



Should This Be Freemium?

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Anyone with a mother has heard the old adage: No one is going to buy the cow when you’re giving away the milk for free.

Unfortunate memories of our own parents or grandparents aside, it’s a piece of advice that’s stuck around for good reason: We’re afraid that by giving someone a little bit, they won’t be willing to make the investment to buy entire products. So, how does this apply to membership?

We see it all the time: If you want access to this association’s online learning system, its mailed newsletter, its stack of fantastic resources, you’ve just got to get past the paywall first. Sure, it might have made sense for a while before we all had access to treasure troves of information online for free. But that’s not the world we live in anymore.


As Robbie Kellman Baxter notes in “The Membership Economy,” “There’s no reason why virtually any organization cannot offer something free on a regular basis.” Doing so, she argues, offers three benefits:

1. Building awareness and widening your initial funnel of potential members.
2. Community-building for those with specific interests, providing value to those who do join your association.
3. Attract new potential members by encouraging use of and interaction with your association.

While there are several risks associated with offering free content — cannibalizing your potential membership, creating an expectation that your content is free, among others — there’s one big question that comes with it: What content should be part of a “freemium” plan?

That’s where this decision tree comes in. Inspired by Baxter’s book and other sources like the Harvard Business Review , Entrepreneur and TechCrunch , we’re here to help you define what should and should not exist behind a paywall.

Dive right in on the next page.

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