should generate a lot of nice ideas there. Look for those that are the "most popular" viewed as these usually indicate a hot topic. Also, you can join as many lists (use a Gmail account, not your main account) from your competitors as possible to keep an eye on what they are writing about. This is usually another way to stay current on what your market wants to know.

3) Questions from members. The best of them all, however, is to simply ask your members what they want to know. Who better to tell you what will keep members active than the members themselves?! That's the best part of asking members: they tell you what they want, you deliver it, they stay put because you give them what they want. It's a virtually flawless arrangement. Unless there is a compelling reason to do so (I.E. Terminal illness, personal tragedy, financial disaster, etc.) most people will NOT quit buying something that is exactly what they want. That's just a consumer buying habit ... if we are getting what we want, we will keep buying as long as we keep getting what we want.

So, there are three great ways to brainstorm ideas for future lessons. When you keep delivering the content that your members crave, you'll keep your members happy and active in almost every instance.

Question #2: How do you handle undelivered email? I've had an FTM-type subscription service and have major problems with people not getting the emails, and it creates a big customer service issue.

That's not surprising. With the unreliability of email these days, it can be a problem. I actually had a bit of trouble with it myself when I first launched one of my fixed term membership sites and have subsequently went back into earlier lessons to make some strategic changes to address the problem. We are moving into month four and the delivery issues are virtually non-existent at this point.

Let me explain how to fix the common delivery problem. There are three things that I strongly encourage you to do in order to overcome email delivery issues...

1) Encourage whitelisting. It's best to always remind your members to whitelist your email address. Let them know what email address will be the originating source of your lessons so they can "approve" you ahead of time. This WILL NOT fix all the delivery problems, but it is a necessary first step and will reduce a lot of the filtering issues.

2) Recommend Gmail accounts. There are several ISPs and ESPs that are trigger happy when it comes to blocking emails. (I won't name them here, but there are about 5 that are T-R-O-U-B-L-E.) When someone emails me to let me know that they are not receiving the lessons – or are receiving some of the lessons, but not all of them – then I recommend they open up a free Gmail account to use in receiving the lessons. This almost always fixes the delivery problem. In fact, to date, I've never had anyone using a Gmail account who reported a missing lesson that I am aware of. Here is something you could do to provide an easy fix for this problem, go back into lesson #1 and add the following box in the opening page...

URGENT: Your Email Address ... Potential Delivery Problems

There are a couple of ISPs that are spam trigger happy and unfortunately yours may be one of them. Oftentimes whitelisting myname@membershipxyz.site will remedy this. However, in some cases it is necessary to use a different email address.

Please check your email and if you do not receive the "welcome" email within 24 hours then I recommend you get a free Gmail email address (not Yahoo or Hotmail as they are trigger happy too!) to use for these lessons.

You can get a free Gmail email address in just a few short minutes at <http://mail.google.com/mail/signup> . Once you have done so, please email me back and I'll manually reconcile the new email address to your account so you'll properly receive the lessons.

Feel free to use the above box in your own opening lesson. (Just change the email address to your own!) I have found that this has eliminated a huge portion of the delivery problems.

3) Make lessons accessible. If you'll notice, before the introduction of every lesson you receive from me in this series, there is the following note...

Note: Download links for previous lessons will be at the close of each PDF file in case you missed or misplaced an earlier edition.

And, sure enough, at the close of every lesson will be download links to everything from lesson #1 through the current lesson being read (including links to any bonuses).

This isn't in there by chance. I've included it to train members to look there if they have missed a lesson. This cuts down on my customer support emails, lets members quickly track down anything they might have missed and eliminates problems associated with a random lack of email delivery.

If you do those three things you should cut down almost all of your problems associated with not receiving lessons due to email delivery issues.

Question #3: Most membership sites have a "forum", but with the FTM model there isn't a forum. Will you be addressing this in the future?

Let me begin by giving you my feelings about the "community" aspect of a membership site ...

I think it's VASTLY overrated.

That's not to say that it doesn't have it's place, nor is it to say that it's not useful and even wanted. I'm just saying from my own experience, many people like the idea of it, but most people don't use, for example, a forum.

In the three years that I've had a forum at ListAndTraffic.com we've had about 1,000 posts to the forum ... that's from 2,500 active members for over 30 months.

Do the math.

I think there are much better ways to build community such as having periodical live chats, teleseminar calls, etc. I will be talking about these things and even forums in future lessons, but they aren't a necessity for the FTM model ... even in the Web 2.0 world.

If you want to provide a forum for members, it's easy enough to do. Set one up at your web site and issue a password that changes every month (so inactive members can't view the forum).

Question #4: Why would someone pay a monthly fee for info when so much free information is available online?

This is an excellent question and one that I'll answer momentarily. But, let me say that the availability of free information – even a LOT of free information – isn't a problem. Think of the diet books on the market. There are a TON of diet books and a TON of free information available on the topic. And yet there continue to be huge-selling NEW books released in that market.

There are some reasons that this is so which I'll address now. Let me suggest three ways to get people to pay a monthly fee even though free information may be readily available...

1) Unique Content. The primary reason why people will pay despite free information is the idea of "unique content". That is, you have lessons that are exclusive to your site. When you have methods, case studies, ideas, experiences, etc. that no one else has, then you FORCE interested prospects to buy from you because they simply can't get it anywhere else. As much as possible, you should always strive to present original ideas. Obviously, this is not always an easy thing to pull off. But, when you can do so you eliminate the "*I can get this online for free*" barrier.

NOTE: One thing that is ALWAYS uniquely yours is this: your story. When you have an interesting story to share about your background and your experiences, you will be able to share content from a starting point that likely isn't shared by others.

2) Unique Concept. One thing that is always under your control is the presentation and organization of your content. And that is your primary method of separating the free from the paid. Even more important than WHAT you share (the "content") in a crowded market is HOW you share it (the "concept") In the absence of uniquely original information is the way in which you share that content. Let me offer some examples...

Example 1: I spoke earlier of the "dieting books" market which is super crowded with both free and paid information. Yet books like "3 Hour Diet" and "The Maker's Diet" and "Eat This, Not That" are incredible NEW sellers in the marketplace because they are unique in how they are presented. The "3 Hour Diet" approach is to eat meals more frequently. The "Maker's Diet" deals with a diet based on Biblical principles and practices. "Eat This, Not That" shares how to pick better foods. These are all unique in concept.

Example 2: Look no further than this fixed term membership site for a great example of this. Creating an autoresponder membership site isn't new content. But, I slapped the term "Fixed Term Membership Site" onto it and offered it as an actually autoresponder membership site. This is a unique presentation of the content, making it something desirable even in a market where there are many products and services available on the topic of membership sites.

Whether you present the content in a different media than others do, target specific demographics (Christians, seniors, stay at home moms, etc.), organize your content by some unique acronym (I.E. List P.R.O.F.I.T.™ System) or some other unique way or sharing your FTM site lessons, this is a great way that ANYONE can sell in a "freebie" world.

3) Unique Connect. The third and final way comes after you have a following. If you have an established name in your market, then people will buy from you because they "connect" with you. They like you. They trust you. They find value in your content. They like your style. And it doesn't really matter that there are others out there hocking similar wares ... they're a fan of yours and they'll buy what you're offering.

I have customers who have literally been with me since I started back in August 2000. Despite the fact that internet marketing is one of the most crowded markets there is, people buy my stuff because they have "connected" with me in some way.

Now, having said all of that, your sales process goes a LONG way to converting freebie seekers into paying customers.

The right mix of free lead generation content, salesletter, email sequences, etc. will do much to convince people to pay for information that they might otherwise think they could obtain for free.

We will continue to talk about ways to improve the sales process (and talk at length about pre-selling with free content) in future lessons.

Question #5: Should I offer a free lesson or some other freebie to presell leads on buying a membership?

Yes, you should definitely do this. We're going to talk about NUMEROUS ways in which to accomplish this in a series of future lessons, but I want to share briefly about it here in this lesson.

Remember last week when we talked about how to create "useful, but incomplete" lessons to convince members to buy something additional for you?

The exact same strategy can be used to create a free report to give away in order to convince people to join your FTM site.

So, review last week's lesson again and follow the same blueprint for creating a free report to give away as a lead generator.

Now, let me give you a great hint for how to "give away" the report...

- 1) Create another copy of your main sales page and entitle it specialreport.html.
- 2) Add a download link to the top of that page for your special report.
- 3) Upload the special report and accompany download page.
- 4) Use your advertising to direct visitors to that page to obtain the free report.

Now, this is a great tactic because...

Firstly, it allows you to give away the free report which will convert a percentage of readers into paying customers. As visitors download and read the report, there will be those who decide to buy a membership as a result.

Secondly, it allows you to get the visitor to your sales page at the same time. When they arrive at the page, they will download the report. BUT, the majority of them will also take a look at the sales page while they are there! Some will buy the membership as a result of this initial visit. And of those who don't, you've subconsciously gotten your product in their mind. The next time they see the offer, they will likely be "warmer" to it because of the slight familiarity.

Note: There is another step you can add to this, but I don't want to get too technical now as I'll cover it in an upcoming lesson. You can create an "opt-in page" for the visitor to join a list PRIOR to being directed to the specialreport.html page. This will allow you to build a list AND accomplish all we've looked at above.

Interesting Question #1: How do you finish a program? I know I'll stick with Membership XYZ to the end, but if I want to get started right now with a shorter membership program, say 3 or 6 months in length, how do I conclude it? With a big blank page that says, "THE END"? Of course, I'm joking around but I'm sure you get my drift.

I have a super-duper lesson that I'm going to roll out as the next to the last lesson in our sequence (you're only 9 months away ☺), so I'm not going to ruin the big bang surprise.

But...

I will tell you what will be coming in that last lesson to some extent in answering this question.

Let me share a universal marketing concept that directly answers your question...

There is no END!

There are no ends in marketing. There are only opportunities for new beginnings.

That is, you offer a "congratulations" for completing the FTM and then you make every effort to enroll the graduating student into ANOTHER FTM site or some additional funnel of offers.

This can either be...

- 1) Advanced. Elementary school. Junior high school. High school. College. Medical school. See the pattern? HIGHER education. When your members "graduate" from the FTM site, you can offer them an "advanced" FTM site to take their existing knowledge and experience to the next level.
- 2) Related. Another option is to create another FTM site that is centered on a topic "related" to the original FTM site. Someone who has just mastered a process is a prime candidate for another process that connects to the initial one.

We'll get to this in due time ... but, no, no, no ... don't ever put up a "THE END" sign. ☺ There is no end.

Interesting Question #2: Assuming one does not have the background and experience that you possess, what is a reasonable amount of man hours required before a motivated person of slightly above average intelligence can, in fact, acquire all the skills and knowledge necessary to make a living online working just a few hours each week from home?

The FTM model is setup so that you can have your site up and running in the first month if you are not "experienced".

(I could literally have one setup in 8 hours starting from scratch ... but I know the process and am highly experienced.)

I believe having the FTM setup after a month of following through the lessons is reasonable.

Note: I think this is so reasonable that it was at this point in the course that we had a house wife started this program, and we put this course to the test. This is the ultimate test as our house wife knows how to check her email and that's it. (And she even messes that up sometimes! ☺) In about 4 weeks I'll report back to you with the results of her efforts and give you an actual look at her FTM site. We have not helped her.

How many "hours" will this take for the first month? Obviously, there are a lot of factors involved in each individual. So, this isn't a scientific formula, nor is it anything that will universally apply.

- 1) In the overview lesson (lesson #1) I broke down the steps and assigned a "time" for each of the activities. This resulted in 16 hours of invested time for someone who has experience similar to mine.
- 2) For someone who doesn't have similar experience to mine, I would think it would be reasonable to add another 16 hours for reading the setup lessons (Lessons #2-4) so you can understand how to do each of the steps I've outlined.

- 3) Then, let's add another 16 hours to complete the steps at a slower pace than an experienced person would do.
- 4) Finally, let's add another 16 hours for any extra research you might need or just more time to complete the steps.

Bottom line: someone working 16 hours per week for 4 weeks should be able to setup an FTM site. If you only work 8 hours per week, then in two months time you can reasonably expect to have it setup.

Now...

The process certainly can be SPED UP dramatically by doing the following...

Outsource activities you find overwhelming. *If you have it within your budget, you certainly can get others to do any activities that you find overwhelming or time-consuming. For example: One of the biggest challenges that most coaching clients have mentioned is writing a salesletter. This is something that can easily be outsourced to someone else, taking the difficult task out of your hands.*

Now, I realize that some people simply don't have the budget. And that's understandable.

But...

For those that do, it's almost inexcusable not to invest money in outsourcing. If you started a "brick and mortar" "real world" business, you'd pay for stock, property lease, utilities and their deposits, insurance and a variety of other startup costs.

Why not invest in outsourcing a salesletter? Or getting someone to setup the technical part of your FTM site for you? Or even hiring a personal coaching to guide you? This is something you should strongly consider.

But, even if you don't go that route, there's no question in my mind that anyone can have their FTM setup in the first month, working a couple of hours each day. Two months if you really want to take it slow.

This Week's Assignment

1) Pick one and put it into practice. Review the 7 questions that I've answered and identify ONE activity that really resonates with you. Put this into practice this week.

That's it for this lesson.

See you sometime next week.

Coming Up Next ...

Lesson #13: *"How To Add Hundreds Of New Paying Members"*

In this lesson, I'll share a "fail-proof" method for getting a huge increase in the subscriber base for your FTM site. Anyone who uses this strategy can expect a LOT of new subscribers ... hundreds, possibly even thousands. Yes, it really is that good.