MEMBERSHIP FOR NEWBIES

DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES:

Pursuant to the Federal Trade Commission Guidelines:

MATERIAL CONNECTION DISCLOSURE:

Why people join membership sites does vary considerably, but one of the most compelling reasons, beyond access to new, valuable information or resources, is the need to communicate and to belong to a group of like-minded individuals.

There are several estimates about how much money has been spent on membership websites in the last year or two. Those estimates range from several million dollars to over a billion dollars. This business model can provide the income you want. However, the reader should take note, running a membership site is definitely not a "publish and forget" process it will require some steady work on your part.

Some membership sites have stood the test of time, whilst others have simply fizzled out like a burning star, and some just never get off the ground.

I've seen a lot of good – actually GREAT membership site ideas that never see the light of day because of what I perceive to be the biggest single obstacle that most marketers hit when starting a new membership site.

"THIS OBSTACLE BEING THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS BEHIND THE SITE."

People get lost in the minefield of which script to use, well there's something I want to point out right here and now, **concentrate on the CONTENT –Don't obsess about the setting up, obsess about keeping it going!**

<div align="center">

Your membership site can be built around anything you like.

Pick a niche you are passionate about and take some action!

One Step At A Time.

</div>

Let's get started.

Before you can decide on which script you will need, you will need to decide on what kind of membership site you are going to run, let's take a look at the options.

You can run a free membership site. This is where no subscription payment is required; your members only need to register on the site to become a member.

You can run a paid for membership fixed term course, you charge your members either a one off fee or monthly installments and deliver their content to them on a weekly or monthly schedule for a fixed term.

You can run a paid for membership site where your members continue to pay you on a monthly basis. You can offer different levels of membership at different prices, you've seen these sites, they offer Bronze, Silver or Gold memberships, all priced differently, some sites even have a "lifetime" one off fee.

Whichever method you choose, there is one essential tool that you are going to need and that is an auto-responder, this is the one thing you cannot do without. As we are looking to set up our membership site for free, we are going to use a free auto-responder called Listwire

Other free auto-responders you can use are

http://www.freeautobot.com/
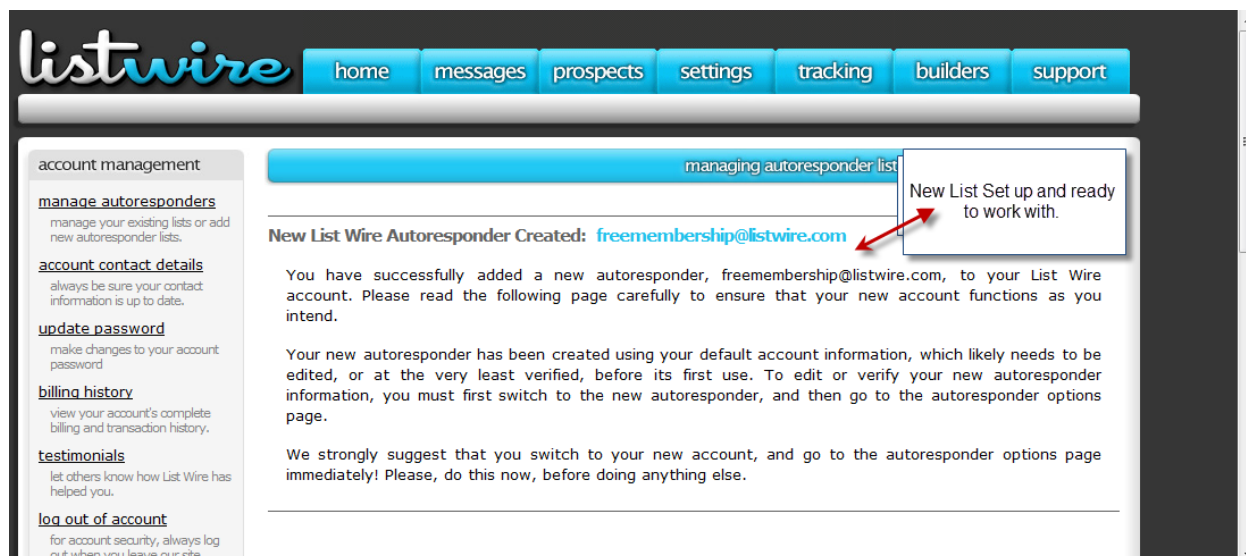
http://www.sendfree.com/

http://www.freefollowup.com/

Just use Google to search for "free auto-responder" you will be amazed how many there are out there. I personally like **Listwire.**

Once you have created your account at listwire. Create a new auto-responder list specifically for your membership site.

Simply follow the instructions on the screen and your list will be set up in under 5 minutes. You can have up to 12 free auto responders.

All the menu items you need are located on the dashboard once you have logged in.
The messages tab opens up the widow for you to add, edit, delete and test your messages.

You can click on any of the sub tabs to check your follow up messages, your broadcast messages etc. If you are going to be asking your subscribers to pay you once a month, then make sure the messages are set to be sent at 30 day intervals.

The prospects tab opens up the window for you to add, edit and delete or even blacklist members.

The prospects tab is also the tab you need to create your subscription form or your squeeze frame for your site. Everything is editable from within the dashboard.

The settings tab again opens up other areas of the program where you can customize your information for your messages.
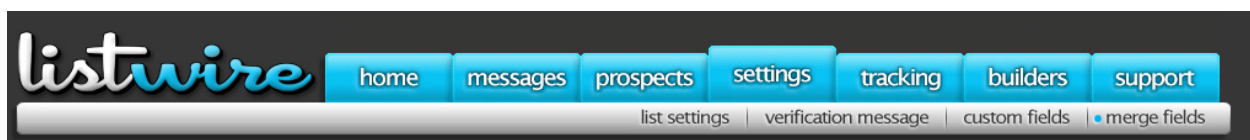
The tracking tab allows you to add any tracking you want to add to your messages.

The tab titled builders is list wires' own co-registration advertising section.

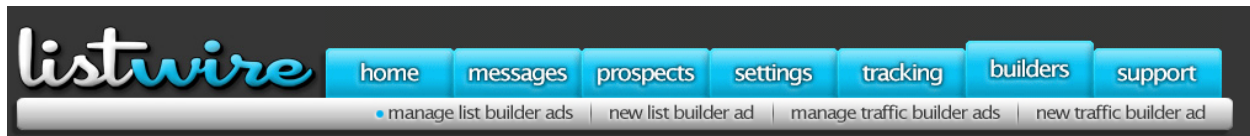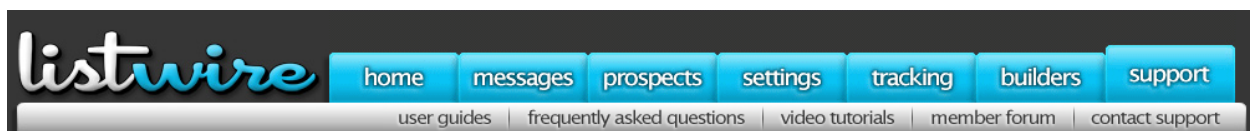As we are setting our auto-responder up to accept paid for subscriptions, we will stay well away from this section of the dashboard, because we don't want people to sign up for free.

The support tab hides a plethora of goodies. It links to the support forum

User guides, FAQ's, videos and if you still need it, their support desk.

Now you've got your free auto-responder, you could actually set up your membership site with that alone. YES! That's right, just an auto-responder, no complicated web script needed, just your sales page and your auto-responder.

Whilst this sounds really easy, it takes a lot of work to set up the system before you can actually start taking in paying members.
This type of membership site is referred to as the "fixed term" membership site.

Here's how it works. You build your exciting sales page, and decide how often you are going to deliver the content to your members. Let's say that you are offering a 12 month course on "The Art of Calligraphy", you are going to send your members one lesson each month, it is advisable to have at least 50% of the course material already written, there is nothing worse than having to scrabble something together two days before it is supposed to go out to your members.

Get smart here, save yourself some stress, and get your auto responder loaded with 6 months of lessons, before you promote your membership offer.

To create your lessons use **OpenOffice** which is a free word processor with an inbuilt pdf maker. You can download Open Office from [here.](#)

Good, so now we have 6 messages in our auto responder waiting to deliver the lessons to the members. On your hosting space, create a download folder to deliver the actual lessons to your members. Make this folder hard to guess don't name it lessons! Make sure that this folder also has an index page inside it, this is really important to stop the outside world from viewing the contents. Fire up Kompozer (free) and create a simple file add this line to it. Place it just after the <title></title> tag, and inside of the head tag.
<meta name="robots" content="noindex,nofollow">
Then close off the head tag </head>

Our fixed term membership site is nearly ready to promote, so let's put it together.

Our site is going to sell our calligraphy course in 12 monthly lessons, so we need to create a method for our members to pay in 12 monthly installments.
Whilst it is not completely free, PayPal here is our best option. There is no charge to join and set up an account, fees are only charged on any sales you make.

If you don't already have an account at PayPal you will now need to go and sign up for a Premier or Business Account with them. You can sign up here
http://www.paypal.com for the USA and http://www.paypal.co.uk for the UK.

Once you've signed up, the next step is to create a payment button to add to your sales page.

Log in to your **PayPal** account and select "Merchant Services" from the top menu. A new page will open, on the left hand side of the page look for "start accepting payments and click the "sell subscriptions" text.

Use the drop down menu and choose "Subscriptions"

Give your subscription a name, this is what is shown on your order form when your member goes to subscribe at PayPal. Then give your SUB an ID that will help you remember what that member has signed up to with you.

Just simply select the options that you want to set and then click on the blue tab that says "Step 3" Fill in the required details.

Check the box that says Take customers to this URL when they finish checkout and input the full web address of your sign up page.

There is nothing more to fill in on this page, so we now click the create button at the bottom of the page. The next page that opens up has the code we need to copy and paste into our sales page.

Copy and paste this into your sales page where you want the button to be displayed.

```
<form action="https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr" method="post">
<input type="hidden" name="cmd" value="_s-xclick">
<input type="hidden" name="hosted_button_id" value="2BFEQLK44FT62">
<input type="image"
src="https://www.paypal.com/en_US/GB/i/btn/btn_subscribeCC_LG.gif" border="0"
name="submit" alt="PayPal - The safer, easier way to pay online.">
<img alt="" border="0" src="https://www.paypal.com/en_GB/i/scr/pixel.gif"
width="1" height="1">
</form>
```

Make sure you copy the whole of the text from the opening <form action

To the final </form> tag or the button is not going to work.

So we have set up the sales page with payment button, and we have told PayPal where to deliver our customers to once they have subscribed. Remember it was the URL you input at PayPal when you made that subscription button. This is the page where we now need to add our listwire "in line" subscription form to deliver the lessons to them.

This page can be a simple page thanking them for signing up to your course, reminding them that they just paid you through PayPal and that they will be billed every month for the next 12 months.

Explain that in order to receive the course, they need to sign up to your list so that your auto responder can immediately send them their first lesson.

Add the code to the page for your opt in list. Your form should be the inline form for adding to your web page.

You have the choice of using a javascript code or the html code. Bearing in mind that some people don't have javascript enabled in their browsers, it is better to use the html code. Just simply copy and paste it like you did for the PayPal button. It looks like a lot of code, but it is vital that you copy and paste your code just as it is.

Here is an example of what it should look like.

```html
<center><table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" style="position: relative; margin: 0px;
padding: 0px;">
<tr><td align="center" valign="middle">
<form action="http://www.listwire.com/form/process.php" method="post">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_action" value="form_subscribe">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_track_code" value="form_subscribe">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_pass_standard" value="0">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_pass_custom" value="0">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_account" value="listname">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_redirect"
value="http://www.yourwebsitename.com/redirectpage.html">
<input type="hidden" name="bot_web_form_id" value="2777">
<table width="380" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0">
<tr><td height="32" width="10%" align="left" valign="middle"> </td>
<td height="32" width="28%" align="left" valign="middle"><div style="font:bold 13px verdana, sans-
serif; letter-spacing:-1px; color:#363636; margin:0px 5px 0px 0px;">Name:</div></td>
<td height="32" width="62%" align="left" valign="middle"><input type="text" style="width:85%;
margin:0 auto; font:12px verdana, sans-serif; height:22px; line-height:100%; padding:4px 2px 2px
2px; border:1px solid #363636; background:#ffffff url('http://forms.listwire.com/images/form-input-
bg.jpg') top left repeat-x;" name="fullname" value=""></td></tr>
<tr><td height="32" width="10%" align="left" valign="middle"> </td>
<td height="32" width="28%" align="left" valign="middle"><div style="font:bold 13px verdana, sans-
serif; letter-spacing:-1px; color:#363636; margin:0px 5px 0px 0px;">Email:</div></td>
<td height="32" width="62%" align="left" valign="middle"><input type="text" style="width:85%;
margin:0 auto; font:12px verdana, sans-serif; height:22px; line-height:100%; padding:4px 2px 2px
2px; border:1px solid #363636; background:#ffffff url('http://forms.listwire.com/images/form-input-
bg.jpg') top left repeat-x;" name="email" value=""></td></tr>
<tr><td height="50" colspan="3" align="center" valign="middle">
<table style="border: 1px solid #363636;" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0">
<tr style="background-color:#e8e8e8"><td height="26" style="border-top:1px solid #ffffff; border-
left:1px solid #ffffff;"><input type="submit" style="overflow:auto !important; overflow:visible;
width:auto !important; width:50px; margin:0px 15px 0px 15px; border:0px; background-
color:#e8e8e8; font: bold 13px verdana, sans-serif; letter-spacing:-1px; color:#363636;"
name="submit" value="Submit">
</td></tr></table></td></tr>
</table>
</form>
</td></tr>
```

```
<tr>
<td colspan=2 valign="bottom">
<center>
<table width="100%" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" valign="bottom">
<tr style="background-color: #c0c0c0;"><td height="1" align="center" valign="top"></td></tr>
<tr style="background-color: #ffffff;"><td style="padding: 5px 0px 0px 0px;" height="32"
align="center" valign="top">
<table width="300" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0">
<tr style="background-color: #ffffff;"><td style="padding: 0px 0px 10px 0px;" align="center"
valign="top"><a  href="http://www.listwire.com/listname" target="_lw" title="ListWire - Free
Autoresponders"><img src="http://forms.listwire.com/images/listwire-form-logo.jpg" height="32"
width="128" border="0" alt="ListWire - Free Autoresponders"></a><br><a
onmouseover="this.style.color='#22c1eb';" onmouseout="this.style.color='#000000';"
href="http://www.listwire.com/listname" target="_lw" style="font: normal 10px verdana, sans-serif;
color: #000000;" title="ListWire - Free Autoresponders">click here for your free
autoresponder</a></td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>
</center>
</td>
</tr>
</table>
</center>
<img
src="http://forms.listwire.com/img.php?xJp002H5AarmLHFkg0GYAKJvA3Z41zZyWwH04zZcSTq">
```

And that's it; you now have a complete membership site set up for FREE.

When PayPal notifies you that someone has cancelled their subscription, you simply log into your auto responder account and remove them from the list.

Let's take a look at some of the other options available to us and how we can set those up using free methods.

Using Your Cpanel to protect a dedicated member's folder on your site.

Perhaps you already have a well established web site out there on the internet, and you

simply want to add a member's area to it. If your hosting account has cPanel included you can easily protect a folder with a single username and password.

Log in to your Cpanel for your hosting account. Look for the section that is labeled Security.
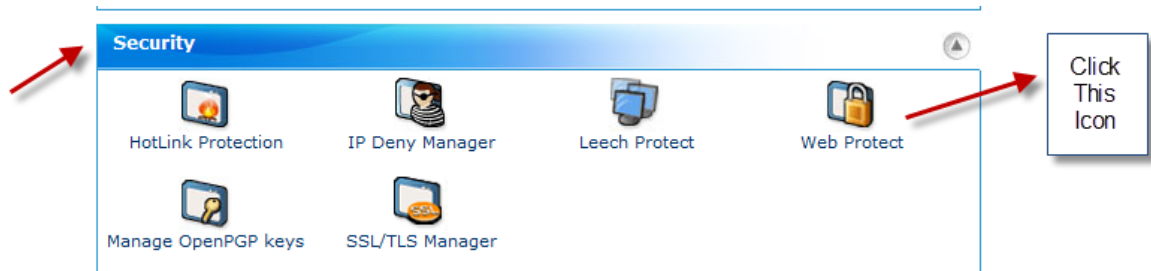
Once clicked, we can choose the directory or folder we are going to protect.
I've chosen to protect a directory I've named members.
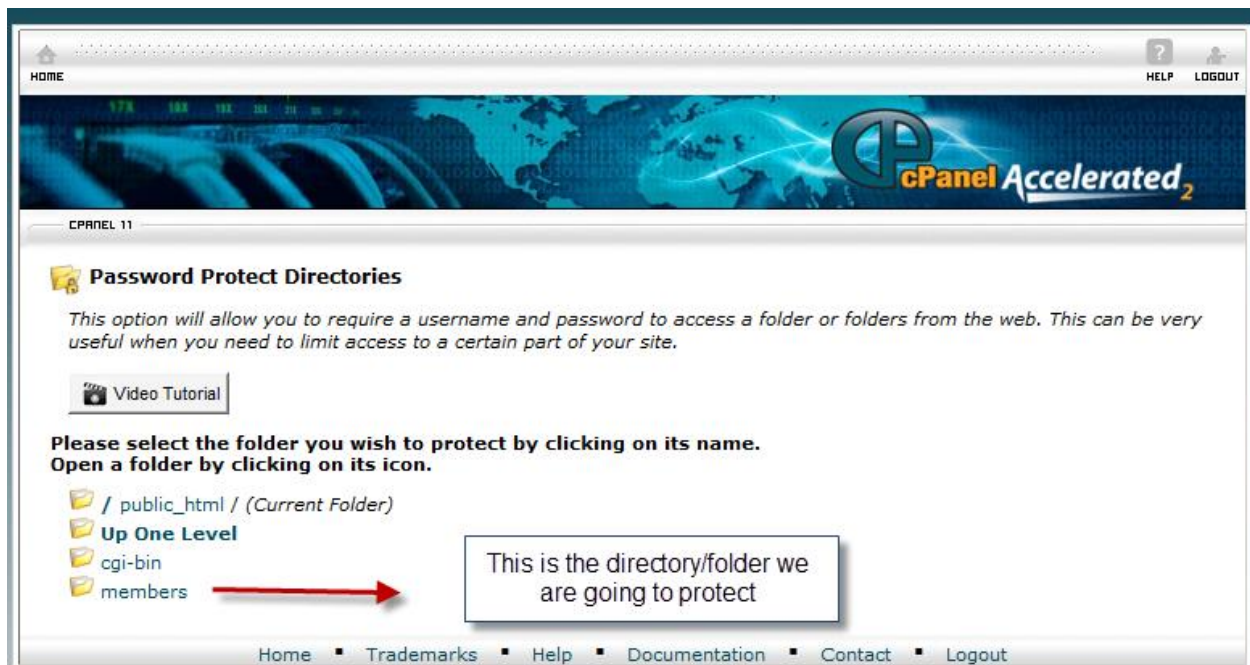
Some Cpanels will have video tutorials for you to watch Bonus! Does Yours?

Password protection allows you to require a username and password to access a folder within your site from the web. When password protecting a folder, there are a few things to remember. Protecting a folder will protect all folders within that folder as well. Also, you will need to create users who can access the protected directory. You can give the

password protected directory any name, no matter what the actual directory is called

Hit save and then go back to create a user by adding a Username and password. Be inventive here, you don't want to make this easy to guess by anyone else.

Although the secret here, is to make it look like it is an individual username and password that could randomly have been generated by some software program.

What happens now is that when anyone is trying to access the member's folder on the site, they are presented with one of those authentication boxes to input their username and password before being granted access to the member's area of the site. As long as you publish all the members pages into this directory or a folder within this directory it will be protected.

This is where you need that auto-responder account again, when someone wishes to become a free of your site, you present them with a sign up page which adds them to your auto responder list, and you set your auto responder message to automatically send them the username and password to gain access.

All users can access using the same password and the same username, this is really not important, as it is a free site anyway. You can change the User name and password every month if you choose to and email the new password to all currently subscribed members through your auto responder.

What other software can we use to create a free membership site?

Forum Software can make a great membership site. Cpanel includes two forum programs that you can use for free. One is Phpbb and the other is SMF (Simple Machines Forum) I've been using the later SMF for over 6 years and no one has managed to crack their way in yet. ☺

Log into your hosting Cpanel and look for the smiley blue faced icon, this is called fantastico, it is usually located in the software/services menu/

Double Click on the icon Fantatico De Luxe

When the next page opens, look down the menu to the left look for the title Discussion Boards, you will see both Phpbb and SMF listed there. Click on the SMF link and scroll down to where it says New Installation. You will need one spare Mysql database for this installation, and 57.79 mb of free hosting space to install it to.

When you click on New Installation, a menu page appears asking you to input the directory name for where you would like to install SMF for this example we are going to use members2. Most of the boxes are pre filled by the program, just edit and alter to suit your site. Once all the information is completed hit the button at the bottom that says install SMF.

The program will then automatically install itself into the chosen directory and will automatically install its own database information too. The whole installation usually only takes around 6 seconds! When the next screen appears, click finish installation.

When you finish the installation, make use of the email offer to send you the details of the installation, you never know when you might need it.

You are now ready to log into the SMF forum and configure your settings.

Log in as admin with the username and password you set during configuration.
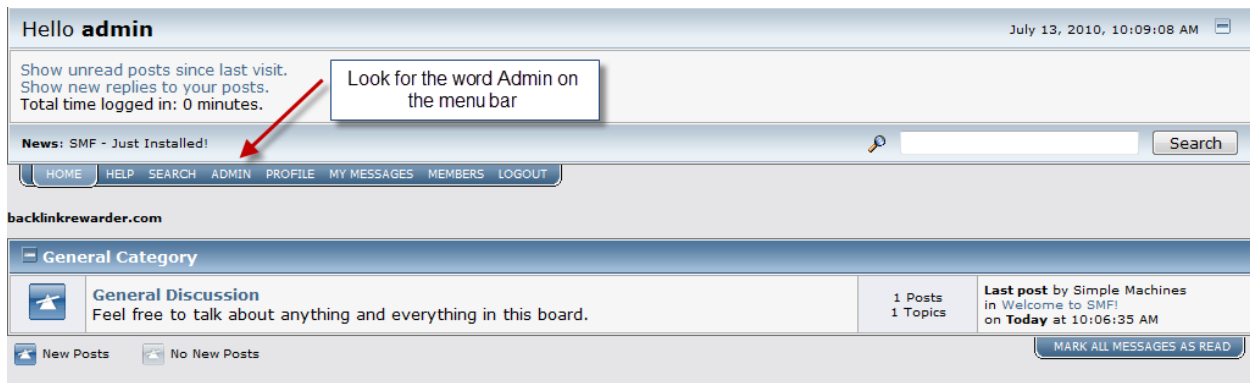
Inside the Admin Panel, the first thing to do is to disable registration. This means that anyone who tries to register without your permission will not be able to do so.

From the admin menu, look for the members section and choose the registration link, then select settings.
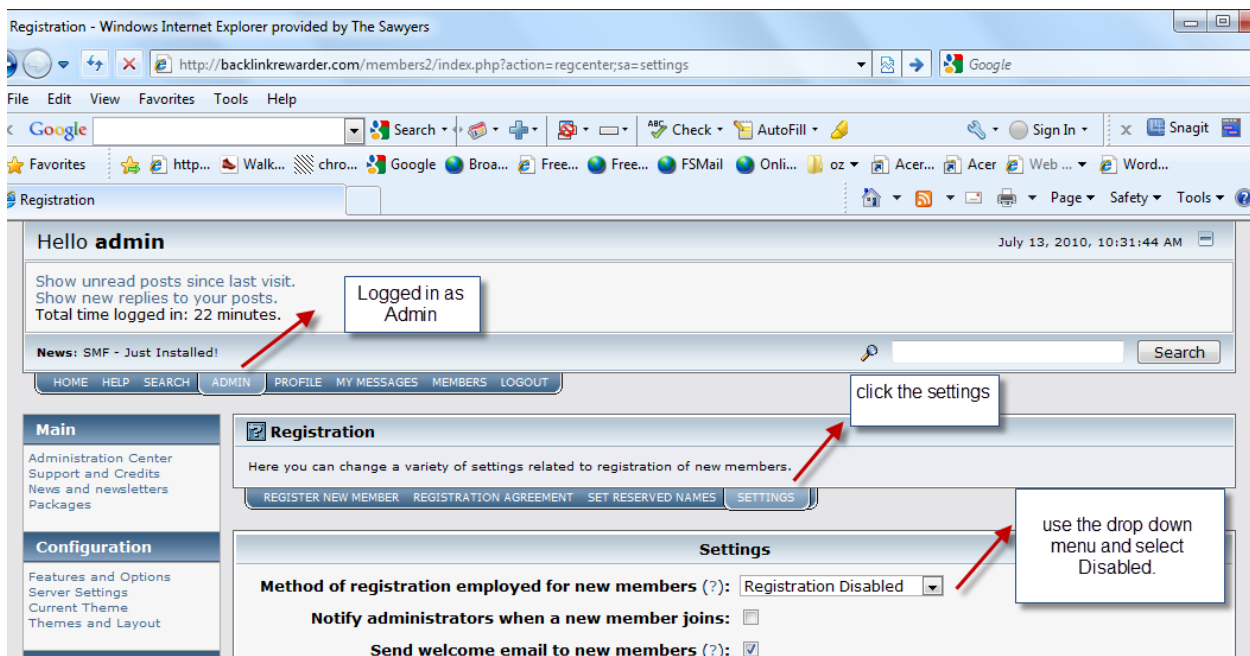
Save your settings. This has now stopped all registrations to the forum that are not approved by you.

The next step is to add a new member group, so click on member groups from within the admin menu, then choose Add Member group. Give your new member group a name.

You do not want this group to be based on post count so leave the next two boxes empty.

Set the permissions of this group to standard so that they can view all the posts of others and the admin posts too.

Visible boards, select all that you are willing to allow them to see. As your forum grows, so will the number of boards, you can always come back to the admin panel and change any settings you want to.

Take some time to set some boards and some posts up in your forum, no member likes to be rattling around in an empty forum. Think about its layout, what are the members paying you for anyway?
Can you get other experts in your field to be involved?

So we'll assume you have set your forum up, and it is full to the brim with different boards/topics and lots of helpful admin/experts posts. How do you get the members registered?

Set up your sales page, sell them your forum, add your PayPal subscription button and take their payment. When you set this subscription button up at PayPal make sure the page you

taken them to when they have paid explains quite clearly that all accounts are activated manually and there may be a delay of a couple of hours before their account is activated. When PayPal notifies you of a new subscriber log into the forum as admin and add the new subscriber manually.

You can use their PayPal details, their name and email address to set their account up and send them an email from the forum when their account is ready. This is easy and quick to do and will not take up much of your time, unless you have 1,000's of members joining every day!

Simply fill in all the new member details and then save them.

Members can edit their profiles once they have received their registration details. They simply log in and amend their profile. Whilst they can't change their username, they can change the name that is displayed to other members as long as you have allowed this in the admin settings.

When a non paying member finds the forum and tries to register, all they will see is this screen.

July 13, 2010, 11:13:09 AM

Welcome, **Guest**. Please login or register.

[ ] [ ] Forever [▼] [Login]
Login with username, password and session length

News: SMF - Just Installed!

[Search]

HOME   HELP   SEARCH   LOGIN   **REGISTER**

An Error Has Occurred!

Sorry, registration is currently disabled.

Back

Powered by SMF 1.1.11 | SMF © 2006-2009, Simple Machines LLC

And even if they try to search the forum, the will not be allowed access to anything, the whole forum and its member list remains concealed. There are just one or two more tweaks and your private members forum will be ready to go.

Hello admin

July 13, 2010, 11:18:38 AM

Show unread posts since last visit.
Show new replies to your posts.
Total time logged in: 41 minutes.

News: SMF - Just Installed!

[Search]

HOME   HELP   SEARCH   **ADMIN**   PROFILE   MY MESSAGES   MEMBERS   LOGOUT

Main
Administration Center
Support and Credits
News and newsletters
Packages

Configuration
Features and Options
Server Settings
Current Theme
Themes and Layout

Forum
Boards
Posts and Topics
Calendar
Search
Smileys and Message Icons
Attachments and Avatars

Members
Members
Membergroups
Permissions
Registration
Ban List

Maintenance
Forum Maintenance
Generate Reports
Forum Error Log

Features and Options

This page allows you to change the settings of features, mods, and basic options in your forum. Please see the theme settings for more options. Click the help icons for more information about a setting.

BASIC FEATURES   LAYOUT AND OPTIONS   KARMA

You can enable or disable Polls.

Basic Features

Poll mode — Disable polls [▼]

Allow guests to browse the forum — [ ]
Enable user-selectable language support — [✓]
Allow users to edit their displayed name? — [✓]
Allow non-administrators to hide their online status? — [✓]
Allow users to hide their email from everyone except admins? — [✓]
Do not reveal contact details of members to guests — [✓]
Enable custom titles — [✓]
Enable buddy lists — [ ]
Default personal text — [ ]
Maximum allowed characters in signatures (0 for no max.) — 300

Uncheck Allow guests to browse the forum.

Make sure that Do not reveal contact details of mebers to guests is checked

Select the other options to suit your needs. remember to save your settings..

Default time format — %B %d, %Y, %I:%M:%
Default number format — 1234.00 [▼]
Overall time offset (added to the member specific option.) — 0
Failed login threshold — 3
User online time threshold — 15
Track daily statistics — [✓]
Track daily page views (must have stats enabled) — [ ]
Enable error logging — [✓]
Disable administration security — [ ]

Require reactivation after email change — [✓]
Require admin approval when member deletes account — [✓]

Allow users to disable announcements — [ ]
Don't allow post text in notifications? — [ ]
Log moderation actions — [✓]
Search engine friendly URLs **Apache only!** — [✓]

Max width of posted pictures (0 = disable) — 0
Max height of posted pictures (0 = disable) — 0

Enable reporting of personal messages — [✓]
Maximum number of recipients allowed in a personal message. (0 for no limit, admins are exempt) — 5
Post count under which users must enter code when sending personal messages. (0 for no limit, admins are exempt) — 5
Number of personal messages a user may send in an hour. (0 for no limit, moderators are exempt) — 20

[Save]

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That's it, hit save and your new private members forum is ready to go.

So now you have learnt 3 different ways to set up your membership site for free.

There is a lot of money to be earned with a good membership site. Never ever become complacent always make your site under promise and over deliver.

I am not going to throw some magic math numbers at you here, I'm sure you have your own calculator crunching the numbers right now.

Besides the methods mentioned here, there are also free scripts that can be used too. Alas though, some of them are pure rubbish, and most of them are just a free giveaway to entice you to purchase their upgraded version.

I know that a lot of you may be using Wordpress as your main site; it was very disappointing to find that there were not a lot of free membership script plugins available for Wordpress. Perhaps that might change in the future.

One plugin that l could recommend for Wordpress is the s2Member plugin.
This integrates with PayPal via IPN, whilst it does look very, very robust and extremely promising it is not something a newbie could really cut their teeth on.

For the sake of repetition, I'm going to remind you of what I warned you about right on the first page.

I've seen a lot of good – actually GREAT membership site ideas that never see the light of day because of what I perceive to be the biggest single obstacle that most marketers hit when starting a new membership site.

"THIS OBSTACLE BEING THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS BEHIND THE SITE." People get lost in the minefield of which script to use, well there's something I want to point out right here and now, **concentrate on the CONTENT –Don't obsess about the setting up, obsess about keeping it going!**