

FORUM RICHES

LEARN THE SECRETS OF MAKING MONEY WITH FORUMS!



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Introduction

Pretty much everyone on the internet has visited at least one forum, and most have visited many of them. Although Facebook has replaced forums for some users, a lot of people still prefer the standard forum format.

Reddit is one of the world's biggest online forums. For years, they have been receiving millions of unique visitors per month, and they have consistently been in the world's top 100 websites. They are just one example of how much traffic and money there is to be had from forums.

The trouble is, if you're not careful, you can do something that can cause irreparable harm to your forum. Running a forum successfully is not the easiest thing. In fact, even Reddit has learned this the hard way. A combination of politicking, ham fisted moderation, and server problems, has recently caused Reddit to drop from over 15,000,000 unique visitors per month to around 6-8,000,000. It was a sudden, massive drop, and it could have been prevented.

In this guide, you're going to learn how to run a successful forum, from choosing a platform and setting it up, to populating the site with posts, to getting traffic, and preventing the loss of that traffic.

So let's begin!

Forum Software

The first thing you must do is decide which forum software you'd like to use, and there are a lot of options to choose from.

One website has a wizard that will help you choose which software to run by answering a few questions:

> <http://www.forummatrix.org/wizard.php?d%5Bgo%5D=1&x=72&y=8>

The site also has comparisons and information about most of the popular forum platforms, so you can choose the one that is right for you.

Some of the most popular forum platforms include:

>> <https://www.phpbb.com/>

>> <https://www.mybb.com/>

>> <https://vanillaforums.org/>

>> <http://www.simplemachines.org/>

If you use one of the popular cPanel hosting companies, they will often have an installer program that will make it easy to install your forum software with just a few clicks. Ask your hosting company if they have something like Softaculous.

You could also hire someone to install the software for you if you don't feel like you can handle it yourself. Search Fiverr or another freelance website for "script installation" to locate someone who can do this for you. Just keep in mind that if your host offers something like Softaculous, you can easily do it yourself.

You may also want to hire someone to create a logo and theme for your forum if you can't find one that is right for you. Most forum packages have some free themes available, but a custom theme will go a long way toward making your forum stand out. People prefer visiting sites that have good layouts and are easy on the eyes, so that is one way you can attract more users.

Initial Posts

Once your forum is up and running, you need posts.

No, not traffic. **Posts**. Sound odd that you need posts before you even get traffic?

Just imagine going to a forum with no posts. Would you want to be the first one to start a conversation, not knowing if anyone will ever even see the post, much less respond?

Most people wouldn't want to do that. They prefer to jump into threads that are already active rather than start a new thread, especially if they see very little activity on a particular forum.

The biggest attraction to get people to sign up to a new forum is activity, so you need a few users posting on a regular basis in order to get others to join the forum and participate.

The best way to accomplish this is to hire people to post for you. You could do that on a place like Fiverr, or you could use a service that specializes in forum posts, such as PostLoop.com.

> <http://www.postloop.com>

PostLoop.com is a broker that has a large number of people ready and willing to post on your forum for pay, and it really doesn't cost much. Most of the users are students, disabled individuals, stay-at-home parents, etc. They really don't need to earn a great deal of money, so you can get posts very inexpensively, and usually very quickly.

The site even screens applicants to be sure they can post intelligent discussions and use proper spelling and grammar. They don't have to be perfect, but they have to be at least as good as the average forum user, so don't worry about getting a bunch of incoherent posts from people who barely speak English or just paste a bunch of translated nonsense.

You want your forum to look busy, so it's a good idea to have at least 10-15 individuals posting, and to have at least 10-15 different topics in each area of your forum, as well as several posts in each thread. You want the forum to look as busy as possible.

You, as an owner, should also be active. Make sure users see you posting often, because they want to know you care about the forum before they invest their time into it.

Once you have a good number of posts and your forum looks active, you can start looking for real users for the forum.

Getting Traffic

Okay, your site is running, and you have a good number of initial posts to get the discussion rolling. What next?

It's time to find some people to come post on your forum, and that can be easier said than done. Not only do you have to find people who are interested in the subject of your forum, but you also have to find a way to convince them to start posting!

One of the easiest ways to start doing this is to raid other similar forums. Look for people who post often and seem pretty knowledgeable on the subject, and people who rarely, if ever, have conflicts with other members. The last thing you want is a bunch of rude personalities chasing off other potential members!

NOTE: Before you do the following, be sure to check the forum rules to be certain you won't get banned for it!

Send those people a private message and let them know you have started a forum, and that you are extremely impressed with their posts and you would be very pleased to have them post on your forum in addition to their current forum.

You might also set up a gamification system in which top posters are given prizes each month or are entered to win a nice prize. This is a great way to encourage users to stay active!

Another way to get traffic is to create a blog in your niche and link to your forum from as many spots as possible, potentially mentioning your monthly prize(s) in order to get more people to click.

Ads are a near sure-fire way to attract new posters. Facebook ads are particularly effective if done correctly, and you can even mention your prizes in your ad to attract attention. Ads are easy to target in most niches, so you can locate the people who are most likely to be interested in your forum.

Moderation

Moderation is a critical element of running a forum, and it can be very time-consuming if you choose to do it all yourself. You don't necessarily have to read every single post on the forum every day, but you need to be ready to act quickly if you receive any complaints about a particular post or user.

What type of complaints are you likely to see?

- Arguments, name calling, and other personal attacks
- Spam
- Pornography or other offensive or illegal content
- Hate speech or threats of violence
- Plagiarism (yes, it can happen on forums)

In order to keep your visitors happy and returning, it's important to take care of any of these issues quickly. Allowing tempers to flare further will only end up in the potential of additional members becoming involved and taking sides, and even more users possibly leaving the forum.

You should institute a clear policy for repeat offenders. You might, for example, give three warnings before a ban, unless the user commits such a bad offense they must be banned immediately. Always consider the severity of the issues before deciding whether or not to ban a user. Every member is important unless they are causing nothing but problems.

If you find you cannot keep up with moderation on your own, you have two choices. You can hire one or more people to moderate the forum, or you can ask for volunteers from your member base.

Before inviting someone to be a moderator, there are a few things you should consider:

- Are their posts always helpful?
- Are their posts always fair and kind?
- Do they get along with other members easily?
- Have they been posting long enough to be trusted?

You want your moderators to be fair and impartial at all times, and you want to be sure you can trust them not to make decisions that could hurt the forum, or worse, to damage it on purpose. For this reason, you might want to avoid volunteer moderators until your forum has been active long enough to have members who have enough history on the forum to be trusted.

Avoiding Problems

Forum members can be very quick to abandon a forum if there are a lot of problems, so it's vital that you keep a close eye on potential issues so you can cut them off before they chase away your key members.

Moderation is one of the essential keys to avoiding problems, but there are a few other issues to be on the lookout for.

First, make sure you keep your forum software updated. Hackers are constantly looking for new ways to exploit different software, and they could find a way to hack your site. If you keep your software updated with the latest patches, you'll be less likely to suffer such a breach.

Also, be sure you use a good hosting company. If your server goes down a lot, users will grow frustrated and abandon the site. This is one reason the traffic at Reddit has declined, because the servers have had issues and people have grown tired of the downtime.

It's important to listen to your members and give them what they want whenever you can. If you make changes to the forum that upset a lot of users, be sure to apologize, politely explain your position, and then reverse your decision if you can. If you aren't able to, you should explain why, and let them know you'd have preferred not to make the change, but it was absolutely necessary. Communication is essential if you want to keep members happy!

Making Money

Once the forum is running and has a decent number of active users, you can consider monetization methods. I wouldn't even worry about making money with the forum at first, because ads and other monetization methods may slow the forum's growth. Instead, keep the forum mostly ad-free until its growth has begun to slow.

There are many different methods you can use to make money with your forum. Some monetization methods may work well with one forum and be disastrous on another, so it's important to test various methods.

The most common form of forum monetization is advertisements such as Google AdSense or other ad network placement. The majority of forums use this as their main (or sometimes only) monetization, but this is not usually the most profitable form. Eventually, visitors will become "banner blind", and will begin to ignore the ads. (And most people are already banner blind to some extent.)

You could also sell advertising to individual buyers. You can do this on a flat-rate basis, charging a flat monthly fee for each ad spot, or you can charge by the impression, click, or even sale.

You could also market affiliate products to your users. This could be especially lucrative in niche markets where there are a lot of passionate users. For example, golfers are extremely avid, and are likely to buy a lot of products over the years, such as balls, gloves, clubs, bags, tees, and how-to products.

Amazon is a great place to start. While it may seem like they don't pay much, purchases can really add up. Plus, even if you only sell a \$6 fishing lure through your affiliate link, you'll also earn a commission on anything they purchase for the next 24 hours. That means if they decide to purchase a \$500 fishing raft, you'll get commission on that item, too! Their cookies used to last much longer, but 24 hours still gives you time to cash in on multiple purchases.

Amazon has a massive number of products you can promote in just about any niche you can think of, so they're a very good place to start.

ClickBank and JVZoo also hold a wide variety of products, and because they are all digital products, the profit margins (and thus commissions) are typically high. If you can find a product that would appeal to your members, you can potentially make a lot of money with information products.

Another good option for some forums is charging a small fee for membership. This could be a monthly fee or a yearly one, and it could be for the entire forum, or just a section of it. You could also make membership optional, giving members that pay some kind of special benefit.

The Warrior Forum (<http://www.WarriorForum.com>) has a number of ways they make money. They charge for a membership, which is required if you want to access certain areas of the forum and if you want to post ads on the site. They also charge for posting an ad in their Special Offers section.

Dirty Discourse (<http://www.DirtyDiscourse.com>) has a forum that charges a small monthly or yearly fee for access. Members must pay if they want to use the forum. Because their market is relatively small,

they don't have a lot of good competition, and members feel they need to access the forum's information in order to be successful in self-publishing, they are successful with this model.

Keep in mind that not every forum is well suited for a membership model. If there are a lot of active forums in your niche, you may find that people will just go elsewhere if you decide to charge for access.

You must find a way to get your members to see the value of paying for membership without upsetting them, and without making them flee to another forum.

If there are plenty of forums in your niche that offer what your members are looking for, you might want to keep most of your forum free for public access and have a separate paid area for in-depth discussions, or perhaps have a membership level that is voluntary, but offers some kind of benefit, such as a forum rank, or the ability to post advertisements.

Finally, there's the option to sell the forum once it has a decent number of active members. Sites with large user bases have the potential to sell for thousands of dollars on a site like Flippa.com.

Conclusion

Running a forum is no easy task. Although the initial setup is relatively simple, it's the daily maintenance in the form of seeking new traffic, managing ads, and moderating the forum that takes time.

Despite the effort required, running a forum has the potential to be extremely lucrative. If you're willing to put in the time and effort, you could end up with a forum that makes you a significant income each month, and that could potentially sell for thousands of dollars down the road.

In fact, WarriorForum.com was acquired by Freelancer for a whopping \$3.2 million in 2014, so you can see that active forums can sell for a lot of money!

Once you have some trusted moderators to handle most issues, you really won't have to invest a lot of time in your forum anymore and it will practically run itself. All you have to do is update the software regularly to ensure the forum stays secure, and be sure to keep in touch with moderators to be sure they're doing their jobs correctly.

Good luck with your new forum! I wish you much success!

Resources

Here are links to some of the resources found in this guide:

Forum Software Wizard:

> <http://www.forummatrix.org/wizard.php?d%5Bgo%5D=1&x=72&y=8>

Paid Forum Posts:

>> <http://www.postloop.com>

Forum Software:

>> <https://www.phpbb.com/>

>> <https://www.mybb.com/>

>> <https://vanillaforums.org/>

>> <http://www.simplemachines.org/>