

**Membership Site**  
**MASTERS**

**STU McLAREN**

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## MASTER #1: THE PROLIFIC VETERAN

### An Interview With Ryan Lee From RyanLee.com

**STU:** Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Stu McLaren, founder of WishList Member and I am very excited here today because we are going to be talking to somebody who has been running membership sites for over ten years. In fact, he had over 40 plus membership sites running simultaneously! He's had thousand of members, made millions of dollars, Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome Mr. Ryan Lee.

Ryan, how're you doing today buddy?

**RYAN:** Stu, my friend, I am so pumped to be here and I just wanted to say one thing, can I just say one thing? Stuuuuu – that's it, I start off every interview by saying Stu.

**STU:** Nice, Good branding, excellent.

Now Ryan, I am very excited to have you because, you and I are good friends, but beyond the friendship I have learned a tremendous amount from you when it comes to running successful membership sites. You've just got a wealth of experience, because as we said in the intro, you've been doing this for a long time. This is not something new to you. So, what first got you into building membership sites to begin with?

**RYAN:** This is kind of a brief history. My very first paid membership site was at the end of 2001, so its now been over 10 years. I had setup a free site

before that and that's when I was still working full time in a children's rehab hospital. Then later on I was a Gym teacher and I set up a site just to put out some free articles about training and fitness, cause that's what I was doing.

At the time, I was training mostly athletes but I saw a couple of other people who were publishing information geared towards this market. That led me to a guy named Chad Packet (who I later become friends with) and he had a membership site in the general fitness and weight loss market.

After I saw his site I was like you know what, if he could do that for weight loss, I bet you I could easily do it with strength and conditioning, which is kind of a sub niche of weight loss and a sub niche of fitness.

So, fast forward, I launched my first membership site, and back then it was just purely as a way to supplement my income. I was working full time as a Gym teacher and I thought you know what, if I can make a couple thousand bucks a month doing what I love, that's gravy.

The first month out of the gate, I brought in just about six thousand bucks. I was like, Oh My Goodness. Don't forget back then in 2001, there was no You Tube and 80% of the people had dial up. Remember that? There was no audio, it was literally text articles and pictures that would take 10 minutes to download.

**“The first month out of the gate I brought in just about six thousand bucks”**

So it was really old school. To collect payments I used Clickbank , and at that time had to use “yearly billing” because Clickbank 10 years ago, had no recurring monthly billing. So it was a very rudimentary site. I used FrontPage to build the site and everything was manually created. It was ugly but it worked.

As we are going to talk about over the next little while, I've learned a lot since then, but I've been doing it for a long time. I love membership sites and when you do it right, there is no better business in the world.

There is no better business where you can help people connect, build communities and make money month after month. I know I don't have to tell people about the benefits of membership sites, because everyone listening or reading to this has either bought WishList Member or has been a WishList client for a while, so they know the benefits, so lets just cut to the meat of this interview.

**STU:** It's an awesome story, because you started with your first membership site and then you went on a tear building multiple membership sites. I think this in and of itself is an important lesson for people to realize because you didn't just stop with your one strength and conditioning site. You really began to create all kinds of niche membership sites. Can you talk to us a little bit about that?

**RYAN:** Sure. A really important rule is to listen to what people want. When I built the strength and conditioning site, we had a forum and there was a lot of interaction. So I just started listening. I didn't guess what people wanted. But by listening, I started noticing pretty quickly there were a lot of questions geared towards "the business" of training.

### ***"Listen To What People Want"***

I thought initially I would get more coaches and athletes, but what ended up happening was I started getting a lot of personal trainers and strength and conditioning professionals. So they started saying "Ryan, how are you doing this while having a successful part time personal training business?"

So I started talking about it more and more, and people kept asking more of the business related questions. It wasn't long before I thought, "I bet this could be its own separate website."

That's when I did a lateral move by staying within that market but I gave them something different - another membership site that focused on the "business" of training.

Then on the strength and conditioning site more and more people started talking about "underground" type training (things like using kettle bells etc.). You gotta remember, this was like 10 years ago and although everyone knows about them now, back then it was new. That's when I recruited a guy to help create content for the site and I started a site called Underground Strength Coach.

All these other sites began just by listening to what people wanted. From there I built a membership site for 4 minutes workouts, then I launched a whole network of inner related fitness websites, and a whole bunch of others. Just listening to what people wanted but staying in that one market.

I didn't make the mistake of saying "Ok well, if I did well in the fitness market for memberships site, then I could do it for gardening. Then I could do it for hopscotch and auto mechanics as well."

I stayed in that one market and went deep. Without sounding arrogant, there was a time when I was the top guy in the fitness industry. I influenced a lot of people over the years, and it's because I was so focused on that one market. Now I've kind of moved away from that and gone to into the "general marketing" niche because that's where my passion is now.

### ***"I stayed in that one market and went deep"***

But here are a couple lessons from this:

- 1) Shut up and listen to what people want.
- 2) Give them what they want and be really, really focused on serving the market

If you do this, you'll be surprised at how many potential membership sites you can do within one market.

**STU:** Well I think it's a brilliant lesson for everybody because as you said, we often think if we have success in one market we can easily jump ship and start over in a brand new market. But, if you've built up so much momentum, then you'll have much greater success carrying that momentum forward from one site to the other within the same or related markets.

**RYAN:** Yeah it's a huge, huge mistake that I see a lot of marketers make. They have a specific skill and they start building a list in one market, and they think they should just jump over to a completely different market.

For example, if we were to relate this to the fitness industry again, let's say you get a trainer who has a really good system for reducing injuries. They're working with athletes to help them build strength. So they've built a list of 2000 athletes and coaches and a really good brand around helping athletes.

Then all of a sudden, this same trainer discovers that his massage techniques work well for seniors too, so he decides to create a site for rehabbing seniors. But while the same potential content may be a little bit different, you're now starting back at zero and now you have a list of zero seniors. Now you have to start over again and your athletes are wondering if

you've forgotten about them. Now they're get pissed off and they end up leaving your original membership because they feel like you have left them.

The lesson is simple. Go in one market and say to yourself "I'm going to kick ass and I'm going to dominate and not going to settle for anything less."

Do not consider moving your markets or changing your direction until you are no. 1 in that market, because there's plenty to be made. I think it was Dan Kennedy who said "There's riches in Niches", and there really are.

**STU:** I want to talk about to about that a little bit further and then I'm going to shift gears and we'll talk about some other things.

Staying on that subject what advice would you have for somebody who's thinking about entering a particular market? Should they go general first, then look to build more specific niche sites after or do you suggest they start very niche and then broaden out after that?

**RYAN:** That is a great question Stu, and the reality is you can have arguments on both sides and have really good examples of success on both sides.

"Your chances of success are much greater when you start really niched... keep narrowing down until you're the #1 guy or girl in that market"

My personal opinion based on my experience and all the people I've coached is that I think your chances of success are much greater when you start really niched. You start with that big thing and you keep narrowing down and narrowing down until you're the no. 1 guy or girl in that market.

A perfect example is my friend Perry Marshall. He could have gone into general online marketing. But instead of online marketing the sub niche of that is traffic. The sub niche of traffic is paid traffic. The sub niche of that is Adwords. So in this scenario, he went 3 or 4 levels deep, found the sweet spot, and now he's the no. 1 guy in Adwords.

You can probably go down further than that. You could probably stay in the Google network and aim to be the no.1 guy for Google Content Network advertising or the no. 1 keyword guy. So you could position yourself so that all you talk about is keywords and everything about your business revolves around keywords. You could create software for keywords and membership

sites for keywords because you're the keyword guy. Even saying this, I don't think there's a keyword guy, at least if there is, no one comes to mind.

So in the fitness market, which I have done a lot of stuff in, you could narrow fitness down into all kinds of sub niches. There's weight loss, then there are specific types of weight loss. You could be the kettle bell guy for weight loss, or the kettle bell guy for women 35 and over who want to lose weight with kettle bells. So, drill down until you could be the no. 1 person and once you've become the no. 1 person, then you could look at expanding beyond that.

**STU:** I think it's a great piece of advice and the thing that I want everyone to hear is that you increase your chances of success. So you're not saying that this is the only way to go, but what you're saying is put the odds in your favor. Start with a niche market because its much easier to be a big fish in a smaller pond versus a big fish in a massive pond.

**RYAN:** Yes exactly, and if you really think about your potential customers sitting at the computer and they don t know you yet, there's a good chance that they might go to Google to find out more.

Using the example of the traffic expert, if they wanted to learn how to market online, they might type in a general keyword like internet marketing, if they do, good luck being no.1 in that or even being competitive as far as your search engine placement.

But if they're typing in something specific like Google Adwords or make money with Adwords, now they're looking for a specific problem to be solved. When you're focused on the niche market, your chances are so much greater. First, it will be much easier to get ranked high in the search engines for those specific terms and second, it will be much easier to convert someone to a subscriber and then eventually a paid customer.

**STU:** You mentioned in the beginning that you were using all kinds of different systems for your membership site and that you were trying to piece them all together, that it was cumbersome and wasn't easy – but you did make it happen. Looking back, how has your approach to building memberships sites changed over the years?

**RYAN:** Oh my gosh, it has changed tremendously. When I first started, I used Microsoft FrontPage and it was all hand coded and I would literally type in each page. To protect the content I used some kind of free password protection script. It was fine and did the job – but it certainly wasn't "easy".

Then I hired some college kids to do some programming and it was a nightmare. The kid was never there, the site crashed and I tried to call him and his roommate answered the phone. It was just terrible. So none of that stuff was really working well so then I went to an upgraded solution. I ended up using a solution from one of our friends Tim Kerber, who's with Membergate, I used that for a number of years and it's been good. However now, I'm using WishList Member for any new site I create.

In 2007 I decided I wanted to use the WordPress platform to manage my content. That's when you guys came out with WishList Member in mid 2008 so I was quite a few years without it but I was a really early WishList customer and I liked it a lot. The only "snag" was that I had so many custom technical requirements that I began making things too complicated. So I tried a couple of different solutions, but now I'm back to WishList. What I love about it (besides working seamlessly with WordPress), is that once it's set up, my site is so easy for me to update. I literally go in, create a new post, and I click if I want to protect the post or not. Then it's done.

### ***"For me now, it's about simplification"***

For me now, it's about simplification. Simplifying my business and simplifying my life. I feel by using one simple format and one platform, something that's web based, I don't have to worry about the software downloads and all the headaches that come with trying to get too fancy or too technical. Plus, you guys provide great support and I'm just really happy with how quickly and easily I can get my membership sites up and running.

Also, I use Clickbank to process my credit cards and the fact that there is an integration within WishList Member for Clickbank makes the whole "business" side of managing a membership site even easier.

What I love about Clickbank is that they take care of 90% of our "accounting" stuff. They take care of refunds, they take care of billing and they take care of credit cards that are declined. They handle all the rebilling. They take care of affiliate tracking and paying affiliates so you don't have to worry about it. Affiliates love Clickbank because they are reliable and pay on time.

It's just such a relief to know that all that stuff is handled by someone else. It allows me to breathe and relax. I thank you guys for creating WishList and I thank the team over at Clickbank for making my life a whole lot easier!

**STU:** I appreciate all the kind words you said, but I want people listening to get the lesson of a tried and true “membership site veteran” because anytime that you can simplify the process of managing your membership site, you should! It frees up all kinds of time, energy and it relieves stress because now you can channel all that energy towards creating better content, focusing on your marketing and getting more signed up for your site. I think that is a big, big lesson for everybody.

We hear it quite often (in terms of Clickbank) and people say “Stu, I’ve heard you recommend integrating WishList with Clickbank , but they charge 10% of total sales.”

My counter to that is “yes”, you could find a cheaper processor in terms of doing it yourself and configuring it all yourself, but you’ve then got to worry about the management of the affiliate program, making sure affiliates are sent their checks, making sure the accounting is all handled etc etc etc.

When you take all of that into consideration, you realize that it really sucks your time away that could have been better spent focusing on creating better content and producing more effective marketing (the two things that will help you get more members).

I hope that people really grab that lesson from you because when it’s coming from somebody who has made millions from membership sites, you can hear the sense of relief that Ryan has by simplifying the whole process down and just focusing on what he does best. Thank you for sharing that Ryan.

**RYAN:** People say that Clickbank takes a little bit more but let me just run through the numbers quickly, just to hammer home your point and you’ll see why I’m such a big fan of Clickbank.

At the time of this conversation, Clickbank charges 7.5% for recurring transactions. If you were to go into your own merchant account (and I’ve done it every which way you could imagine), a typical merchant account is going to be 2.5 – 3%. So you’re looking at a difference of 3 - 4.5%. But again, Clickbank does everything. They handle all the risk, they do rebilling, and you don’t have to do anything regarding customer billing support.

You don’t have to hunt people down for expired credit cards. You don’t have to pay your affiliates. They handle all the tax stuff for your affiliates (and yes, they take care of all of that too!). Just that alone is easily worth the

difference, plus the fact that if you're on Clickbank and you're within the network and marketplace, affiliates are going to find you automatically. So all it takes is one or two affiliates to find you and promote you and its well worth it.

I had my whole membership site last time working with a different platform, and I used my own merchant account and literally because it was such a nightmare, I basically told my techs to cancel everything. Cancel the entire inner circle. It was a lot of money, but I decided to start over and cancel it. I didn't want to deal with the nightmare of handling all that stuff again so I decided to start over and bring everyone in through my new site with WishList Member and Clickbank. It was a ballsy move but it's paid off.

**STU:** By simplifying your site I bet it has lifted a huge weight off of your shoulders and relieved a lot of stress. Because now your day is not being consumed by following up with people who's credit card hasn't gone through, or making sure affiliates are taken care of, or helping them get their links and stats and all of that.

Now you can focus on what you do best. I know as a customer of yours, you create kick ass content and the bottom line is the more we can have Ryan Lee creating more of that content, the better off we are as customers. So it serves not only you, because it simplifies your life, but it also serves your customers a lot better as well.

**RYAN:** Right, because then you can focus on the two things:

- 1) Focus on getting people in the door.
- 2) Focus on keeping them happy.

If 20 or 30% of your time is dealt with handling the garbage and the technical support or you're spending all the time and resources with billing, then you're taking away from one of those other 2 important components.

**STU:** I want to talk to you about something you just said there Ryan, because we've got a wide variety of people listening or reading this but what you said is relevant to everyone. We have people that are brand new to creating membership sites and we've got people who have a tremendous amount of experience with membership sites but here's what I like about what you said.

You really simplified something in your last statement when you said every membership site owner should focus on 2 things; getting people in and keeping them happy. Can you speak on those 2 things?

**RYAN:** Obviously you can have the best membership site in the world, but if nobody knows about it, you're not going to make any money.

So if you look at it from the really broad, thousand foot birds eye view, two things become obvious. Number 1 is you need to get people to your site. That means marketing, generating traffic, getting butts to the seats. And the good news/bad news is that there are a million different traffic tactics. What I recommend is you find the 1, 2, 3 maybe 4 different things that work, and just study them and go really deep rather than trying to implement 400 different things.

Find those couple of things that work to get traffic and just be the best at using them.

**Some Of My Main Traffic Strategies Include:**

- 1) Blogging - I blog consistently on my site which is also tied into my membership site. That gets me great search engine traffic.
- 2) Guest Blogging – This includes writing articles for other sites, or magazines.
- 3) Commenting on Discussion Forums – This is very simple but you'd be surprised at how effective it can be.

These are a few of the really simple things. But also, trying to also get some more online media doing interviews for other sites and especially joint venture partnerships.

So number one is you've got to generate traffic.

The second part of the equation is then keeping members happy. Stu I know you do a lot of training regarding member retention. There's a lot of retention strategies, tricks and tactics. But the reality is, keeping members really boils down to two basic strategies.

## Keeping Members Really Boils Down To Two Basic Strategies:

- 1) Give Them Good Shit
- 2) Create Anticipation For Upcoming Content

First thing is you've got to give people good stuff. So if it's a content based membership site where you're providing articles, interviews, teleseminars, webinars or whatever the delivery system is, the stuff's got to be good. I don't care how many tricks you have, if your content isn't good, they're not going to stick around.

**"I don't care how many tricks you have, if your content isn't good, they are not going to stick around"**

People look at their credit cards and it doesn't matter if you're charging \$10 per month or \$100 a month, they're going to look at it and wonder if it's worth it. If you don't have the goods, then go back to that, and deliver the goods.

Then when you're delivering the goods, you can start using some tactics. The easiest one is the cliffhanger. The two most powerful words by far for customer retention, member retention are "Coming Soon".

### ***"The two most powerful words for customer retention are... Coming Soon."***

So you just tell them what's coming next. Pick any market for a membership site – think of a market.

For example, let's run with the "gardening" example we had earlier. Pretend you write an article about gardening for your members and you say, "guys, next week we have a kick ass interview with a women who at home, has grown her roses to 15 feet using the secret ingredient that you could find at any health food store." Do you see how we've created anticipation for that one piece of content. Whatever your content is, get them excited!

If they even had the slightest urge to cancel their membership, now they'll be thinking "I was going to cancel, but I want to see how she grew that 15 foot rose." So now they're going to stick around one more month. The bottom line is, give good stuff and tease the hell out of it.

Another example of this takes me back to my childhood. When I was a kid, I loved the show Dukes of Hazard. Do you remember that one?

Inevitably right before a commercial, there'd be a cliffhanger. Beau and Luke's car would be sliding across the ditch and the teaser would say something like "Are Beau and Luke going to make it? And is Boss Hog going to catch them?" Stay tuned. I was like "Oh my God... I've got to find out what happens!" That's what you want your membership site like. You want to have that feeling of "I can't go anywhere, cause I don't want to miss what's coming next week."

**STU:** Being a customer of yours Ryan, you also do a fabulous job of communicating with your members. A lot of membership site owners forget to communicate with their members. They just think that their members are going to come back and remember to check the membership site for new content. But the reality is they don't. So to counter that you have got to communicate with your members and you do a good job of giving them a reason why they should come back to the site again and again and again.

Can you talk to us about the importance of communication?

**RYAN:** There are two ways to look at membership sites.

One person I know (who is a very smart marketer) said you can just "set up the membership site and never contact your members again. And hopefully, they never see the charge on their credit card."

I personally think this is the absolute worst way to approach a membership site. I'd rather be in front of my members saying "Hey I've got good stuff to show you, and if you don't like it cancel, that's fine." But I'm not going to hide or hope that my members forget about the charges for my membership site. That's not the way I'm going to do it. I'm going to keep in touch with them often. Granted, you don't want to do it too much and you don't want to keep doing member updates every single day because there is a definite point where the amount of content you deliver is overwhelming. And if people feel overwhelmed, they'll cancel.

"If people feel overwhelmed, they'll cancel"

So you have to find that sweet spot for your list, your topic and your customers where it feels like they're getting a ton of value, but it's not overwhelming them. Even if you have so much content that you could do a new two-hour video every two days you've got to remember that people just

can't consume that much. Then, if they start getting two or three months behind, they'll cancel.

Another real world example of this is with our supplement company. We have most of our people on auto ship but the most popular reason people cancel is because they don't take the vitamins and the pills, and they still have two bottles worth in their cupboard. So that's the point when they cancel. So, give them really good value, but don't overwhelm them.

For me, on members updates, I update the site once a week, and I tell them about it. But in terms of the general email, I also email four to five times a week with just other free content on my blog. The key reason is to show that I'm still here, I'm alive and I'm not going anywhere. I also use it as a way to position myself differently from my competition. The reason is because my competitors in the "internet marketing space" usually only contact their customers when they're trying to sell them something.

So I'm always giving them education and not just pitching them all the time. We've all had the experience of not hearing from someone for a long while and then all of a sudden they start sending you three or four emails in a row. You think to yourself "here we go, now all of a sudden they care about us cause they're going to try to start selling me something or launch something." In my opinion, this is such a crappy way to live and to market your products. I'm not trying to stand up and preach that I'm perfect, because I've screwed up more times than you can imagine and I'll continue to screw up on a daily basis, just ask my wife. But just try to do the right thing by staying in contact with your customers and continually deliver really good value without overwhelming them.

**STU:** I think it's a great piece of advice.

Now I want to shift gears a little and talk about your new site at [www.RyanLee.com](http://www.RyanLee.com). On that site you do a great job of blending both free and paid content and I want to talk to you about that strategy you're using. We get asked a lot about whether someone should give away free content or should they keep it all behind a pay wall.

I personally think that there's a balance in that you can use the free content to draw attention to the paid content. Now the key I want everyone to notice is that you have both your free AND your paid content all on the same site. So when people go to [www.RyanLee.com](http://www.RyanLee.com) to consume the free content that you send out regularly they are simultaneously getting exposed to your paid content. Can you talk to us about that strategy?

**RYAN:** Yeah you hit it on the head. I put out a lot of free content and its probably 80-90% free content with the remaining 10-20% being my premium or paid content. For me the business is always changing and I'm always trying new things or different strategies.

"I put out a lot of free content. It's probably 80-90% free content with the remaining 10-20% being my premium content"

Originally I put out two blog posts a day and I would make one free and one paid. The free post would be good but the paid one would be really "juicy". What I found was that I had to change this strategy because of a more selfish reason. I found after a while I was getting overwhelmed – it was getting hard to come up with the two new things a day so I was "forcing" content out that wasn't as good and the conversions began to drop.

So I went back to the drawing board and I asked a lot of questions. I wanted to get some feedback from my members and find out what my customers really wanted. What they wanted more than anything was more access to me. They wanted answers to their specific questions.

So I paired it down and decided to still give away a bunch of content for free. I give away tons of really good content including all kinds of articles and resources. But what you pay for are the weekly live trainings. So this setup puts a lot less pressure on me. I know that once per week, I'm doing the live training and it's going to be me answering questions. Sometimes I'll have special guests on with zero pitching. The rest of the stuff is the free content which I use to draw them in. Then when I do the replay and the live trainings I'll tease that within the free content and I'll make it it's own protective post too.

So the top part of the post (that everyone can see) will say something like "Hey guys training number two is up and you're going to see how to turn your blog into a SEO machine". Then the actual training is protected in the bottom part of the post. I'm always plugging the paid membership within the free content as well. For example I'll say "If you want to see this, don't forget our next training is coming within a day or an hour." So I draw them in with the free content and then I use that to get them into the paid part of the site.

**STU:** What I love about this approach is that it's an elegant way to use your content to generate interest in your paid membership. By using this approach the message is not coming across as a "hard sale". Therefore

people are much more open to clicking through and consuming the free content. Then once you've got them there, the hope is that they'll say "you know what, this is really good stuff" and that's what's going to pull them into your paid content.

Another reason I like this approach is because it's a much easier way to sell your membership. Some people subscribe to the notice that you've got to sell, sell, sell. After a while, people just get turned off by always being "sold to" and then they become closed to the idea of clicking through and seeing your other stuff. So I've just found the strategy you're using a much more elegant way to use your content as a way to demonstrate the value you can provide and then incentivize them to come and join your paid membership.

**RYAN:** Yes exactly, and it felt better and more natural to me and I could see by the comments in the post that they appreciated it too. They appreciate not being sold all the time. If you don't want to buy, you can still come to my site all the time for really good free content, and that's fine. And you know what, you're going to tell people about it. So when they say "Oh have you heard of Ryan Lee?" they'll say "Oh my God his stuff is really good." As opposed to "I have no idea" because the only time he sends me emails is when he wants to sell me something.

If you think about it, at least in my space, how much content do you really see from other "gurus"? I say that because 99% of the time the only content you see is when they are trying to promote a product. So you don't really know anything about these "gurus". That's why I'm just trying to be different by opening up and providing ton of value. And to be honest, I really, really enjoy sitting down and creating these blog posts and this content. I love doing it and the fact that hundreds of thousands of people are reading this and it's helping to improve their lives, it just feels good. It's cool.

**STU:** As we continue to talk about your current membership site at [www.RyanLee.com](http://www.RyanLee.com), I want to talk about a big change as you mentioned earlier in this interview.

You said that you were using another platform and it was getting complex and therefore creating stress as far as the merchant account and billing was concerned. So you made a pretty dramatic decision in that you said "we are stopping everything". I know you had a lot of paying members and you decided to stop everything and re-start it fresh on WishList and Clickbank. Can you talk to me about your thought process when you were making that decision and what can people now expect at the new [www.RyanLee.com](http://www.RyanLee.com)?

**RYAN:** My thought was everything was too chaotic. I was getting too many emails and having too many technical problems. Plus, I felt like the platform I was using was too limited, it wasn't user friendly. I had to do HTML stuff and it just wasn't working for me. When you add that on top of the shopping cart and the merchant account and the affiliates, it was just too crazy for me – remember I'm trying to simplify my life.

So I thought the site is bringing in good money, but I'm all about making my life easy. I'm married I have 4 young kids, I just want easy and simple. So I took a chance. I knew, because I had developed a good relationship with my members over the years that a large percentage would renew and rejoin again under Clickbank, and those who didn't – that's fine too.

That was my whole thought, just simplify. Knowing that it's on WishList, (a simple program that I can update it myself if I need to), I can now run the whole business by myself, knowing that Clickbank is taking care of the billing. So it just made sense. I knew I could get a lot of affiliates behind it, especially because it's Clickbank and they know that Clickbank takes care of payments and never misses a payment. All of that stuff made the decision easy.

So, it was just a simple, simple business model and in terms of what they expect, like I said, the biggest thing is that I first gave them access to pretty much all of my archive products. All the video's from my \$2000 coaching program and all the audio's. There were hundreds of hours of content and a lot of great training (and that's just a bonus). The real meat of the membership is what is "happening now". These are live training calls every single week. No pitching. Just Q & A with special guests where we talk about what's working now.

You know how it is, you could buy a product today and two weeks it could be obsolete. You could buy a product about marketing with Facebook and Facebook could just do huge massive changes to their platform within a day or two and you think "now what"? The training is keeping you up to date about what's happening now, and its not every month like a lot of other marketers, or every other week, it's every single week. You are always going to get the freshest, latest stuff from me and I never sugar coat things. I will always tell you straight up how it is, or how I think it is. People appreciate that.

So life is great, I have a lot of members, people are loving it, they're spreading the word and it gives me more time to do interviews with people like you Mr. McLaren.

**STU:** I hope everybody can learn from your experience of moving to WishList in the fact that you identified that people want more of you. Ultimately, the easiest way for you to deliver that is through a once a week interactive coaching call where they can ask you questions and you can share what's happening right now.

When you have a membership site, the number one thing that people are coming to you for is convenience. Distilling information into the core essentials of what people need to know is a proven winner for membership site success. At the end of the day, people don't have the time to do all the research, they don't have the time to figure everything out and stay on top of it themselves and that's why they come to you.

**“When you have a membership site, the #1 thing that people are coming to you for is convenience”**

I think that's a big part of why your site Ryan, is such a huge success. You do a great job of staying on top of things but then distilling it down and sharing it with your members in a much more intimate, much more personal nature.

**RYAN:** People want to connect and a mistake marketers make is thinking, “I'm just a solo entrepreneur with a membership site but I want people to think of my site as a huge company”. Then they create some big generic corporate name like “Big Profits” and they never show who is really behind the site. Make it about you. Bring your personality into it and connect because people will stick with you when you deliver value and they see that you care. The bottom line is care, just care about your members and connect on that personal level.

***“...people will stick with you when you deliver value and they see that you care.”***

**STU:** As we wrap up here Ryan, I'm going to give a recap for everybody else, but the final question I'm going to ask you at the end is, what advice you would have for other membership site owners? But before we get to that, let's take a look at some of the things we have talked about here today.

----- RYAN LEE INTERVIEW RECAP -----

So we've been talking to Ryan Lee, and as I mentioned at the top of the call, Ryan has a tremendous wealth of experience when it comes to running successful membership sites. He's been doing it for over 10 years. At one time he had over 40+ membership sites running simultaneously. He's had thousand of members, made millions of dollars doing this stuff, so the guy knows his stuff.

It all started back in 2001 when he began experimenting. He was publishing content on a free site for training fitness professionals, trainers and athletes showing them a whole bunch of different things he had learned in that industry. By doing this he noticed was that there was a lot of conversations around strength and conditioning.

So he spun that off and created a paid membership site on that very subject, strengthening and conditioning.

By creating this site, he was hoping to make some supplementary income to compliment his full time job as a teacher and the personal training he was doing on the side. His goal was to make about \$2000 per month.

Right out of the gate, he made \$6000 in his first month. This obviously turned him on to the concept of membership sites very, very quickly. But it wasn't an easy process because he had to bill yearly and the systems were very convoluted. The whole process of getting the sites up was a challenge, but he made it work. He knew right there and then that there was no better business to help people connect with one another and to make money.

Now if we fast-forward, Ryan is now in a position where he has got a ton of experience running successful membership sites and he's learned a thing or two. But the most important lesson for any membership site owner is to listen to what people want.

**“The most important lesson for any membership site owner is to listen to what people want”**

Even from the beginning, Ryan started noticing questions in his forum of his first site from trainers that were asking about Ryan's experience running a training business. They were more “business” related questions instead of specific fitness questions. Ryan then thought, “hey there's an opportunity”.

From there Ryan made a lateral move and built another membership site focusing on the “business of training athletes”. By monitoring questions

from his members he quickly identified many opportunities for other membership sites and began rolling them out with “underground strength training” and then “4 minute workouts” and so on.

All these different, tightly focused niche membership sites, came as a result of listening to what people wanted. However, a key with this strategy as Ryan pointed out is to stay within the same market. Instead of trying to jump from market to market, Ryan said “stay in the same market and go deep”. He said don’t be afraid of spinning off another site but stay in the same market and go deep. When you do that you’re able to carry that momentum from one site into the other. So listen to what people want, give them what they want and go deep in the market.

If you follow this advice, you’ll dramatically improve your chances of success. Ryan said you can increase your odds even more by being very focused. Think about how the customer is going to search for information on that subject, and when you think about that, its much easier to target them and to convert them when you have a site that’s very tightly focused.

When Ryan started building his first membership site, it was all with things like Frontpage and he was a handing coding a lot of the site himself. Since that time he’s moved through a variety of different systems and now uses WishList Member. He has integrated that with Clickbank and one of the primary reasons he uses Clickbank is because it simplifies his business and his life. Now he doesn’t have to worry about the accounting and the affiliate side of the business along with all the things associated with processing money - because Clickbank handles all of that. Combine that with the fact that WishList Member has given him the ability to easily publish content and protect it with one click, the process of creating a winning membership site is much easier than when Ryan began.

Moving forward, Ryan said the key to membership site success boils down to two simple things that all membership site owners should focus on.

- 1) Getting more members into the membership
- 2) Keeping those members happy.

When it comes to getting more people into your membership that always boils down to getting traffic (eyeballs) to your site so people actually see what you have to offer. It’s all about your marketing.

Ryan suggested implementing 4 – 5 traffic strategies that work for you. Everybody is going to be different and there are going to be different

marketing strategies that will be more appropriate to you but just focus on 4 – 5. Don't try to do everything. Just get really good at those 4 – 5 things.

For him, blogging is one thing that works really well. It helps with search engine optimization and it helps to get eyeballs to his content. He also guest blogs, publishes articles, conducts interviews and participates in various joint ventures. Those are the core things he does in his business, but he said whatever you're doing in your business, just focus on 4 – 5 strategies.

Then when it comes to keeping people happy, he said always give them good stuff. That's the bottom line that all membership owners should focus on, give your members awesome content.

The other thing that works really well when it comes to retention are two powerful words: "coming soon". You've got to create anticipation for your content. Create anticipation for what's coming up so that people have something to look forward to. Always communicate and always keep them anticipating what's coming up.

Ryan went on to say that there are two ways to look at membership sites. The old school of thought is to set up a membership site, don't communicate with your members and hope that they forget they're getting billed. But the new school of thought, the one that Ryan subscribes to, is to keep your members informed of the value that they are receiving and communicate with them on a regular basis.

With that in mind, he said that you don't want to overwhelm your members, because if you overwhelm them by giving them so much content that they can't consume it, even if you're communicating all the time, your members are going to feel like they're not getting the value that is being delivered and they will therefore cancel.

Ryan likes to adhere to a once a week update, where he updates his members on all the things that have been happening and then he communicates regularly throughout the week by giving them free content and goodies.

When it comes to free and paid content, Ryan said 80 -90% of his content that he publishes is actually free. He uses it to drive people to his membership site where the paid content is located. It's all contained and located on the same site and that's really one of the big benefits of WishList Member. You can pick and chose which content you want available for free and what content you want to protect.

Ryan publishes a lot of regular articles where people can take that information and be able to apply it on their own. He said the paid content is really access to Ryan. Basically it's Ryan distilling a lot of information down to the nuts and bolts for his members, giving them practical how to's and showing them what they should be doing in their particular business.

He uses the free content to generate interest in the paid membership and by doing this, he's noticed an increase in comments as well as a lot more people appreciating him for the free content. The result of this is that it's generated more word of mouth and more sign ups.

Ryan also recently made a big shift with his main membership site located at [www.RyanLee.com](http://www.RyanLee.com). He completely overhauled the entire site and in fact even though he had lots and lots of paying members, he shut it all down and moved to WishList member and Clickbank. The reason; to simplify his life. He said "I had a good relationship with my members, so I knew a lot of them would sign up again. Some didn't and that's ok." Doing this has given Ryan a simplified breath of fresh air where he can now focus on what he does best and that's creating kick butt content and cranking out top quality marketing material.

As far as the "community" aspect of running a membership site, Ryan said the main thing to realize with the membership site is that people want to connect. A big mistake that a lot of people make is that they try to position themselves as this "big company". Forget that, be you, show that you care, show that you connect with your members and continue to deliver great value and you'll have a very successful membership.

----- END OF THE INTERVIEW RECAP -----

**STU:** Ryan, there is so much goodness contained in this interview and as I was going back through what we covered, I was thinking this is really good stuff.

The final question I wanted to ask you is what advice would you have for other membership site owners, who are perhaps not experiencing the kind of success that they really want to or someone that is starting for the very first time?

**RYAN:** I would say the first thing you have to do is look within yourself and ask yourself how badly do you really want it?

We can give you all the tactics and strategies and all that stuff, but unless you really want it, you won't do what's necessary to achieve it. If you look at the most successful people in the world, they tend to be the most driven. They're the ones who are the most hungry. So ask yourself how badly do you really want it? If you really want it, then go for it and cut the excuses out because everyone's good at making excuses.

***“Don't tell me you don't have time.  
You have to make time.”***

Don't tell me you don't have time. You have to make time. You can carve out an hour a day, everyone can. Stop watching so much TV. Stop doing all those other things. Look in the mirror and take 100% responsibility for everything you have. That's getting a little hard core but it's absolutely true. I'm not some motivational speaker here – but it's the truth.

The second thing is finding that niche or place where you can become the instant expert. The place where you can make a splash big time.

Finally, have the confidence to go after your goals and don't stop until you reach them. That's it.

I could have repeated myself with things that were said in the interview, but I don't want to sound repetitive. It really is a lot of the stuff that we have been talking about today. Implement those tactics along with the hunger and your goal list.

**STU:** Ryan I want to thank you. I know you did this as a favour, because we're good friends. There is just so much knowledge contained in that cranium of yours after running so many membership sites over the years and we appreciate you openly sharing it with all of us.

**RYAN:** Anything for you Stu, I'm just glad to help and I look forward to hearing all the success stories, and welcoming every single listener to the new inner circle.

**STU:** I would encourage and invite everyone to go and check out Ryan's site as there is a lot of free content and you'll also see what he's doing from a

marketing perspective as you'll see how he encourages his members to sign up for his inner circle.

**Profile Information**

Name: Ryan Lee

Website: [www.RyanLee.com](http://www.RyanLee.com)