

Recurring Income

To recap: The key business platform is your network, and your key character trait is trust. Your Web site's purpose now is loyalty – to ensure your subscribers remain members.

For Recurring Income, we create a “membership site” rather than the “members-only area” we discussed for Bundled Income. This is more than just changing the name; it's also a shift in your thinking. You're no longer dealing only with clients; you're dealing with “members” (or “subscribers”, but I'll use the term “member” here), who have a perceived value about their membership. They expect a better level of service, so be prepared to provide it to them.

Most of your members will know you personally, because they come from your clients and audiences – as for Bundled Income. However, this isn't always the case, and some members will find the membership site through other people. Again, this creates a different relationship between you and them. In particular, they will assess their membership based on the value you offer in the membership site, not on their relationship with you.

Broadly, your membership site offers three things:

1. *Resources*: The material that members download at their leisure. As with Bundled Income, this can be material you create yourself, or material you find elsewhere. An attraction of a membership site is that the owner sorts through the overwhelming amount of information available elsewhere and presents only what's relevant.

2. *Community*: A way for your members to interact with each other; for example, individual profiles, blogs, a chat room, and an on-line forum.
3. *Access*: Special access to you and other experts in your network via teleseminars, member-only events, discounts on other events and SMS access.

One of the biggest advantages of a membership site is the recurring stream of income it generates for you. On the flip side, it commits you to providing value regularly. So be sure you're ready to make that on-going commitment.

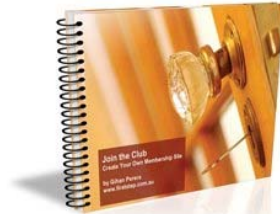
Coming Up ...

I'll now give you another 10 things to add to your Web site for Recurring Income:

- ⇒ *Resources*: Resource library, self-paced learning, teleseminars and webinars
- ⇒ *Access*: Other experts
- ⇒ *Community*: Profiles, private mailing list
- ⇒ *Management*: Marketing partnerships, membership tracking, payment processing, outsourcing

You might find at this stage that you no longer require the members-only area you created for Bundled Income, because much of that material goes into your membership site. However, you might choose to keep it anyway, because it can still serve a useful purpose. For instance, you can still use it to deliver post-presentation material to audiences, even if they haven't subscribed to your membership site.

For more about membership sites, get the e-book and audio *Join the Club* at my Web site www.GihanPerera.com. You'll learn how to build an effective membership site and keep it running effectively.



26. Resource Library

In A Nutshell

Create a library of relevant resources for your members.

In the previous section about Bundled Income, we talked about creating a resource library for your clients. This extends that idea, with three significant differences:

1. It must be stand-alone material that's complete in itself. So it's no longer good enough to only provide follow-up material to your presentations or coaching sessions.
2. You'll be expected to keep the resource library current, partly by constantly adding new material and partly by weeding out old, irrelevant material (for example, deleting links to Web sites that no longer exist).
3. You'll probably have a greater mix of other people's material now. Your members value your ability to filter, sort and present other people's material in a relevant and engaging way.

Here are some examples of the kind of material you can provide in your resource library: Self-assessments, e-books, audio programs, video tutorials, articles, links to Web sites, workbooks, templates, slide shows, on-line tutorials and on-line courses.

As the resource library grows, it's important to provide ways for your members to find information easily. Broadly, you can provide access in five ways: Browsing, tagging, searching, personalising and sharing. You don't have to provide all five methods, and most membership sites don't. But it's worth knowing about them so you can plan for them in the future.

Browsing

The simplest option is *browsing*, where you organise your material in a hierarchy of documents, which users can browse by clicking through headings and sub-headings. We've seen this already in the section on Bundled Income, and I mentioned the Thought Leaders site, which has a membership site at thoughtleaderscentral.com, as an example:



Document Vault

Search:

Members - log in here.

Member Password:

[Forgot your password?](#)

If you're already a member, log in by typing your member password above. Click the "Forgot your password?" link if you've forgotten it.

- [Communication](#) 5 (2 new)
- [Enrollment](#) 35 (4 new)
- [Execution](#) 38 (3 new)
- [Expertise](#) 6 (4 new)
- [Foresight](#) 10 (1 new)

- [Mindsets](#) 3 (2 new)
- [Personal Leadership](#) 40 (3 new)
- [Pitching](#) 8 (1 new)
- [Positioning](#) 7
- [Uniqueness](#) 8

This organisational method has three advantages:

1. It's clear and neat, and easy for your members to understand.
2. It's useful for members who are browsing the library to see what's available.
3. It's useful for members who only have a vague idea of their needs, and don't know exactly what to search for.

However, it does have one major drawback, which is common to all filing systems: It relies on you and your members thinking the same way. Otherwise, they may waste a lot of time looking for something that *is* there, but in a different part of the library.

A related drawback is that some items can reasonably belong in more than one place. For example, does an article "Personal Branding for Entrepreneurs" belong in the Entrepreneur section or the Branding section? The answer is, of course, both. This leads to the next option.


Tagging

Because items in your document library can be classified in different ways, *tagging* allows you to put labels, or "tags", on each. This makes it easy for your members to easily find all items with the same tag.

This is common on Web 2.0 sites like YouTube, Flickr, Blogger and Wikipedia. You can do the same, choosing appropriate tags for each item.

For example, on the Thought Leaders membership site mentioned earlier, items are tagged with the author's name, the source and other relevant keywords. This makes it easy for members to quickly

find other items by the same author, from the same source, or on the same topic. Here's an example:



Leveraging Ideas - October 2008
By [Gihan Perera](#), [Rowdy McLean](#), [Anne Riches](#)
[Leveraging Ideas podcast](#)
In this issue of Leveraging Ideas, hosted by Gihan Perera, Anne Riches looks inside your brain to explain what hits your hot buttons, and Ron McLean teaches you how to implement service as a business strategy.



Tagging helps to solve the problem of a single hierarchy. However, members are still restricted to finding material by the tags *you've* chosen for them.

Searching

At some point, your resource library will grow to a point where browsing and tagging alone aren't enough. The next option – and one I'm sure is familiar to you – is *searching*.

This is the same concept as searching on Google, though of course you don't require anything as powerful as Google's search. A simple word search is usually sufficient, where the member types a word or phrase, and the resource library finds all matching documents.

As an extra feature, it's nice to allow members to search for recent additions to the library – for example, by letting them choose a time frame, like this:

Search:

These first three options will cover most of your members' needs for finding information. The next two options are icing on the cake for your members.

Personalising

If your members use the resource library regularly – as you hope they will – it's a nice touch to let them *personalise* the results. For example, you could:

- ⇒ Remember the most recent and most frequent pages they visit (like their Web browser's history), to make it easy for them to find information again.
- ⇒ Let them choose how many search results they see per page.
- ⇒ Let them create a Bookmarks or Favorites list, just like their browser does.

These are advanced features, and not necessary for an effective membership site. However, they do provide that added personal touch that makes life easier for your members. You can also provide many of these features using the same system as the next option.

Sharing

Finally, you can allow your members to *share* their search experiences with other members. For example, Amazon.com pioneered this idea with the "People who bought this book also bought ..." service, which helped readers find other books on related topics.

The beauty of this system is it's self-organising. *You* don't have to create all the links between related products; and your members

don't have to do this either. They simply share their preferences with others, and the system facilitates the sharing.

Although this might sound difficult to do, you can use third-party services to do most of the work for you. For example, Digg.com and Clipmarks.com are both widely-used "bookmarking" services that help users share their favourite on-line places. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, you could teach your members how to use these services for your resource library.

One word of caution, though: If you do use these services, be sure your password protection system is robust. Your members will be exposing your membership site to the world, so be sure only registered members can get access to the protected material.

27. Self-Paced Learning

In A Nutshell

Create ways for members to enrol in on-line training courses on demand.

Although I've mentioned e-mail courses already, I want to highlight them here, because they could become a significant part of your membership offering.

In the Bundled Income section, we talked about an e-mail course as a way to complement, supplement and reinforce your live presentations and sessions. Now consider it as a way to completely *replace* the live version. You re-package the content of your live events into electronic form, and bundle it together into a coherent

learning experience. The package might be a mix of articles, worksheets, self-assessment quizzes, audio clips, e-mail courses, video tutorials and more. You then make it available in your membership site, and allow members to enroll in it at any time.

It does take some skill to re-package content for on-line learning, especially if you're a keynote speaker, because so much of the value you offer is based on a live experience. It's also unlikely a conference organiser will subscribe their delegates to your membership site in place of a presentation slot! However, even in this case, you can focus on the *lessons* in your keynote presentation, and then create supporting material to put them into practice.

Of course, you need to think carefully about taking this step into on-line learning, because it might harm your live events. However, despite this potential drawback, it could have significant benefits:

- ⇒ It opens up new geographical markets, for people who are too far away to attend your live events.
- ⇒ It opens up new economic markets, for people who can't afford to attend the live events.
- ⇒ It could salvage a relationship with a client who's feeling the pinch and is cutting costs.
- ⇒ Even if it does adversely affect income from live events, you're turning one-off income into Recurring Income, which could be a good long-term strategy.

Finally, keep in mind the world is a much smaller place, and somebody somewhere else is probably planning this or doing it already. So ignoring or deferring this opportunity might be dangerous to your long-term future.

That said, in my experience, many speakers, coaches, trainers are *too* eager to convert their live presentations into on-line training.

The reason this is a mistake is because it's difficult to sell *anything* on-line. If you're keen to pursue this option of on-line training, it's far easier to start by offering it to your members instead. It's free (or at least, it's included in their membership), so it's an easy "sell"; it's an added service to your members; and you test and refine it in a trusted environment.

For more about e-mail courses, get the e-book and audio program *Keep the Learning Alive* at my Web site www.GihanPerera.com. You'll learn how to convert your presentation materials into e-mail courses.



28. Teleseminars and Webinars

In A Nutshell

Create regular "live" educational programs to give members additional value.

Although a membership site has many advantages, one of its drawbacks is it creates distance between you and your members. This is especially a problem if many of your members came from your clients and audiences, who valued the experience of *you*, not just your material.

One way to resolve this problem is to *give* them access to you again, in the form of teleseminars and webinars. They're inexpensive, convenient, efficient, high value to your audience, and they re-connect you with your members.

A *teleseminar* is simply a telephone conference call, where you and the participants all dial a common telephone number, and you conduct your seminar over the phone. There are no visual aids, though of course you can – and usually will – send them a handout, workbook or slide presentation in advance.

A *webinar* is similar, except your participants also have access to a Web page where they can watch your presentation slides while listening to the call. Some webinar services include advanced features, such as a virtual whiteboard, a chat facility for Q&A, interactive polling during your presentation, and even the audience viewing selected windows on your computer (so you can demonstrate things in action).

For convenience, I'll use the term "teleseminar" here to cover both teleseminars and webinars.

A third option is a *video conference*, which – as the name implies – includes video as well (not just your slide presentation, but live video of you on their computer screen). Although this is notionally better than just audio, in practice it's more expensive, more complex to set up, and might not add any real value to your audience. So we're not going to discuss this any further here.

Why now?

Teleseminars aren't new, but they have recently become more attractive, for three reasons:

1. *Teleseminar services are inexpensive and easy to use.* That wasn't always the case, but it's certainly true now.
2. *Long-distance phone calls are cheap.* They're even cheaper if your audience uses phone cards, Skype, or other VOIP services. Even if they don't understand what that means and just use their standard telephone line, it's easy to get a cheap long-distance telephone plan nowadays.
3. *People are more comfortable with them.* It doesn't take much for somebody to participate in a teleseminar – all they do is dial a telephone number or visit a Web site. But some people still have a fear of them, simply because they're novel. Fortunately, this perception is changing, as teleseminars become more common.

Conducting a teleseminar

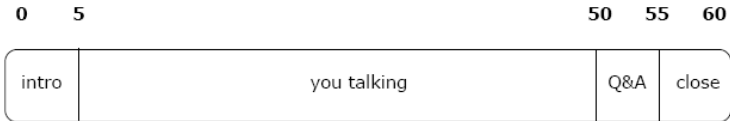
If you're new to this technology, start by participating in some teleseminars as an audience member. Discover for yourself what it's like to listen, then to ask questions. You'll learn a lot just by that experience alone.

When it comes to designing your own program, forget you're doing a teleseminar, and design it just like any other program. There's nothing magical about the teleseminar format. You don't have to design the program differently just because you're doing it as a teleseminar (Well, this is not strictly true. There *are* some things you can do to make best use of the teleseminar format. But they are minor details, not major structural design issues).

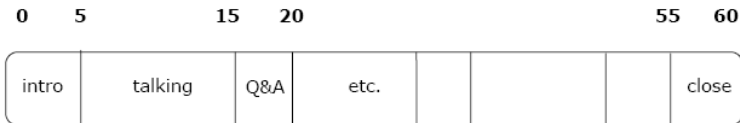
The fact is, whatever type of program you deliver now, you can probably adapt it to the teleseminar format. For example:

- ⇒ If you give *keynote presentations*, design your teleseminar as a keynote-style presentation, with the aim of changing their

attitudes or shifting their beliefs. It will probably run for 45-60 minutes, with you doing most of the talking, and perhaps a brief Q&A session towards the end.



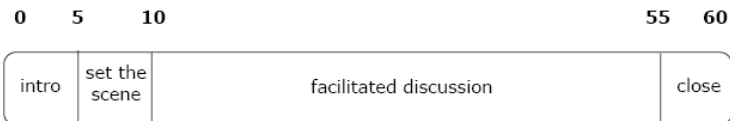
⇒ If you offer your teleseminar as a *training session*, you'll be teaching them skills. It might be about an hour long, with a handout they download in advance, exercises they complete during the session. You'll still do most of the talking, but you might have more than one break for them to ask you questions, and you'll allow more time for questions.



⇒ If you run a teleseminar as a *group coaching session*, you'll be asking lots of questions and giving the audience more time to answer them.



⇒ Similar, if you do *facilitation* by teleseminar, you'll set the scene, and then open the line for the audience to do most of the talking (with your guidance, of course).



- ⇒ If you're conducting *mentoring sessions* by teleseminar, you'll combine the training and coaching modes – that is, a mix of teaching and asking, with some time for you to speak and some time for them to interact with you and with each other.
- ⇒ If you're using teleseminars to conduct *interviews*, treat this like a one-on-one facilitation, where you and a guest do most of the talking, and your audience listens silently.

There's more to it than the brief overview I've given here. But I hope it helps you to put teleseminars in perspective.

For more about teleseminars, get the e-book and audio *Tell the World* at my Web site www.GihanPerera.com. You'll learn how to plan, deliver and promote teleseminars effectively.



29. Other Experts

In A Nutshell

Give your members access to other experts you know and trust.

As much as your members value *your* expertise, they also value your ability to give them access to other experts. Don't underestimate this feature – for some people, it might be the *most* important part of their membership.

This is where you tap into your own network of colleagues and clients (sometimes called “your million dollar Rolodex”) to find suitable people to introduce to your member community. The easiest way to involve them is to interview them for a teleseminar or for a recorded audio program.

Look for experts in these broad areas:

- ⇒ *Niche experts*: You’re the expert in the broad area, but these experts have skills in a narrower field. For example, if you teach sales skills, you might bring in experts on relationship selling (a topic niche), selling to professional service firms (a market niche), selling to Generation Y (a demographic niche), or selling in China (a geographical niche).
- ⇒ *Strategic experts*: This is the opposite, where you’re the niche expert and they have broader expertise.
- ⇒ *Complementary experts*: These people operate in a related field of expertise. For example, if you teach sales skills, you might bring in experts on negotiation, key account management and supply chain logistics.
- ⇒ *Member Needs experts*: These experts might have nothing at all to do with your topic area, but they fit other areas of your members’ lives. For example, in December or January, you might bring in an expert on goal setting and strategic planning; or if there’s an economic downturn, you might bring in an expert on financial planning.
- ⇒ *Celebrities*: If you have access to celebrities, media personalities or other public figures, it could be worth bringing them to your clients. Sometimes it’s not even necessary to create a link between them and your area of expertise – it’s enough they are a celebrity.
- ⇒ *Clients*: Finally, if you have clients who have successfully implemented your ideas and strategies, interview them as a

case study for your members. Often, they will be happy to share their experiences with others, simply for the opportunity to help other people.

Making it worth their while

If your guest experts serve the same market as you, there's an obvious advantage to them when you expose them to your members. This might be sufficient motivation for them to take part.

However, this isn't always the case, and you might like to invite experts who don't have anything to gain from their participation. In this case, of course it's fair to give them something in return. Sometimes this might have to be money, but often they will be happy with payment in other ways. For example:

- ⇒ For people who don't operate a business themselves, it can be exciting and rewarding to be treated as an expert. So if you're recording an interview, create some CDs for them to give to family and friends.
- ⇒ For those who do operate a business and can use the recording for their own promotion, give them a master copy of the recording and the rights to create as many copies as they wish.
- ⇒ Some people will be happy with a gift or gift voucher.
- ⇒ Some will do it without expecting anything in return, simply as part of their relationship with you.

If you do give your experts the right to distribute the recording themselves, don't worry too much about what price they will charge and who they will reach. It's unlikely they will overlap much with your market, so just let them use it as they wish.

30. Member Profiles

In A Nutshell

Allow members to create their own profiles, promote themselves and interact with each other – like a private version of Facebook.

When I first started using the Internet in 1988, we didn't have membership sites, but we did have on-line communities in the form of mailing lists and discussion forums. As a member of those communities, we had very limited ability to position ourselves. It was nothing more than a name, e-mail address and perhaps a three-line "signature" (There was no Web at the time, so even the signature couldn't include a link to more information).

It's different now. Sites like Facebook and Myspace have introduced Internet users to the idea of creating a full-page profile – sometimes even more than a full page. Many membership sites and on-line communities have followed suit. Not all of them provide this service, but if your software platform does allow it, I highly recommend you enable this feature and encourage members to use it.

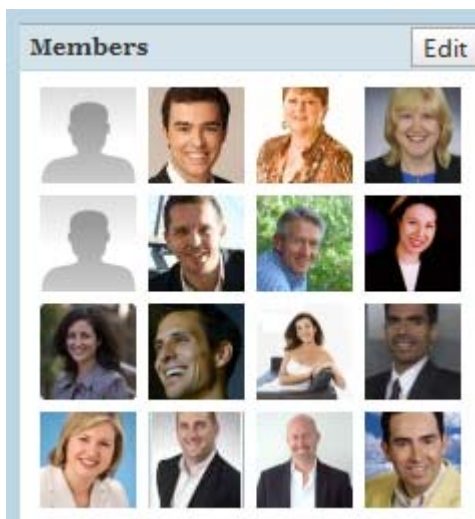
This is their "home" in the community, so it gives them a greater sense of belonging, and hence a greater commitment to it. Allow them to add photos, post videos, link to their Web site and blog, give away reports and e-books, and even promote themselves as loudly as they wish.

Some membership site software even allows members to personalise the look and feel of their profile page. They can change

the colour scheme, move elements around on the page, and even add interesting “widgets” (for example, quotations, cartoons, jokes and news feeds) to show off their personality. Unless there’s a good reason to block these features (if, for example, your members are corporate employees whose employers don’t want this customisation), allow as much as possible. Give your members the chance to express themselves, and they’re more likely to remain loyal.

Of course, some markets lend themselves more to this than others. If your members are business owners, who understand the importance of positioning, branding and self-promotion, they are more likely to use their profile actively.

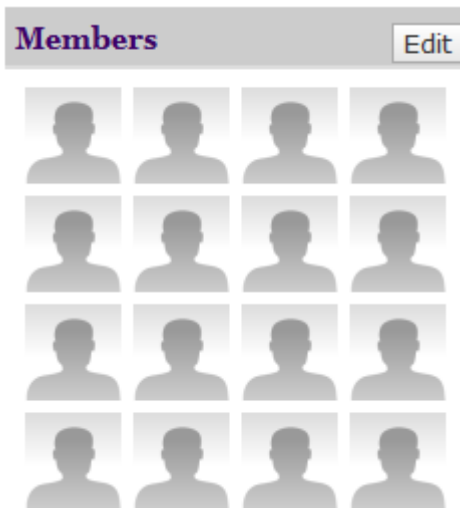
For example, here’s a snapshot showing photos of the 16 most recent members of one membership site I manage – this is a group of entrepreneurs:



As you can see, almost all of them have included a photograph on their profile – and in many cases, they have paid for professional

photographs. Only two haven't included photos – the two near the top left, who just have a placeholder.

In contrast, here's the same snapshot view of another community I manage – this time of public service employees, who have far less need to promote themselves:



However, although these members haven't published their photos, they are far more active within the community, connecting with each other, asking questions and engaging in discussions. In contrast, members of the first community position themselves more strongly when they first join, but don't use the community as actively afterwards.

Every community is different! So don't expect your members to jump in and fill their profile pages with relevant, engaging information. They'll do it if it matters to them; otherwise they won't.