Neil Stafford Interview

Membership Sites, Recurring Income and Building an Online Business



Archive interview • Issue 102 (original recording date not confirmed)

An archive interview transcript published by FAQ Marketing Logic

Neil Stafford Interview

NOTICE: You Do NOT Have the Right To Reprint Or Resell This Interview Transcript!

You Also MAY NOT Give Away, Sell Or Share The Content Herein

© 2026 Dean Branwhite, FAQ Marketing Logic. All Rights Reserved.

This publication contains a licensed archive interview. The copyright notice above does not claim ownership of the original interview recording or the words of its participants. No part of this edition may be reproduced, transmitted, resold or republished without permission from the relevant rights holder.

DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES

This publication is provided for informational and educational purposes only. The interview was originally recorded in August 2019. Views, experiences, business practices, software features and financial examples discussed reflect the time of recording and may no longer be current. Historical earnings or sales figures are not guarantees of future results.

Reasonable care has been taken in preparing this edition, but no guarantee is made concerning the accuracy, completeness or continued relevance of the information. The publisher accepts no responsibility for actions taken in reliance on it. Readers should seek qualified professional advice where legal, financial or accounting matters are concerned.

Published by Dean Branwhite, FAQ Marketing Logic.

Lytchett House, 13 Freeland Park, Wareham Road,

Poole, Dorset, BH16 6FA, United Kingdom.

About This Interview

In this archive conversation, Neil Stafford speaks with interviewer Gavin McCoy about his first internet-generated sale in 1998, his move from a corporate career into online business, choosing niches, and developing membership sites that can generate recurring revenue. The examples and technologies discussed reflect the period in which the interview was recorded.

This is the original archive interview, conducted by Gavin McCoy, and not a new interview conducted by FAQ Marketing Logic. Speaker labels and wording follow the supplied transcript, including its transcription quirks; formatting has been adjusted for readability.

Full Interview Transcript

Gavin McCoy: Hello, this is Gavin McCoy and on the Internet Marketing podcast today, my guest is Neil Stafford, who swapped his corporate career for an online business. Today you'll discover what exactly was the unusual product he sold to get started, and how he felt when he got his very first sale, and the secret of generating an endless recurring income from simple membership sites plus much, much more as we say hello to Neil Stafford.

Neil Stafford: Hi Gavin. Good to speak to you again.

Gavin McCoy: When did you kick off in internet marketing

Neil Stafford: Oh, my word. I will say back when the internet was gas powered so ... very short story. When the internet started taking off, if you remember the mid 1990s, web designers were getting paid a fortune to build simple three, four, five page websites. So I said, "Oh, I can do that. I'm sure I can." So I walked into a local computer shop in Wigan where I live in the Northwest of England, and it's still there to this day. One of these in like an old converted terrorists house with computer parts everywhere. And I said, "I want to build websites." He said, "You need Dreamweaver." I said, "I love it." He goes, "It's 300 pound." Which is about $500.

I went, "Oh! That's a lot." But I managed to take a deep breath and bought it and then I wandered over to the local bookstore and I bought the Idiot's Guide to HTML, which is like the forerunners to the dummies book and proceeded to try and teach myself how to build websites. Well, long story

short, I did and my word, they were ugly. They were really, really ugly. But I saw some sort of potential in it. Fast forward a couple of years and my first sale online was back in May, 1998 and that was for, believe it or not, an oil painting. Now, I wasn't the artist.

My design skills and artistic skills are like a three year old with a crayon. But a friend of mine was an artist, and it developed out of an idea that we had where I used to go with him to craft firs and exhibitions to keep him company. And one time a lady came up to me and said, "Does he do paintings from photographs?" And I went, "Yes." I had no idea whether he did or not. I went, "Yes." Took a deposit and said to my friend Paul, I said, "Paul, can you do this?" He said, "Yes." So he did a painting from photographs. She was happy. So we started commissioning more paintings from photographs.

Then we placed adverts in magazines where people will ring up for an information pack. Now this is pre-digital photography. So we had to take photographs, all these painting, scan them and put them on to printed material and send them out and they'd send it back with an order form and a check. And that's how that went on. And I went, "Oh, I've got an idea. Why don't we, instead of getting them to ring up for an information pack, this newfangled internet thing, we can send them online because I know how to build websites, ugly websites. They can read it, and then they consult it out online."

Now, I always call myself and Paul back then dumb and dumber because, we have no way of taking payments. There was no PayPal, there was certainly no Stripe or any way of taking payments online except with a bank merchant accounts and they wanted [inaudible 00:03:13] firstborn and profits for life. So, what we did was we simply put the brochure up online, ugly website, and let's put it into context. We placed the adverts in a magazine and we use GeoCities for our hosting because they gave free webspace, but that meant our website address was geocities.com/squigglyline3754 and they were really horrible domain name.

But we did it. We placed the adverts, waited for the magazine to come out and to put it into context and all that came through ... What the person had to do was buy the magazine, take it home and read it, read the classifieds

in the back, see our adverts, go to the computer, turn it on. Now this is 1998 [inaudible 00:03:55].

Gavin McCoy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Neil Stafford: They weren't fast to turn on. Connect to the internet with dial-up, yeah [inaudible 00:04:01] this all ugly looking website. Read through it, print off an order form, ready? Write the order form, write the check, write the envelope, put the stamp on an envelope, walk down to a post box and post it to us. But low and behold, that's what happened to me. I would love Gavin to be able to say it was on this date in May. I just can't remember the date, but I know it was May, 1998 that this envelope popped through the letterbox with a check inside for back then 95 pounds, about $140 at the time, $150 and it was our first order generated online, although it was an offline payment, if that makes sense.

Gavin McCoy: Now, despite those disjointed steps that led to your first sale, Neil, how did you feel looking at that check?

Neil Stafford: Wow. I always talk about tipping points with people. So that was our tipping point. First sale generated online and the tipping point is, "This could work." There is something in this and they [inaudible 00:04:58] belief and whether you're going for your first sale online, your first thousand dollar month, your first $10,000 a pound month, each one of those is a tipping point that takes you past that point of flipping [inaudible 00:05:11] this works. Where could it go?

Gavin McCoy: Now for many of us, our foray into internet marketing is in fact a plan to escape from a day job, which takes too much time and probably doesn't pay too much. If I'm able to ask you Neil, what did you do prior to breaking into this business of internet marketing or information marketing?

Neil Stafford: Yeah, so past careers have been working for an insurance company in customer service, working in shops, being a DJ mobile and club DJ for a good few years. And when I started looking at the internet side, I'd actually settled down into a bit of a career in the financial services industry. And I always say, "I can't give a rags to riches story." Because I had a a pretty good career. I was climbing career ladder. But one thing I did was look ahead and I didn't like what I saw where I was going to be in five or 10 years.

And again, these little things that happened to you, many years ago when I was 15, 16 years old, a family member he was very successful said, "Have a plan B Neil. Always have a plan B." Now my deejaying was plan B for a while. So I worked on DJ before I went deejaying Jane full time. And then when I started in financial services, I still doing deejaying. But because of the way the career took off, I stopped the deejaying. But this internet thing came along. So that started to be my plan B. So, my career was well paid, it had great bonuses, company car all et cetera, et cetera.

So on the outside looking in, you say, "Oh they're successful." But what they didn't see was the company owns you basically. And the higher you climbed up the ladder, the more and more success we had, the more and more income you had, but less and less time you had. I've had phone calls at one o'clock in the morning to put a paper together to be released to the stock market because something has been said by my bosses boss [inaudible 00:07:01] ringing milk. And that was another tipping points thinking, "Hang on a minute, this isn't right. If they can do that and ask me to do it."

Which I did. It got released after [inaudible 00:07:10] clock in the morning, job done. So with me it was more of "Okay then let's get this plan B rolling again and see where it can get to."

Gavin McCoy: Now Neil your first excursion into using the internet as a marketing vehicle was for solid, tangible products. Of course, today the biggest part of our industry is selling information products. What was your first attempt at that?

Neil Stafford: Yeah, so after the sale with the oil painting, we did more of that with Paul and looking back maybe he said, "Okay, what we should have done is really gone to town and own that market." But I think I did what everybody does and disappeared down the internet marketing rabbit hole of trying to find a way of doing things different, better shortcuts, and you start investing in different courses and products. Now, back then, there was some people selling training products which we invested in and that led me to digital products. So my first digital product sale, it was round about the end of that year.

It was round about December '98 January '99. And this will make you laugh Gavin. It was for a report, but the report again was sold with a principal

order form. So they had to print off the order form and send a check in. This is for a digital product, remember. So the check came, when the check came, I sent them the report that they bought, and I sent it as a word document, as an attachment to an email. No PDF, no click here to download. It was sent on email as a word document. So, that was my first digital product sale.

From then we looked deeper. I managed to get in this country what was called a Worldpay account, which is an online merchant account. So that was my first online merchant accounts. We started selling online. People were able to download the products and pay online, and my first membership site which one of my favourites information products was launched in 2003.

Gavin McCoy: In internet marketing or information marketing nowadays you can either sell a one off product with a big launch, or you can do what you did. Think about what we term recurring income, and I want you to tell me something about this membership site business. Now, presumably, in order to succeed in that, you have to find a group of people with a common interest, who are willing to pay for information.

Neil Stafford: Correct. Yeah. And the opportunity today for a membership site or a continuity programme, where people will pay you on a regular basis, typically being monthly, but it can be quarterly, half yearly, can be annually. But typically for this example, let's say monthly and two questions I say with a membership site is ... Two big questions to ask yourself is, why will they join? And once they've joined, what's the overriding reason they will stay paying you month after month? And those are two easy questions to ask, but they need a bit of thinking to keep people engaged and involved.

But as far as groups of people, having done this for a while now and worked with a lot of people on their membership and continuity programmes, there is a niche and a market for everything from the mass market to the weird and the extreme and the funny niches.

Gavin McCoy: Now I spoke to somebody a couple of years ago in terms of a weird niches and they were selling information subscriptions on ... I think they call these things pocket pigs.

Neil Stafford: Love it.

Gavin McCoy: It was astonishing.

Neil Stafford: Yeah, love it.

Gavin McCoy: Because you think, "Well who would possibly buy this?" But the people who are fans of those little tiny pets, are avid readers of anything published on that kind of information.

Neil Stafford: Correct. Our first membership sites was aimed at people who coach and run junior football teams, junior soccer teams. So it wasn't aimed at professional coaches. It was aimed at the young sang heroes, the parents who get roped into and volunteered and dragged into coaching their kids' soccer team. So, I teamed up with a friend of mine, he was a soccer coach at the time, very new soccer coach. He had only been coaching his team for about six and nine months, but we entered that market from the position of, "Listen word just like you. This is what we do. This is the team that we coach. This is how long we've been coaching. What we're going to do is, we're going to discuss and report back everything that we do. We're going to tell you what worked, what didn't, what training we did, what things we found out, how we deal with parents, come along for the ride."

So our first product in that market ... This will make you laugh Gavin was a cassette tape, was an interview on a cassette tape, 3C60 cassettes that we sold, which then led to to the membership site in 2003, and all we did was report back what was happening with my friend's team. I used to play pretty good as a kid. Semipro I was a goalkeeper, so I would talk about goalkeeping, but he was the one who did the coaching badges. I didn't have any coaching badges, so it was a great marry up of, I knew online marketing, a big interest in soccer fan. He is a soccer coach.

We got on well together, it was a good coming together. And we developed that business 2003 we started, like I said, the site is still going to this day many years later. So, finding that market of people who have an interest in something is not ... I'll use the word is not hard. It's not easy. It's simple, if that makes sense. But you've got to find out what's the overriding reason they would join your site? And then what's the overriding reason they will stay a member? And there's many different variations of a membership site or a continuity programme. Like I said, pocket pigs. Were they delivering versions of these or talking about them or?

Gavin McCoy: They were talking about them and it truly amazed me because we're all in search of a what we'd term a lucrative niche, but you know there were so many things there that could be a viable market for an information service. We simply don't know about. I mean, my tip Neil would be for anyone who is thinking about this for the first time, is to go to a branch of Smiths, and have a look at all of those monthly magazines that might be vintage cars, they might be holidays, they might be knitting. There are literally thousands of them there. If you need a bit of an idea about finding these, go and have a look at those magazines from end to end of the rack, WHSmith, and you'll walk out inspired and think that, "How can I chop one of those niches up?"

For example, steam trains into something a bit smaller? You might find a sub-niche that might be viable and lucrative for you.

Neil Stafford: Yeah. Over the years we've launched obviously a number of membership sites which we're in a part of our business strategy, other ones were to be doing for a bit of fun and to show our customers and clients what can be done. So for example, many years ago at one of our events, on stage I was talking about membership sites and a particular style of membership site called Fixed Term. And a fixed term membership site is a membership site that has a definitive start and end point. And so I said to people, I said, "Right, what I'm going to do, I'm going to create a new fixed term membership site. And I'm going to write about it and let you guys know how we developed it."

So what I want you to do is I want you to shout out potential topics. That was the first mistake. Letting your audience choose what we're going to do. So one of the things that came out with keeping check ins and membership site on keeping check ins. Now, I said that's a good idea but I'm not going to do that, because at the time we had two clients who were in that market. So as I keep shouting out and somebody shouted out, "Keeping pet ducks." And the audience got on that and said yes. I said, "Oh, okay." All right, so keeping pet ducks. So I did my research and you wouldn't believe it, Gavin on Facebook alone back then, there was over 9 million people who have an interest in ducks and pet ducks. I know crackers.

I did my research and everything indicated there was an interest in people wanting to know how to keep pet ducks. Now to me, these things, I've got wings and fly away, but hey, people want to keep pet ducks. So I did the

research. Now I'm not an expert in pet ducks. So what I did, I went and found somebody else who had information on keeping and breeding ducks, and I asked him, "Could I licence his information." Which means pay him a fee to be able to use this information that I wish. So we agreed a fee. I bought that information. I then chopped that information up as you just said, into segments or lessons or updates, whatever you want to call it, modules.

And we created a nine month fixed term membership site where information is released every two weeks, so people join. They paid one monthly fee. Then every two weeks, a module is released on keeping pet ducks. I didn't write it, I didn't create the content, but I did the research, found out the interest, found out what people are asking about. Then went and found a product that I could licence and brought that back. Now it wasn't going to set the world on fire. It was nine $995 a month. I think the most members we had was a couple of hundred touching 300 when we were doing it.

So, it was a nice income, but it just goes to show what is possible and as you rightly said, a collection of people who have an interest in a topic, would they be willing to pay for it?

Gavin McCoy: It is truly amazing that even though the business of internet marketing has been going for I don't know, probably 20 years now from start to finish, that there are still niches to be found. There is still seems of gold to be found, that somebody can come along with fresh eyes and discover. And as this podcast is aimed at newbies, maybe Neil with your vast experience, you can tell us a couple of mistakes that people tend to make when they set up membership sites.

Neil Stafford: Yeah, so some of the mistakes that you see online is, thinking that you have to be an expert. Okay, so that's one of the mistakes people make with membership sites or one of the reasons they don't get into it. They think they have to be an expert. That's certainly not the case. Now, don't ever say you're an expert if you're not, don't ever claim to be an authority if you're not, but you can put your marker in the sand, your position in the market as we did with the soccer site to begin with, which is, "Hey, we're just like you. We're going to report back what works and what doesn't, come along for the ride."

Now, 16 nearly 17 years later, that site is seen as an expert sites and an authority site in the market, but it didn't start off like that. And again, the mistake about thinking you have to be an expert alongside that mistake is, comparing your now with somebody else's right now. And what mean by that is, if you're comparing yourself to somebody in the market doing something that you want to do, you need to go back to when they were at your starting point.

Gavin McCoy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Neil Stafford: So don't look at them now. Don't look at right now. Look at where they've come from, and they're not you and you aren't them. You have your perspective. You have your view, you have your knowledge, you have your experience and you're not after everybody in the market. That's what people need to remember. You're after the people who are resonate with your approach, your style, your information, how you put things across. Now when we started in the soccer coaching market, there was no other amateur soccer membership sites online. There was professional ones. There was FIFA, the FA, German league.

But the problem at the time was, all these other sites and products, all the images, and back then the videos before DVDs, VHS as DVDs were coming in, they were all of professional training grounds, where the grass was perfectly manicured. Kids were all stood to attention in perfect kits, listening to the coach and doing it. Where in reality the weekend is, you don't know how many kids are going to turn up. You have to get down there early to clear the pitch of all the glass, the stones and [inaudible 00:19:03] and then you have to then see which kids are going to turn up and train them.

That's reality of grassroots soccer. So that's where we came from and that's where our appeal came from. Now since then, there are now hundreds if not thousands of different soccer training sites online. Do we still sell and bring members in? Absolutely. Because, although there's information out there and there's a metric tonne of free information, what they're not getting is our approach, our style, our experience, what we bring to the table. So don't, don't ever think you need to be an expert to start a membership site.

You just need to be able to put information over, help your members get the result that you're promising them. So if you're new to a market, say you're

new, and share your experience and your examples and help your members learn from that, then as you grow with experience, you bring more to the table. Another mistake a lot of newbies make is, thinking that they have to have a lot of content to start a membership site. And there's two sides the sword. One is, if you think you need a lot of content before you can open your membership site, whichever style a membership site you're using, you're either going to A, overwhelm yourself, thinking of how much needs to be done.

But perversely, if you have a membership site which is chocked full of contents, you can actually overwhelm your members. And if you overwhelm your members, human nature says, "There's too much to do here. I'll never get through it. I'm going to cancel." Because they feel that there's just too much to wade through. So content is one of these double edged sword. Too much, and you overwhelm you and your members, too little that doesn't get the result your members are looking for can also have an effect of, "Well there's not much in here." But you can position things in your site.

You could start a membership site with no contents, as long as you explain that, "Great, I'm opening the doors we're launching." And what you do is you record the content live with your members, training them and teaching them on your specific thing. And then that then goes into your membership site. So for the next eight weeks we're going to go through this, this and this. And we're going to record it live. Come to live training. The recordings are going to go into the membership site. So there's so many different ways of creating content for your membership sites.

And I'd say, out of the mistakes, the big three are thinking you need to be an expert, too much content. The third one is, people focus too much on the tech. The technical aspect of putting a membership site together. Now when we started, there wasn't that many options, and it's a double edged sword again, because there wasn't too many options to choose from therefore, we could make a decision. And back when we were starting there was two, if I remember, two options which are low price, but you have to be virtually a programmer to be able to use them. They were good, but you have to be technically able to understand how to programme these things.

That wasn't us. And then there was a solution at the time which was $4500. That's a lot of money. $4500 for an idea that we had bought. It was

the closest thing to an all in one solution which had point and click. It had the same functionality as [inaudible 00:22:27] you had a Microsoft Word with bold, italics, et cetera. Everything could be uploaded through the sites. There's no need for separate uploaders like FileZilla or anything like that to upload your files to the internet. Everything was self-contained, but it was 4500.

Now we chose that piece of software because we saw that there was less of a learning curve and we could get to market quicker by investing that money rather than buying the lower price solution, but meant that we needed to understand programme and then go find a programmer. The other solution have that all in one that we would be in control. Now today, there is a multitude of different ways that you can set up a membership site, a gated community, a continuity programme, whether that's from simple WordPress plugins to specific membership platforms, to having a programmer doing it for yourself.

There in lies the problem. You see people worrying, forcing, researching over the tech, before they've even done the research and understand what their market is looking for.

Gavin McCoy: Would you tell us what your favourite is now?

Neil Stafford: Couple of things. Our membership site for the soccer sites and two other sites were built on that original platform and it's called MemberGate. Now, it was $4500 back then. It isn't that today. In fact, they have a lower cost monthly fee, and it's still a brilliant piece of software. I love it. Can't say a negative word against it. I know the team behind it now who are UK based. They bought it from the American chap who I knew very well as well. It's a fantastic piece of software, MemberGate you go and have a look at it, great team behind it.

We also now use a WordPress plugin called WishList Member for our other gated communities and membership sites or where we want to restrict access and have different levels. So we've used MemberGate WishList Member, but as part of what we do for our customers and clients, we do a lot of tech work for our customers and clients through our site takemystressaway.com and Pete who heads up the team there has used a lot of different platforms. Everything from the WordPress ones like MemberNet, a member right through to things like Teachable, Kajabi, Think Ethic, AccessAlly.

So, they all do a good job. That's what I've got to say these days. They all do a damn good job. So, if you are wondering what tech to look for, first of all, take a step back and say, "What do you want your site to do?" What do you want it to do first of all. And remember, don't compare your site starting off with somebody who's been going for 10 years. Think what you want to do now. What's your minimal viable membership site that you want to put together that will get the result that your members are looking for.

Then go and have a look at the solutions available and see which one ticks the most boxes of what you want it to do. Then, this is what I would do. I would actually email them support before you've even bought anything some questions, and see which ones come back. Because, if they don't come back, that's a red flag. Now most of them also now have trials, get it tried out. Play around with it for two weeks or 21 days, whichever the trial is, and then keep asking questions about it.

Gavin McCoy: I was going to say that feedback does give you a great indication as to how they will behave of you do have a genuine problem.

Neil Stafford: Yeah. And this can be all done within 30 days. All done within 30 days tested, tried. What you don't want to be doing is going around in circles for several months deciding on the platform that you need. Now let me tell you, no platform's going to be perfect. It just isn't. Even I know people who've spent tens of thousands having their own solution developed and never happy. But what you need is the platform that will get you started, get you up and running and allow you to start taking payments now. You can change in the future bit of a pain, but not impossible. But if you don't start, you're never going to bring money in. No revenue in.

You never going to have a business and you never going to be able to help your members with the information that you have. So, biggest mistakes, definitely focusing too much on the tech and worrying about the tech. Too much content, no overwhelm for both parties. And then thinking you need to be an expert to get going.

Gavin McCoy: Neil, this is a big question, but if you are setting about launching a new membership site now, how would you do that? How would

you get it onto the market? How would you get it to the attention of the hungry customers? How would you do that?

Neil Stafford: It's really interesting how people launch membership sites and et cetera today because, if somebody came to me and said, "I've got this idea, it's for a membership site." And let's say it's a low cost membership site, $10 a month, 20 a month, and that's the first product into a market. I've actually counselled them to take a step back and this sounds counterintuitive to the way that we did it. When you remember our first membership site was $10 a month. And the reason for that is, the online marketing landscape is very different now than it was back in 2003. If you're buying traffic, traffic costs were minimal way back then.

We were using Overture or GoTo as a paper click search engine before Google [inaudible 00:27:43] AdWords to pay for clicks, which were less than a penny a click. So bringing people to the site was no problem. So if you've got a membership site that you want to launch and it's low cost, you're going to struggle at first ... Not impossible, you're going to struggle at first to get traction with it, unless you're prepared to play the longer game. So somebody launching a membership site today, then a couple of things I would see whether if there's a product you could sell into that market to begin with.

So if you've got a product that you could sell into the market $100 and above, you can start selling that product into the market. You could use paid traffic, and it would be self liquidating because the product would pay for the traffic, you're building up your list as well, and then once you've got your list built up, you can then say, "Okay, I'm going to launch my membership site into that market." Another way to do it with paid traffic, and this takes a little bit of understanding of upsells and down sells, but we recently worked with a client and took them from zero to 10,000 a month ... monthly recurring revenue in just less than 90 days.

And the way we did that, and this is exactly how we did it. There's nothing missed out here, there's no like what he left out. [inaudible 00:29:03] He wasn't me telling his everything. This is how we did it. We sent paid traffic to an opt in, a really good opt in for that market. Once they opted in, the first offer that we gave them was a trial for the membership site. Now it was a a $1.95 trial, not $1, $1.95 trial. So they took a trial for the membership site. If

they took that trial, the next one was a video explaining a little bit about the membership sites.

It gave a little bit of teaching and then also made an offer for an annual subscription to that site. So it was a $49 a month site, so call it $50. It was a $1.95 trial. So if they took an annual one, annually, 12 times 50 is 600 just under $600 a month. We did a damn good deal of $349 for the year. So not quite half price, but a damn good deal if they took that. Here's where the magic happened. What then happened is, people who taught the annual, so a couple of percent taken the annual paid for the traffic, we could now reinvest more back into traffic.

And then people who took the reoccurring over 98% of people who took the trial went through to first billing, which is damn good. Now only a couple of percent cards bounced and people cancelled before the end of the trial and what we did, it was an aggressive marketing campaign, reinvested the money back into marketing, and within 90 days they were at just over 10K monthly recurring revenue.

Gavin McCoy: There are two battlefronts in setting up a membership site. First of all, you've got to get them on board and then the biggest battle is keeping them onboard and fighting what we term attrition. The people who disconnect and stop subscribing. Have you got any secrets for that at all? Again, it's a big question, but what keeps people on board on a membership site?

Neil Stafford: Great. Well, I've worked your framework and again I'll tell people the framework, so successful framework for a membership site and continuity programme for me is, you have an attraction system and engagement system, conversion system and retention system. So the attraction is what we just spoke about. How would you bring people into your world? Your engagement is then how do you start engaging with them? What's the communication we have with them? How do you start making that connection with them? Then you moving across to the conversion events.

Conversion event is simply how you turn people into paying members. So is that done through a sales letter? A video sales letter, a webinar? Whichever process you use. And retention is how do you keep people in your membership site. And retention obviously covers things, your deliverables,

retention campaigns that you send out to keep people engaged and using it and looking forward and being excited to your membership site. It also looks at the systems you use in the retention and also what I call reactivation.

People who have either cancelled. So what reactivation campaigns do you use to bring those cancelled people back? And also when payments bounce, some monthly payments will bounce on credit cards. What campaigns have you got in place to reactivate and bring those people back? Because people who've emailed in or asked to cancel are different from people who's cards just bounced.

Gavin McCoy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Neil Stafford: They both may have lapsed, but there's a different psyche for each one of them. So, if you're running a membership site, you can split it into those four areas, this framework. What attraction campaigns have you got? What engagement campaigns have you got for your prospects? What conversion campaigns are you using to bring people and get them to be paying customers? And what retention campaigns have you got in? So, bringing people in, get members, keep members and keep it those two ways. But once somebody's in ... keep this in mind, people will join your membership site, your continuity programme for the content, for the stuff that they get.

They will stay a member, because of the community feel that they have. Now a community could be a forum on your side, can be a Facebook group. A community could also be how they feel. So, you can foster a community through email and video talking about your members, where your members don't even interact with each other, but because of how you communicate and talk about the membership and different members, they feel the part of that community. Now, they'll always get further by ... and get results through ... I call it the coaching that you give.

Now, I don't mean like personal coaching, but how you get results in your membership site for what they joined for. So that can be, training programmes you have within your membership site. It could be coaching as we know it, as in you may offer a different level of coaching. It could be how you get the result for people. And I'll tell you what Gavin, they will become raving fans of yours. There'll become true believers who want a ... Better word and loyal advocates for the connection they feel with you and or the site.

So they will join for content, they'll stick around for community, they'll get results with coaching, but they'll become loyal advocates, raving fans for the connection they have with you. And that connection is done through your interaction with your members, whether that's within the site itself, on a forum, whether it's done in a Facebook group or other groups, whether it's done through the communication and engagement you have with people. And one of the great things to keep people in a membership site is actually a physical touch point.

If you can have a physical touch point maybe once a year, twice a year, you have a members event. When you get people to an event, they will stay longer as members. Let that sink in. And a lot of people think that's a lot of the work. Well, tell you what, you can increase member retention significantly, by having a member event in there. So it's not right for everybody, but just think about it. Next thing done, maybe have member only webinars. So it's member only webinars. That's a touch point with you, with your team. They will stay longer because of the connection they feel that they have with you.

Gavin McCoy: Another thing which I might suggest too is once you have a core of members Neil, you can use as the resource for generating content.

Neil Stafford: Correct. Yeah.

Gavin McCoy: By perhaps putting up a survey with SurveyMonkey. What is your biggest problem or what would you like to know about? And getting that feedback from them again builds a really strong bridge.

Neil Stafford: Certainly does. Having a membership site starts to position you as an authority in the market first of all and very quickly in experts. It's builds up a loyal band of followers, who will then help you ... As exactly what you've just said with what they're interested in next, what they're struggling with, what they need help with. And that can be done through direct surveys and questionnaires you've just said or listening and reading what they're saying in the group. Members will always consume more of your products. So, when you have a membership site and your position as the leader of that membership site, when you release a product, your members will always buy more than non-members.

Gavin McCoy: Neil, we've got to wind up now, but we've had I think from you, a great disclosure of many secrets today. And for the benefit of our listener, if you want to find Neil, where can we find you Neil online?

Neil Stafford: Yeah. If they go to the ... Do all the W's, thetrainingvault.com. That's the general site, you can have a click around there. There's information on there about markets and align as well as membership sites. And there's a lead generation, a blueprint download PDF and video training, which shows how to put together what I call a strategic omnipresence campaign online, sounds very grand. But what we're saying here is, you need a campaign that talks to people at this point that they're at in their journey.

So, in a marketplace, there's always people who are ready to buy right now. And then there's people who are aware of you. Well, I'm not too sure whether you're the right person to buy from all your solutions, the right thing. And then there's a big chunk of the market which is completely unaware of you, completely unaware of your solutions. And in some cases completely unaware of what help they need. So the strategic omnipresence campaign for membership sites and digital products helps you understand where people are on that journey and to create a marketing campaign that speaks to those people.

So you move your honour where, to a where, where into ready right now to join your membership sites or buy your products.

Gavin McCoy: I'm going to repeat those details. neilStafford@thetrainingvault.com and that's vault V-A-U-L-T as opposed to the electric volt. V-O-L.

Neil Stafford: Yeah.

Gavin McCoy: Thank you so much Neil for spending time with us today and for being so straightforward and honest with disclosing all of your secrets.

Neil Stafford: My pleasure to you Gavin, thank you for having me.

Gavin McCoy: Pleasure Neil. Thank you. On the next edition of the Internet Marketing Podcast, we'll be talking to international marketer, Matt Bacak and from his home in the USA since the year 2000, he's generated over a hundred

million dollars using email marketing. Join me for the next edition of the internet marketing podcast with Matt Bacak.

Continue Exploring FAQ Marketing Logic

For more practical answers on building and growing an online business, explore our six learning pillars at faqmarketinglogic.com. You can also browse the audio interview library at faqmarketinglogic.com/interviews.

This transcript is provided for educational purposes. Links and references mentioned in the original recording may have changed since it was made.