

S04 E04

# BEHIND THE MEMBERSHIP

**GEORGE REID**  
**LAUNCHPOD ACADEMY**



- Callie:** Welcome to Behind the Membership, season four, episode four. And today I'm talking with George Reid all about his membership for Amazon based businesses the LaunchPod Academy. George started the membership 15 months ago after originally working for Amazon in the UK. And over that time, the membership has become the main focus of his business, accounting for 80% of his revenue. One of the things George is most passionate about is ensuring he is giving his members the best experience possible, meaning his retention, even for annual renewals, is great. In this episode, we're talking all about how George originally started the membership with his brother but is now flying solo, how he is utilising guest experts for creating content, and some of the new strategies he's trying to both get new members and retain his existing ones. And we'll talk about the interesting new model George would like to pursue in the future as well. Plus, much more. So let's dive straight in.
- Announcer:** Welcome to Behind the Membership with Callie Willows. Real people, real stories, real memberships.
- Callie:** Today I'm joined on the show by George Reid, from LaunchPod Academy. Welcome to the show George, and thank you so much for joining me. I am really looking forward to hearing more about your membership, and how everything is going for you.
- George:** Thanks Callie. I really appreciate being invited on to begin with. You guys have been an incredible help from start of our journey with podcasting with memberships, to where we are now. So it's interesting to go through that with you. I'm looking forward to chatting.

Callie: Awesome. And so, to get us started then, could you tell us a little bit about LaunchPod Academy? Who it's for, what you offer, that kind of thing?

George: Sure. So, the academy actually stemmed from... We were initially an Amazon agency, where we look to support brands on the Amazon Marketplace globally, and ultimately try and help them make more revenue, more profit, and build a more sustainable business, which stemmed from... So my background was I worked at Amazon in the UK. I left doing the day job, and then just went privately. What I noticed was I wasn't particularly enjoying the agency vibe. Still felt like I had a boss in some ways, and I also felt like I was... It was a lot of it, of the consulting I was doing was more education. It just seemed like a logical step to go, "Okay, well let's start creating some content, add some structure to what we're doing here." Which allows me to obviously scale up the number of people I can on and support. So that's where we discovered, it was Thinkific to begin with. We're now with your guy's platform, with WordPress, et cetera. And the academy essentially looks to educate people on how they can build a sustainable, successful Amazon business globally.

Callie: Awesome. And so how long ago did you launch now did you say?

George: So it's probably going to be, the academy launched on Thinkific about 15 months ago. So we've just gone past the year mark, I would say. Yeah.

Callie: Awesome. So you mentioned a little bit there about how you came to focus on the membership model. What made you choose a membership over just doing a course, or a coaching programme, or something like that?

George: Sure. So in this space we work in, there's two things that's very interesting. Certainly, you'll see a lot of course sellers out there at the moment, and they certainly get somewhat of a bad rep, I believe, where it's kind of kiss me quick sort of thing, let's get them over the line, it's going to be 997 for the year long course, and you provide the content, then you say goodbye. And in the Amazon world that's certainly the case as well. We do see a lot of that black hat kind of course sellers out there. Whereas, what we were looking for is to build up stronger relationships with people. It wasn't without morals, it wasn't this type of business we wanted to run where we sold something once, then we're on to the next person. The brother and I were certainly in this position where we like to offer value, we like to build these relationships, and ultimately we enjoy the business model around that subscription. And the membership obviously gives us that.

So that's something we really enjoyed, and it gives you a reason to keep turning up each day. Whereas with a course, you can quickly go, "Right, I've sold it. I'm done. I've slammed Facebook ads galore, and I've made as much money as I can off the bat." But you've then not got really any reasons to nurture those, work those members over and over, and try and provide the best experience. And that's what I think we enjoyed most about running the academy, as opposed to a course. And probably was partly driven by what else we were seeing in the marketplace for education on Amazon.

Callie: Awesome. And so do you still offer other services and products as well? Or is the membership your full focus now?

George: So I'd say the membership is 80% of our focus, and the other service that we offer involve the academy members, and what else we can bolt on. How we can deliver them more value, working on the premise that we're already making profit off you guys, we don't need to rinse you for more profit over and over again. How else can we include something else in there? So we offer an advertising service. So, if you want to get more visibility on Amazon's platform, you need to advertise, similar to Facebook, Google, and all the others. It can be a complicated process, so we worked with a team, which I was connected with at Amazon to bring this ex-Amazonian service to our members, which is brilliant. And we can offer a really competitive price for that, because we're not looking to make all of our profit there, because we're already making profit on the memberships.

So that's one area we offer a service. For some others, we do one to one stuff, but we're shying away from it a little bit. We're not necessarily looking to do that. It's only when an interesting project, or brand, or individual approaches us, or comes and falls in our lap, that we go, "Okay that could be something more take on for three to six months." What we're slowly looking to build now is other bolt on services, which could be photography, it could be graphic design work, it could be software to help them run their business. And that's what we're looking at over the next three, six, 12, and those two, three year goals, is how else can we how add more value. We are looking to continuously bolt on new things. And I think we're in a strong position now. We can offer great additional services. And it's something we're looking to continuously build on.

Callie: Awesome. So, the membership is very much the core, and everything else expands on that to help people get better results essentially?

George: That's absolutely right. Yeah, it's our primary focus, and obviously we switched between looking to recruit, and obviously looking to retain. And that's how our time's been split over the last year, that balance between the two. So, at the moment, it is 70, 80% of our income comes from the membership. So it's a valuable thing for us.

Callie: Awesome. So you mentioned that the balance between the attracting members, and retention. Are you open all the time? Do you run launches? How do you work in terms of actually letting people into the membership?

George: So we currently have a door's always open policy, and that's been working fine. When we initially started we were doing a lot of webinars, discovered those, we had some brilliant success. Really enjoyed them, despite me doing it at 10:00 at night, because of the timezone difference of me being in Australia, and all the members being in the UK. So, was always an experience. You're sat there with a beer, and they're questioning why you've got beer on the go on a Thursday morning. That was a big focus for us to begin with, just accelerating up. But now we're looking at more of a steady door's always open, and we're just nurturing people on our email list over time. We've not tried the doors are closing before. It's something we would be open to, but for the time being, we're just sticking with what we know.

Callie: And so you mentioned there that your members are in the UK. Is that still the case? Is it very much a UK focused membership? Or is it more international now?

George: So, I would say, we've got around about 160, 170 members. About 150 of those going to be based in the UK. You may then get around about 10 in Australia, and then sporadic, some random ones floating around, but all of our marketing has been in the UK. We've experimented with Australia, and hit a few duds with some webinars we did. So shied away from it. And we also experimented in the US, but the competition's a lot more aggressive there when you're looking to get clicks on whatever platform you're using. So I think we're really focusing on the UK, and I think we resonate better with the audience there than perhaps we do with other cultures.

Callie: Awesome. And so, that's the practical stuff out of the way then. What would you say has been your biggest challenge with the membership since you launched?

George: I think for us, so background that we discussed before was it was the brother and I. So when I say, "Us," it's the older and myself running this academy together. I think the biggest challenge probably came down to us having different ideas of how we wanted to go about running it. And that was running the day to day, in terms of what concept we're putting out, but also what strategies we're looking to implement for marketing and recruiting new members. So we always collided, as brothers do. And we've done that from a young age, and you can see elements of that coming through. So that's probably been our biggest challenge, is we haven't had this clear vision that we both are aligned on. We both had the same end goal, I feel, but how we got there was different. And that just became hurdle, after hurdle, after hurdle for us. But we did struggle, and we still do struggle with getting leads in. Our retention is pretty good, so that's not been a huge issue. So it's probably been getting leads in a fair price, where we know we can profit from them. But the biggest one is that it's no clear leader would be the way to describe it.

Callie: And I know you mentioned to me before we started this that you've now bought Tom out of the company. So, are you feeling like now that that's happened that you can now forge that path yourself, now that you're running solo with things?

George: Yeah, that certainly is the case. Tom offered so much value, because we split the academy up into social education, in terms of how you're building up funnels, and building up email lists, and social advertising for your Amazon business. And I focused on branding and the Amazon side of things, because of my background. So we offered great value there for the members, in terms of retention, as well as offering loads of value, because he ran all our Facebook ads. And as I'm sure you guys know, that's quite the asset to have. So there is a, I feel, taking one step backwards, which we're certainly doing, and the business is obviously going to struggle a little bit with a capital outlay of buying someone out, which puts constraints on us over the next few months or so.

But all in all I think that, from my personal perspective, I feel having just one clear vision of what I want to achieve, and how I want to get there. And I still ask him for consultation, should I want to, and get advice, and thoughts, and tips, and that still happens. But there's one decision maker, and that is very much a weight off my shoulders. You can ask the girlfriend as well, the amount of times you get into bed, and you just had a long heated conversation, because of the time difference, and your head's just whirling around about how you disagreed on another thing. That's not happening anymore. Granted, I'm still

having challenges of, "Okay, what are we doing, in terms of Facebook advertising? How's that working?" You're taking on more, but I think it is a big weight off my shoulders personally.

Callie: Yeah, and as you say, I know you mentioned it was only recently as well, so you're still in that transition period, I would imagine, where you're finding your feet, and getting into the groove of things yourself. But as you say, having that one clear decision maker can make it so much easier when, as you say, you know that end goal. It's just how are you going to get there, I think.

George: Yeah. That is the case. Our vision was still the same. We wanted x numbers, and x revenue, and different contributes, et cetera. But now I'm not having to waste energy, and time trying to convey what I think is the best option, and him doing the same, and going back and forth. We're not stagnating anymore. It's just me on my own. I make a decision. And it's going to take me time to ramp up, and perhaps find suitable replacements for the value that he offered, and there's going to be a bit of costly mistakes, I'm sure, made there, as I look to appoint someone else to run Facebook, for argument's sake. But still, it's the best decision, I feel, for the business going forward.

Callie: Awesome. And so, what's been the highlight, or your favourite thing, about having the membership site so far?

George: That's a good question. I think one of the real pleasures I get from it is the understanding and thinking about how I can make the experience better for members. And that's not necessarily... Like, what I'm learning, I'm reading a book on it recently called Retention Point. It's not necessarily about just throwing more value in there. Or just going, "Well, you had 20 hours of content, you've now got 60. It's three times as good, so you're going to stay three times as long." I think what I'm slowly starting to realise is, it's more how do people learn? What do people need to make the experience for them better? So, I had a great conversation with another ex Amazon chap the other day, and he's brilliant at asking just the right questions. He's like, "Well, why aren't people perhaps consuming all the content you've got?" And I was like, "It could be down to them not having time." And then he's like, "Well, how can you save them time?" And it really opened me up of, "Okay. Okay, well let's start thinking of other ways that we can offer value for this membership by saving them time, which is how I run this software hype at the moment." Similar to how yourselves, you offer the software, not only great because it makes you stickier, and it builds value, but also great because it helps people save time.

So that's probably the most enjoyable thing, is just brainstorming ideas on my own, jotting things down, and also having the ability to be like, "Well, I'm still working for myself. I can go down to a coffee shop in Bondi, and watch the surf, whilst thinking of new ideas of how we can offer value to customers." So that's the biggest thrill for me. And the financial reward is nice, and it can certainly be a lot bigger, but could also be a lot worse, we want a really good trajectory, and we're happy with where we are now. But it's not a financial thing, it's nothing like that. It's more, "How can I offer value?" And understanding that educational experience, and how we can make it better and better.

Callie: Awesome. So as we're on the topic, you mentioned already, obviously one of the things you love is creating that member experience, and you said that your retention is quite good. So what kind of things are you doing to keep members engaged and coming back month after month?

George: Sure. So I think, to begin with, we were doing a lot of live workshops, and they were going okay, but we noticed numbers dwindling a little bit. So we paused them for the time being, and we're now actually working more on getting external people, who are thought leaders in particular topics on Amazon. It's such a broad topic, it's very difficult, and I'm never naive enough to assume that I know everything about everything there is to know on Amazon, because it's just impossible. So what we're working hard on now is bringing other experts into play. Which is great, because it takes the load off of what I have to do, which is a thumbs up for me, so I can focus on other areas to where I can add more value.

But from a members perspective, they're getting the top of the line people in a particular topic. So it could be tax advice, where I'm never going to speak about that topic at all, because I never want to get it wrong, and completely bugger someone's business. So we've got someone in to speak about it. If it's Amazon advertising, I'm looking at getting a number of real thought leaders, who are at the top of their game in the Amazon advertising world to contribute and offer support. So that's one way that we feel we're offering real value. The other one we're working at now is, we're just running a beta at the moment with clubs. I was listening something brilliant the other day about creating those accountability partners. I think that's so big in Amazon.

We can always get lost in our own little world of running an Amazon business. And what they've essentially said in this podcast I listened the other day was, "If you haven't got a boss, or someone else there, holding you accountable, like, 'By this date you need your images done,' then it can always drag on, and on, and on, and on." So your listing doesn't convert like you'd like it to, et cetera. So we're looking to play with these mini clubs, where there's a lot more trust, and we're partnering people up together with a logic that you can start holding each other accountable. You can be the group leader, but ultimately, Nick is holding Sue accountable for not getting her copyrighting done that week. And it needs to be done by Thursday when we're meeting up again. So that's something I think is going to offer a lot of value, and I'm excited see where they go. Plus, I think it will be an enjoyable process as well. Just having these mini discussions. So they're two areas that I think are working well for us.

Callie: Awesome. And so with those mini clubs, are you putting people together yourself? So you're matching people up? Or is it a lot more organic in terms of members joining clubs themselves and things?

George: So for the beta, we're actually just running it based on a category, which we're focusing on grocery. What's interesting about the topic is it's a consumable product, there's going to be certain tactics related to that. So we have a discussion, and we introduce ideas, everyone can relate to those ideas. And I've made it an open invite. If you are in the grocery category, first 10 people to ask for the invite are going to be gained entry. Over time, what I think will happen, what I hope will happen, is people will start creating their

own, and we're going to encourage that as well. So, for instance, it's going to be electronics, or it's going to be small and light items, or it's going to be bulky items. So people start to form their own support groups, because with Amazon, in particular categories, you come across certain challenges, provided you've got that trust, and it's not, "I'm going to steal your product," which is one, perhaps, concern, which we'll need to police, in inverted commas. But I think it will hopefully become organic, and we just are monitoring these things. But for the time being, we're hand picking a little bit, based on the category we choose.

Callie: Awesome. And so quick question on you mentioned you're bringing in guest experts now, essentially. So this is a question that gets asked all of the time in our academy. Are you paying for those experts? Or they're doing it for free? How are you working that balance out with the experts?

George: So it's an interesting question. I've literally tried to pay all of the experts, but none of them accept it.

Callie: Oh, really?

George: Yeah. Perfect place to be. So these are like, with the advertising people, they're two brilliant characters over in America, and they are very much top of their game. They run very successful agencies. But there, in the Amazon world, it's slightly different. All consultants, and agencies help each other, which I'm pretty sure you don't ever see in any industry. I have calls with other experts around the world all the time, and many people go, "You're chatting to your competition on a Zoom call to catch up." It's not logical, but I think the size of the pie on Amazon is different. So there's so much to go after, in terms of market size. It's not competition almost. So, the experts who are weighing in on our topics, I do say, "If any way I can remunerate you, please let me know." I do say, "The members are there, and you can display your value to them with your posts, and your content. And if they need additional support, I'm happy for them to come to you directly. Because our value is the academy. If they need someone to come manage their advertising, and they can afford your fees, then by all means, go wild."

And at the same token with the tax, same token with a photographer who can offer value there. So we're, I guess in some way, trading access to a warm audience, and a big tick from us that we trust them, in order to come and provide value. So it's a bit of a trade off, which I think they see is the equivalent of getting paid. But at the moment we're not paying them. But the downside of not paying anyone is, you do need to chase them a little bit more. So, "Hey, could you put a post in again?" "Yeah, yeah. Sorry, I'll do that." "Hey, you haven't done it." "Okay. Well, yeah, I'll do it today." So there is that. You haven't got any weighting there. So that's somewhat of a challenge.

Callie: And so, it's interesting what you were saying before about the Amazon market, essentially, and how you're quite often having calls with people that would be considered your competitors, and things, and it's quite a generous marketplace. Are you finding that's also the case in your community? Because I'd imagine that a lot of your members might

also be selling competing products and things like that. So, how does that work in terms of the community element?

George: It's interesting. I think, some individuals are taking time to warm up to this more close knit community. Some people are saying, "Here is my product, here are my things. Can you review it?" And they get the most value out of experience, because I can go in, do a quick Loom video, and review their listing, and it could take me 20 minutes, and they're not paying the expensive rate. They're just getting it for free. And that's where they can really capitalise. Other people, I think, are still nervous about sharing their stuff. And they're concerned that someone's going to steal our idea, and that's it gone.

So that's part of my job of how I can build that trust, and open to ideas in that one. But at this point in time, it's a mix. Some people who are less active, obviously, perhaps have those reservations of, "Okay my products, they're very secret." Others, "I just want to get as much help as I can. And I'm not concerned if someone can see the packaging I'm going for." Because ultimately, if we've got 160 people, the likely of there being a crossover is very small, and the data is always on Amazon anyway. If they want to find a product, it's there. You'd be stealing a slight idea. So, with Amazon, the competition is fierce anyway. I don't think you need to be concerned about the other 150 people in this academy who can now see your product page, or what packaging you're thinking about. So it's not a huge issue.

Callie: Awesome. And so, what kind of content are you actually releasing? Do you have a regular schedule each month? Or do you release things on a bit more of an ad hoc basis?

George: So, it is probably more of an ad hoc basis. The benefit we have with Amazon is that the ecosystem changes so quickly. There are continuous updates, there are always new strategies. So my essential goal, and what I do every single day is I'm just learning more and more about Amazon. And I'm batting away what I don't think is relevant, or useful, or good advice. And then when I see that a strategy is working really, really well, and I'm seeing a lot of evidence for that on all the forums, communities, chatting to people. I'm seeing it lot. I then go, "Right, now let's create either a full course on that, and break it down really cleanly. Or do your quick wins things, like you have." Alternatively, sometimes if it's a quick, very short, sharp notes, I'll drop it inside the community portal. So, I'm still balancing up of whether people prefer the quick updates, and quick Loom videos of stuff that I've seen, and putting in the community, or having that bank updater in the library. So we don't have a strategy. If we update stuff every single month, it's as it comes. If we discover something new, if we discover some value, fantastic. Let's get it in there.

Callie: Great. So, if that's what you're doing for your members once they're in the doors, how are you getting them in the doors in the first place? What are you doing to attract new members?

George: Sure. So traditionally... It's kind of gone away. So, the most success we've ever had of getting new members in is doing a live webinar. And they're always live, never recorded, and that was about a year ago. They were really fairing well for us. We were getting around about £6 a webinar registrant, which is pretty good going. And we were selling a

course for anything from 300 to £450 for an annual membership, not course. Bad term. So that's where we probably saw most of our success, because we were converting a lot of people on these annuals, and the annuals are now starting to come through again now for the first year which is great. So that was probably the most success we've ever seen.

We then obviously had built a really strong email list as well. And we were continuously experimenting with lead magnets, such as PDFs, or recorded workshops, or mini courses. We experimented with a few. And now what I tried last month, or a month and a half ago, because we were facing some issues of getting blocked on Facebook, as I'm sure lots of people are experiencing right now, looking at the communities and forums out there, it's a big issue. So we've been pinged for, unfortunately, some of our main pages on Facebook, which I think we based it on a hard block, which is preventing us from starting a thing again.

So I wanted to ensure that we had a robust system where, if we needed to change to a new Facebook page, I didn't have to go change 15 different landing pages. So, I've set up a resource, I'm calling it a resource subscription now. It's a free subscription. And I just take parts of the whole academy, and I plonk them inside a separate dashboard, just for them. And the logic is we encourage them to become a resource member for free, we use a lead magnet as that funnel. When they join that, they have a series of courses, or PDFs, or cheat sheets, or Excel templates, which they can use on a mini dashboard. My theory is if they're experiencing the dashboard, and the logging on to somewhere, and all this nice content, and what the user interface is going to be, and the experience is going to be, that's going to be beneficial. And it's going to be a much easier upsell because they're already on the page.

So when we say nurture series, we're emailing them, "We've got a new quick training. We think it'd be really beneficial for you." We're looking to make them warmer, instead of sending to a random landing page, they're going, "Oh, it's in your dashboard, you can see it here." So they're going back to the same place over and over. If they're going to that place, that experience is building. So that's what we're experimenting with the moment, and it's going okay. That's something I've deployed since the brother left. But we're also looking now to start again with PDFs. I think webinars have become a little bit too expensive from the glory days of the £6 we were getting before, I think that's probably passed, because they've been hammered by everybody, so the price has gone up. So we're now looking to experiment that resource, and then some PDFs. Just essentially get cheap emails is our logic.

Callie: Awesome. And so with that free resource level, do you have things on that dashboard that also encourage them to upgrade to the paid membership from there as well? Are you showing them what's in the paid membership? Or are you doing it more via that email funnel?

George: So, it's a combination. So when they join the resource membership dashboard, we obviously encourage them to get on to the dashboard as often as possible, straight away. So there's this here, there's this here, there's this here. And we're continuously pushing them to get on there. Once they're on there, front placement is the free trial, which isn't

available, unless you're on that page. So with everything else it's that you start paying straight away, whereas here, you've got that free 14 day trial. And that's sat prominently there. What you have here, but upgraded to this, this, this. So that is something we're looking to continuously upsell, I guess.

Callie: Awesome. Awesome. So let's switch gears a little bit now, and talk about life as a membership site owner. So, is it just you now? Do you have other team members helping you? How's the actual day to day structure of the business now, in terms of getting things done?

George: Sure. So I appointed another person to help out setting up some of the Facebook stuff. I have an offshore team that manage the Amazon advertising. They had some contacts that they put me in touch with to manage Facebook as well. So I'm training up that team a little bit of exactly what I'm after. And then I've appointed a chap in the US to help with that process, and help get the analytics really nailed for me, so I understand the exact cost of a resource subscriber, of an email, of a sign up, everything. That's really important to me. So he's helping me train up that offshore team as well. And then, in terms of other contributors, there's one chap I pay, who was at Amazon with me, and he contributes into the community as well.

But ultimately, in terms of strategies, it's all on me now, with regard to retention, what we're doing, new ideas. And then there's just a couple of other people that are helping me implement them. And that is a slowly building process. I'd like to pass all of the marketing on to someone else, and for me not to think about it, just so I can one, live a more free life, and not be chained, thinking about what PDF we can come out with this month, or what new lead magnet, or what new strategy. I'd like to focus on one thing, do it very, very well, which is servicing those members, rather than thinking about all the other moving parts, would be an objective for me.

Callie: So, this might seem like a bit of a strange question, but you live in Sydney now, whereas you were in the UK when you set up the membership. And as you mentioned before, most of the members are UK based. Because that is a huge time difference, do you find that that impacts things like your customer service, times you have to do calls, and things like that, in order to actually be available for your members?

George: Yes, it certainly does. I think I've become accustomed to... So if members are booking in calls with me, which is something we offered when we did the initial webinar, kind of pay now and get a free consultation. A lot of those consultations are going to be in the evening for me, which I've just accepted. I don't see it as an issue. They have the whole of their morning to book a time in, five days a week. So I don't think it's disrupting them too much. In terms of response times, there is obviously some delays with those, and now it's me on my own, and the brother's not there in the UK responding as well. Sometimes it can be a little bit delayed. And I'm working to make that better by working with the other person in the UK who was at Amazon with me to be a bit more active on getting those responses in.

But overall, we haven't really seen any complaints. For all cancelled members, we are typically seeing the issue is cost or time. It was only yesterday, one person came in, which

was the first one ever to say, "Bad experience," and no further comments, but I've obviously asked. So I don't think we've had so much of a bad experience, in terms of, "George, you weren't there for us when we needed you. You made us have a call at 9:00 AM, when I usually have my coffee at 9:00 until 9:15." It's been pretty fine.

Callie: Great. And so overall then, what impact would you say that having a membership site has had on your life and business so far?

George: So I think for me, I love the freedom that I have with it. I do have the office setup in the sunroom at home, which is great. And I spent some time bouncing around coffee shops and whatnot. But I think for me, having that fixed space of work really helped. But in the same token, the ability to go away when I want, and still run my business is absolutely fine. It's almost the ultimate test to see if I can do it by being 11 hours, or nine hours ahead, as it is, and you're running it day to day. So I know that if I want to go to South America, and travel for three months, for argument's sake, which is on the roadmap then and the Missus, I don't see it being an issue because, worst case scenario, I've got to log in, and have a call for an hour. It's not going to be a huge. So that's one of the biggest perks for me, is the flexibility that I have, being able to move around a lot, and not be fixed to the desk.

The other is that recurring revenue stream is unlike any other business. I'm not ever really stressing about it too much. And there's lots of opportunities for upselling and cross selling as well, so you've got these really nice warm leads, which I think is brilliant. And I'm sure I could be capitalising on it much, much more if I was either more intelligent, or perhaps more driven. One of the two. But overall I think the subscription business works so well for me, where you're acquiring customer, and you work them, and you retain them, and you build relationships. It's what, I think, is a brilliant, brilliant model, and I can see so many other businesses switching that way. So I'm pleased to be getting into it early.

And also into the education because I just find the thrill of helping people go from, "I'm doing five grand a month on Amazon," to "Now I'm doing 15, and I can either send the kids to school at a better private school," or wherever the case may be, you do get that thrill with that. And I really enjoy having those conversations with members, and understanding those different businesses, and the products, and what they're doing with this, that, and the other, and talking strategies. So you are having better conversations, in comparison to the agency model, where you are at the beck and call if your client quite often. I feel the members, as soon as I switch to the member model, and people are kind of, "Thank you so much for your time." They've obviously in some way paid for your time inadvertently, but they're so much more appreciative, grateful. Whenever you are commenting, providing help, they're very appreciative. And it's just a nicer way to work. Rather than with a client, it's "Okay, I don't care what time it is there in Australia. Pick up the phone, we need to speak about this now." We don't have any of that with the academy. I think that's brilliant as well.

Callie: I love that. And so, is there anything you actually wish you'd known earlier or that you'd do differently if you were starting again?

George: What would I do differently? Good question. I think the biggest challenge for us, I think we're still so early. We're 14 months in. So I don't think we've made any major mistakes. I think we're on a really good trajectory, in terms of how we're developing it. It would be nice to be like, "I wish I'd thought the software idea at day one, so we could have incorporated that." Or, "I wish I'd thought of this earlier." But all of those things happen for a reason. I think the biggest thing I, perhaps, would have done earlier on was, when working with the brother, obviously, it cost us a lot of money to learn Facebook advertising. I was pretty flexible with it. But he could be spending a large sum of money every month, and I'm just like, "Okay, he's just learning. He's getting on with it." Perhaps we could have looked at getting external help for that early on. But then the same token, it would have really constrained us a little bit, because to get high value external help is going to cost, 1000, 2000 a month, and you're not necessarily learning with that. So it cost us a lot more money in the short term. And we could have been a lot more profitable, and perhaps grown a lot quicker, but I think the benefit of that was we learned so much.

The downside being the brother's now not part of the business, and he takes a lot of that knowledge with him. But thankfully we're still on good terms. And now I know I can go, "Right, I want someone to look after that. I know I've enjoyed that experience with the brother looking after that for me, and me not having to think too much about it. So I know that I need someone in place there to do that." But nothing major, to be honest. No.

Callie: Great. And so, if someone's listening, and thinking of starting a membership site, what one tip would you give them to get them started?

George: One tip that I'd give them. I think the biggest one that I'm learning is really focusing on becoming as sticky as possible. I always use this term sticky at the moment. I think ultimately, you can have a brilliant flywheel that's working wonders for you in the marketing kind of things, and bringing in fresh leads. But if you're not sticky, it doesn't really matter. You're still going to lose money. I think the value is really in that retention, and understanding of how you can become a crucial part of that member's life. Not only do you get a lot more value yourself from it, because you're like, "I'm really helping them."

And that could be teaching the piano, and they're loving the whole experience, because they're getting better and better. Or it could be someone making loads of money on Amazon, and helping that family just have a better life, whatever the case may be. So, for me, the biggest tip would be becoming as sticky as possible, and understanding the different things that's going to make you sticky. It's not always going to be create more content, and like I've learned recently, it's understanding "Okay, you could have all your content, but they're not necessarily going to consume it. What else is going to make you sticky? What's going to stay them? How are you going them that provide them that value?" So the stickiness would be that nailing that and be in a really strong position.

Callie: I love that, and I think that's such an important point, because that is the big difference with memberships, is the retention is as important, if not more important, than actually getting the members in in the first place. But so many people focus so much on the getting the members in, that they don't pay enough attention to, "Well, how do I keep them? How

do I give them the best experience and make them sticky?" So that's a really great point there about where you should focus that time and energy initially.

George: Yeah, and it is. It is an energy thing. It's so easy to be swayed and be like, "Oh, we need to go get some more members. We need to get some more emails." And we would literally go from one pendulum swing to the other side of which one we were focusing on, which wasn't necessarily healthy. Be like, "Right, we're doing a month and a half of getting new people," and we'd be doubling down at that, and we'd just completely forget that there's people paying us money every month, or every quarter, or every year over here. Okay, well let's just focus on doing a really good job with them, particularly with the annual. If you nail that annual, and the drop off, so the churn is very low on the annual, you obviously have the additional funds, which you could then go use to recruit new people. So that's something that we've noticed recently. If your retention is really, really good on the annual because you've been so sticky throughout the year, it opens up loads of extra cash. You don't need to go back into the piggy bank again, and pull out some capital. You've got a membership coming back in. So, it's such a big one. We're still learning that

Callie: Great stuff. And so last question then. I'd love to know what your goals are for Launch Pod Academy. Where does the membership take you in 2021 and beyond? What's it look like for you?

George: So I have this... It's a silly little idea, and it would potentially cripple the business, but I've got this view on education where... Are you familiar with the AWS model? Because you guys use the S3, et cetera, right? So, it's like you pay for what you use. So I think, in education, that the whole model is actually flawed, because you're always paying for something, and you may only need 10% of it. So someone can log into my academy, and know 80% of the stuff already, but they still have to pay for the 100%, even though they're only going to consume 20. So I think, in an ideal world, what I'd like to establish and set up, would be an AWS style model. So based on the number of times you log in, how much content you consume, how many hours you spend listening, or talking to us, would be the ultimate model for anyone who is looking for a learning experience.

You go on holiday, you're not getting stung by a fee. Why should you? You've not even used it. It's like having a mobile phone that you've got 1000 minutes, and you don't use any one month, because you were ill, for argument's sake. Here's your bill. It's not the most customer friendly way of doing business. And lots of people we speak to the moment, they drop out because, "I just haven't used it for three months. So why should I pay you £47 a month." So you're like, "Good point." It's not a good customer experience from us. In an ideal world, what I'd love to do is set up a consumption based pricing model. And then make money on the back end with other services if they want them, and that's completely optional.

So that would be an ideal world. I can't really do that at the moment, because I'd shoot myself in the foot, and throw away all my recurring revenue. But it will be an ideal situation that I'd like to get to, where other services we offer for members are doing enough to make me a nice income, which I'm happy with, I'm confident is going to be there for a long period of time, to then go, "Right, let's make this switch." Which sounds like a

complete mess of a process, which it definitely would be, but it would be, for me, a brilliant experience.

Callie: Yeah, that sounds like a really interesting idea. I've not particularly heard people talking about wanting to do that approach before, so I'll be really interested to see if or when you implement that, how it goes for you, and yeah, how that works. Because yeah, it definitely sounds like an interesting approach that could disrupt the market quite a little bit, in a good way.

George: Yeah. Absolutely. It worked... If you look at AWS's model, and how they were born, it worked so well for them, because they're able to sneak in with this new cloud service before any big players realised. So it would be brilliant to be able to offer it, and it comes back to one of Amazon's leadership principles, which is customer obsession. I think, arguably, I could be shut down for saying this on a membership podcast, but you could argue at all times as a membership, always customer obsessed, perhaps on the financial side, not because we do take money from people, and perhaps they never use the service. It's still much better than many other models, like courses, I 100% think so, but you could even kind of go, "Are we always doing the best possible thing we could ever do for a customer?" Maybe not. I don't know. It's a discussion anyway.

Callie: Yeah, no. I think that's a really interesting point. And I think you're seeing that move a little bit now with services like Netflix announcing that if you haven't used your account for a year, they're going to automatically cancel you. I think it's a year. And things like that. So as you say, people making more moves as well to stop people just continuing to pay them if they're not using something as well. But yeah, that would be really interesting to see how that goes for you.

George: Yeah, well, if you've got any other tips, if you spit ball any ideas with your mike, share them. I'm happy to think of it.

Callie: Will do. And so, if someone wants to check out your membership, check out your website, see what you're doing, or even join the membership if they're an Amazon seller, where's the best place for them to find you?

George: Simple domain is [launchpodacademy.com](http://launchpodacademy.com).

Callie: Awesome. Nice and easy there. And yeah, I'll put the link to that below the podcast in the show notes as well. And so that is it. I just want to thank you so much for joining me today, George. It's been absolutely wonderful chatting with you, and hearing all about Launch Pod Academy, and how everything's going, and your plans as well. It's going to be really interesting to see how things go for you over the next year.

George: Thanks a lot. I appreciate everything you guys do too for us as well. We're certainly in a better position since we've joined The Membership Guys. So thank you as well. And thank you, for having me on.

Callie: That's all for another episode folks. Thank you for listening. I hope you've got some useful nuggets from this episode. And as always, a big thank you once again to my guest, George, for sharing his experiences. Be sure to check out [launchpodacademy.com](http://launchpodacademy.com) for more from George. And if you'd like to get that link, plus the transcript and show notes for this episode, then head over to [themembershipguys.com/btm36](http://themembershipguys.com/btm36). One of the things I particularly love about George is his drive to constantly look at how he can tweak and improve things further for his members. And it's clear that he is passionate about delivering as much value as possible. What was your biggest takeaway from the episode? Let me know over in the free Facebook group at [talkmemberships.com](http://talkmemberships.com). I'll be back next week with another episode of Behind the Membership. See you then.