SUBSCRIPTION ENTREPRENEUR

HOSTED BY ERIC TURNNESSEN, FOUNDER OF **membermouse**™

How To 10x Engagement Inside Your Membership
Using Video Game Theory with Esai Arasi

"I believe that the step one is to really care about who you're trying to help. It really boils down to understand what is the pain that they're suffering from. And why they have that particular pain point in their life, and what support they need. So, when you do not approach it from a sense of service, you're not going to look at why do they have this pain? Maybe you would but you're definitely not going to look at what kind of support do they need to really solve this pain point."

INTRO:

You're listening to Esai Arasi, my special guest on today's episode of The Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

I'm really excited to share our conversation with you because Esai is a membership engagement expert.

For over 12 years, she's helped entrepreneurs design membership experiences that encourage course completion, build community engagement, and boost member retention.

In fact — in a fitness membership — Esai was able to 10x member engagement and lift retention by almost 90%.

She does this by combining the power of personality types, video game theory, and tech automation.

This is a highly practical episode where you'll discover the systems and frameworks she uses to create engaged memberships. Plus, you'll learn how to implement them in your own business.

One note before we get started:

In the second part of our conversation, Esai shares a specific way you can use MemberMouse to identify the most and least engaged people in your membership.

She does this with the assistance of a tool called Zapier. If you're not familiar with Zapier, it's an amazing tool that helps you connect different software that you use and trigger automated tasks. If you want to implement the strategy she teaches you, be sure to sign up for a free Zapier account.

So, without further ado, let's get to it!

I'm your host Eric Turnnessen and this is the Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

Eric: Hey Esai, welcome to the show.

Esai: Thank you for having me, Eric.

Eric: Yes, it's my pleasure. I'm very excited to talk to you today, just so people get a high-level perspective of what we're going to try to accomplish in this conversation. We are going to want to arrive at some understanding about how you can dramatically increase engagement inside your membership site and dramatically boost retention. So, I'm excited to really hear what you have found from your experience will help to do that. Before we dive deep into that, can you tell us a little bit about your background and who you are?

Esai: Absolutely. So, I come from a background of almost 12 years specifically in training and behavioral course design. So, my background includes specialization and experiential learning and behavioral change programs. So, I was lucky enough to work for bosses and managers who specifically gave me goals whose success was decided by how much a behavior is changed and how long the change is sustained. So, that's what I did pretty much for 12 years, learning what people's motivations are, learning how to change it, what are the factors that affect it and how can I design and create context and support and programs that can help people change their behavior, and give them the outcome that they want. And how do I do it at scale, because sometimes...

So, I'm from Chennai, India, and sometimes we have 50 to 70 students in a class. And there isn't time to do a lot of personal customization. So, I needed to figure all of these things out first. And this is something that I'm extremely passionate about. So, I almost always went out of my way to read as much as I put about it, and do my research and look at what are people doing including typing out radical teaching methods into Google and checking what are the results that's coming up and what are some research people are doing right now.

So, from there, I pivoted to marketing. And luckily, everything that I've learned is super conducive to becoming a successful marketer. Because when you approach marketing and sales from a place of service, everything that I've learned now becomes super relevant. Because you're still trying to understand what drives your audience, what are the motivations of your audience? What is the change that they desire and they're seeking? And you design marketing and sales processes that help people move from a state of pain to a state of achieving the change at the state of achieving the pleasure that they're seeking. So, that's what I do now.

Eric: That's awesome. And so, would you say that is step number one to the success of basically sales in the concept of owning business? We talk about that. Is that step number one really understanding as much as you can about your audience?

Esai: I would say step one would be approaching it from a sense of service; having respect for the people that you want to serve and actually caring about what they do. And then trying to help them and trying to understand them on how to help. Because unless you come from a place of service, you can run sleazy, scammy sales tactics if you understand people but none of that is sustainable. That's why a lot of the scams are very, very short lived because you can only run it for certain period of time. So, membership owners can't really depend on such tactics, because people are going to leave. People, regardless of who they are, everybody has a bullshit meter. And everybody has a lie detector built in, which is going to tell them at some point that this is not what it's supposed to be. I believe that the step one is to really care about who you're trying to help and hold them to a higher standard.

Eric: Can we talk more specifically about that? Because some people may say, "Okay, step number one, care about who I'm serving." And then they'll just be mentally, "Okay, I've done that, now step number two." But there's probably more specific, tangible things that you've learned from your experience that people can do to do that.

Esai: Absolutely. So, when we say care about somebody, it really boils down to understand what is the pain that they're suffering from, and why they have that particular pain point of their life, and what support they need. So, when you do not approach it from a sense of service, you're not going to look at why do they have this pain? Maybe you would but you're definitely not going to look at what support do they need to really solve this pain point.

So, one of the clients that I was working with was a fitness trainer. And she had a membership program where people signed up to get monthly workout plan and coaching calls with her and a diet plan and all of those really good stuff. But people were not actually doing it. Paying for something and actually doing it are two very, very different things. And every membership owner really knows. So, then we had to understand, how do we change this? So, the first step is to really look at the people who are doing this program and care about what matters to them, care about their feelings, care about where they are. Because once we did that, we identified that there are really four types of support that people need.

Number one, when they're working out people, "I don't know what to do." So, this is the problem most people solve. If you're trick is looking to solve a pain point, you will say, "I will tell you exactly what workout you need to follow, exactly what to eat, and you just have to do that." And that is something anybody can identify. But only when you deeply care about the audience that you're serving, you will look at what are the deeper needs that people have. Number two is, I want somebody to believe I can do it. And this is very, very easy to overlook. The reason a lot of my training programs are successful is because when we implemented them, one of the first criteria we had; so, any trainer come on board is you have to deeply believe that your audience and your students can actually do it.

We had students achieve incredible progress when we were teaching English as a second language. And we were teaching eight-year olds and nine-year olds to say thank you and please. And we were able to achieve it because we believed our students were capable of achieving

that change. They had the capacity with them already. So, that is second point. And this you're never going to identify it unless you actually care about the audience you're trying to serve. You wouldn't really see it.

The third type of support that people need is hold my hand as I do it. People need that accountability. A lot of people have that awareness, but it becomes very challenging on how to do it at scale. And which is where tools like MemberMouse and the analytics that you get and the safer interactions, all of this come to help. And we are going to look at that a little bit deeper as we go into actual gamification theory. But that is the third thing we need. I want you to support me and hold my hand, and take me through this step by step.

And the fourth type of support that people need is I want somebody to see me, I want to belong. So, when I started teaching, I was 21. I was very young. The students I were teaching, which is four, five years younger than me. And I'll often have people who do not pay attention when I'm teaching, who would not engage. And one of the most simplest techniques the teachers taught me to use in class is anytime I know that somebody's not paying attention as I'm teaching, casually mention their name like, "This is what we need to do, don't we Eric?"

That's it and move on. And when people know that she knows my name, she sees me. And as soon as they have that, they believe inherently that you care about them because you notice me, you see me, you know my name. And then they start paying attention. And a lot of deviant behavior was automatically fixed just by the simple act of knowing that person's name and calling it out.

So, that is the fourth type of support, a lot of people miss out on because we don't understand that this is a pain point that your audience also have. I want to belong and I want somebody to really truly see me.

Eric: It sounds a lot like you're talking about parenting.

Esai: I think all of that is related. Our parents are our first teachers, it's the first community we belong to. It's the first society that we're part of and they're our first teachers.

Eric: So, in those four things are there... For example, the last one, immediately when you start talking about that, I think about, "Okay. When we do our copy, we put in merge bars to put in person's first name and other things." Is execution as simple as that in terms of accomplishing what you're talking about?

Esai: Sometimes it's as simple as that but there's so much we can do. There's so many more simple things that we can do that a lot of people completely miss out on, that as membership owners, if you guys do these simple things, you can completely stand out as some of the best membership that people have been part of. Because I know that when somebody's a part of your membership, they for sure are a member somewhere else at the same time. And they've definitely tried other memberships before. Or if they leave, they're going to try other

memberships in the future as well. And there are few very, very simple things that you can try right away.

So, one of the first things that I would say that you could try is... So, in MemberMouse, you have something called member analytics. So, you can see how students and members and how much they're engaging with the content. One of the basic automations they can set up for that is anytime you see somebody who has been engaging, let's say 10% and they jump to 50% in one of the months, you could have a setup where you could say, "Hey, awesome, great job. I saw you really making strides. You've made a lot of progress over this time." Because 50%, if I'm scoring 50%, I'm never going to get attention in a class. But nobody sees the fact that I went from 10% to 50%. It's the 90%, it's the people who are constantly in your group who are talking or chatting, they're the ones who are getting a lot of attention.

But if I get a personal email from you saying, "Hey, fantastic. I saw you made a lot of progress. Keep going. I know you're going to get a lot out of accomplishing this." This is simple to set up. You can set it up this text tag that's going to help you really do this, even at scale. There's mail merge, there's a ton of software that can do this for you. And it's very, very simple once you automate it. When you do that, the members who are there, they're going to feel like, "Yeah, this person actually saw that I made progress even though I haven't been engaging, I haven't been pushing myself. So, somebody is watching me."

So, this is actually based on a research that the scientist did. They took some rats and this is a little bit hard to hear, it is a lab test with rats but hear me out. So, they put a couple of rats in a narrow test tube in water. And they recorded how long the rats tread water until they gave up and they dropped. So, in the first round of experimentation, the rats kept treading water and around 20, 21 minutes, they gave up and they dropped. So, then they repeated the test again. In the second round, around 20 minutes, because that's when the rats are just about to give up, what they did was they picked up the rats, they put them down, dried them off, let them rest for a couple of minutes. And then they put them back at the water. Now they wanted to see how long more are these rat going to tread water.

So, the scientist assumed, okay, they did 21 minutes, the first round when they were fresh and strong. But now they're all very tired, so let's see if they matched the 21 minutes. They didn't match the 21 minutes. They tread water for hours before they found. Because they believed at any point help is coming. So, if you can show your audience the support, if you can support them when they're drowning, when you support them with that simple thing, like an email or a personal message when they're not engaging with their content, or when you know from the analytics that they're struggling to keep up, a simple thing like a personalized email saying, "Hey, if you're struggling, here's some resources that can help you. Here's some videos you can watch," or "Here are the people, you can reach out to us. And we will personally help you get unstuck and continue on with the program." A simple email like that will make them work so much harder to complete it. And this is not that difficult to implement.

Eric: Yeah. That's a great point. I feel like organized religion figured that out a long time ago.

Esai: Absolutely.

Eric: So, what about the other two? I want to spend a little bit more time on these first step because I think that part of the hardest job of a membership site is getting people to be engaged. Once they're engaged, like you said, once they get past that first 20 minutes, and they feel like they've been heard, they feel like they get the sense, they'll continue on, they'll be more forgiving. But if you can't get people to that first step of they've felt like an accomplishment or they felt heard or seen, then you're really just... You're spending all this money to get people to your site, maybe they convert but your conversion rates, you can try to improve them. But for the people who do convert, maybe 90%, you have a really high churn rate. And that's not going to be sustainable for your business. So, getting people engaged is a super important part of a successful membership business.

Esai: Absolutely. So, to answer that, instead of saying what we can do for each type of support because there's a lot of overlap, I would to give you examples from a video game and really talk about game theory. Because video games have already solved this. This is not new. Everything that I did in my classroom, and we have done some truly spectacular things, and I'm not even humble bragging. I would actually brag about this because I was stunned by the results we got from gamification. We got high school boys were previously randomizing the school after classes, we got them to stop doing that and start reading books. We got them to read so much that they ran out of books to read in the library and the school had to go out and buy more books. These are people who had zero interested in reading before then. So, there's a lot we did there. And these are not very complicated things to set up.

So, let's go back to video game theory. And let's talk about what are some simple steps we can set up in our business and I will tell you what are the support needs that they address as well. So, one of the first things, if you see, as soon as you join a video game... And I love that you talked about it the first 20 minutes as soon as somebody joins. So, the first thing in any video game as soon as you join, is it gives you the option to play a tutorial. It tells you, "Hey, this is how you do things here. This is how you run, this is how you walk." And it doesn't just tell you, "Hey, here is here's the one pager, learn all the commands and now you're on your own." It doesn't do that. It tells you, "Hey, now go WS80 and try and move. And once you've done that, fantastic, that's awesome. Now try to hit X and hit something. "Now, do a heavy attack, and now do a jump and a crouch." And it makes you do all of these things.

So, this is what we did with eight-year olds. We wanted eight and nine-year olds, fourth and fifth graders, to start saying please and thank you. So, what we did is we gave them crayons, and we organized this thing where they draw something and then they have to come and collect crayons from the teacher and they go fill it up. And then they have to come and return. They can get only one crayon at a time. So, the way it worked is if they want a crayon, they have to say, "Can I please have the red color crayon?" And when they have to return it, they have to say, "Thank you," or the teacher will not take back the crayon. So, they spent 40

minutes practicing please and thank you. And we did that once a week for a month. And then it became a habit.

It became easy for eight-year olds to say please and thank you when English is not their first language, when they come from a very, very poor socioeconomic class of society where they do not see these habits shown by any adults in their life. And they were able to emulate that. So, that is the first step. When somebody joins your membership, imagine a video game. You have to show them where things are. If you want them to introduce themselves in a post, you can't just say, "Hey, introduce yourself." You have people who are extroverts and people who are used to it, people who already know how to do this and people who have energy will go and write something. But most people will not have the energy, will not have the time, will not know what to say, it's a much harder task for them. The way to make it simple is ask them a few question and say, "Hey, answer all of these questions and post it there." There you go.

It's much easier for me to answer questions than to try and think of a clever way to introduce myself. You've made that easier. So, that is the first step. Have a tutorial in your membership as people join. So, that's number one.

The second thing that you have to learn from video games, and this is from Elden Ring. And if for anybody who's played it, Elden Ring is one of the hardest games I have played because I don't play soulslike games. I try Neo and I could not understand why anybody would do this to themselves when they played it because it's an incredibly hard game to play. But here's the beauty of Elden Ring, when you don't want to do something, you could simply run away. You don't have to engage with that.

Another great example of other video games is you can choose, and we were talking about Doom95 earlier. When you start Doom95... I actually beat the game, and I was very happy about it until a couple of years ago when I was bragging, "Yeah, Doom95. I beat the game." It's like, "Yeah, but what mode did you play it in?" And then I realized I beat it in the easy mode, not in the hard mode. But that did not take away anything from my sense of accomplishment. So, that is the second part. When you design a lot of content for your membership, you're trying to design the same content at the same set of actions for everybody. But it's not going to make sense for everybody to do the same thing. Some people will have to do it on the easy mode. Some people will have to do it in the hard mode. And some people like playing Elden Ring with no armor and nothing and just a sword, and they just simply dodge every single hit.

Eric: Yeah. I feel like a good example of that is on a common thing on blogs now is they'll do a summary at the top, like a TLDR. Which is great for me because I'm not really that interested in reading things. But if I see a summary at the top, I can read three bullet points. And if it's intriguing enough then I'll read the article. So, it's the easy mode at the top. And then the hard mode of reading the entire article.

Esai: Exactly this. And this is so critical. Because I saw, there was a post earlier on one of the Facebook group and they asked people, "What membership sites are you a part of?" And they

asked about one specific membership community and two people, one after the other, one of them said, "Hey, I actually quit that membership because they had so much content that it's completely overwhelming." And the person right below that said, "I joined there, but they were not adding any content month after month. So, I just put it so one person quit it." So, one person quit because there was too much content and one person quit because they were not adding more content.

Now, how do you cater to that? The elegant solution for this is you have to design multiple parts through your membership. There is no one set path. So, you have to have people take your membership in the easy mode so that they go through and do the simple things first. For workout, it'll be, "Hey, I work out 10 minutes or 20 minutes a day." That's it. "And I work out 20 minutes, three times a week." And I can check this off as completed. And then I come back and in the second round, maybe I work out 10 minutes a day or 20 minutes a day, every day. And then I get into the harder modes. And slowly I ease into it, just like a progression, and I'm pretty okay.

Eric: I think that this is very common for established membership sites. I've seen people who have been in business for four or five years and they have this huge library of content. And I've joined some of the membership sites just because they gave me some access and asked me to take a look. And I get in and it's that problem? It's like, "Okay, there's so much stuff here." Some people who get into membership sites, a lot of them are just naturally good at creating content so that's what they do. And then after four years they end up with this thing. But you have to go back and like you're saying, think of somebody who's just joining. How would you break this down and present it to somebody so it's not overwhelming to them and they can be guided through the process?

Esai: One of the ways I've seen this done really well is have a quiz right at the start saying, "Hey, take this quiz. And this quiz is going to tell you where you should start and what are the first things you should do." So, that could be a required quiz. What problem are you trying to solve right now?

Eric: And the beautiful thing about that is it doesn't require any rework. It doesn't require any technology changes. It simply is putting something, giving something to the user. And you are helping to navigate them and point them to the right resources. You know how to navigate it.

Esai: Exactly that. And you're just getting the most. And now people are happy you have too much content. And now people don't mind that you're not adding new content because all they want is to make sure they're getting their money's worth. And they want to make sure that they are making progress within your membership. As long as they feel that, they're not going to have complaints about your content. So, that should be the goal.

So, the next thing that we often miss, and this is, I feel a very, very crucial part is something called a feedback loop. So, when you teach people to do something, it's not enough for me to know that, "Hey, you've taught me, now I do it." I also need somebody else to tell me if I'm

doing it right. Now one of the reasons membership owners often don't incorporate this competent, they think it's not scalable. Either I have to do it for all the members or I have to hire coaches and that becomes a bit much. But I'm telling you that person telling them whether I did it right or not, doesn't have to be a coach or mentor. 90% of the time, it could be the other members in the community.

Community is a huge part of membership. And often the biggest untapped resource in any membership is the community. There's so much you can do from there. So, one of the best examples is, as I was discussing, is this game called Guild Wars 2. There you have a concept, if you play enough, you can actually gain the rank of a commander. And commanders can now put together these huge parties and run these big quests that you normally just run on your own. And sometimes as commanders... So, games have something called the jumping puzzle, where you go from one place to another but you have to make this precise jumps and you have to get to the end and then you get the reward. A lot of times players can't make that jump. I could never do that. But oftentimes players like commanders, they will actually complete the jumping puzzle. They will stand at the end and they will open a portal for people. And then they will stand there at the same point for hours, opening portals for people to join.

And when I was a complete newbie, I would have such a problem finding where to come. And they would so patiently help me. These people are not getting paid, the game is not paying them to do that; they get nothing out of it, except the sense of helping somebody. Another great example, and you can Google this, is somebody from Elden Ring. You can Google Elden Ring Let Me Solo Her, is this person you can summon inside Elden Ring. It's a player. Nobody knows who he is, but it's a player who fights without any armor, just in his loin cloth and a helmet on his head. And his name is Let Me Solo Her. So, if you have a difficult one, especially Millennia, she's very hard to beat. So, if you summon him, you can just stand back. He's going to kill her for you and you get her.

And again, this player gets nothing for it. And there are a lot of people like that within your community who want to help. And we can talk about the different types of people in your community. But these people are your biggest resources within the community. And like I said, often the most underutilized.

Eric: It makes me think about Buddha basically saying, "I'm going to help everybody get enlightened and then I will not come back," basically. But I think that what you're talking about is super important and very critical to take advantage of the fact that you have all these people who are ambassadors over your brand. So, you mentioned that there are four different types of people inside the membership. Can you go into a little bit of detail about how a membership site owner can optimize their membership for these different types of people?

Esai: Absolutely. And this is actually the bedrock of how we connect the engagement for my fitness client who was struggling to get people to work out and actually participate in the membership and actually get their money's worth. So, the first type of members that you would often see, and these are members who most visible in any membership, these are people who

want to win. They want to show up for the calls because they want to ask the most cleverest question. They want to post their wins in the group. They're the ones who want to jump in on everything. And if you ask for a volunteer, they will be the first people to raise their hand, because these are the people who want to constantly win.

And the best way to engage these type of people and to really get them, is to have specific actions tied to all of your content. If you can tell me how to do something and I'm most engaged, I will do it and I will get results. And I will be the example, you can hold up and say, "This is what you can get from the content and support inside the membership." These are very, very important part of your membership community. They will need to be constantly challenged. And this again comes back to the gamification technique we talked about as having tier difficulty level because just because they want to win doesn't mean they're always going to be the best. So, sometimes they want to win at a lower level.

That's my personality. Any course that I won in, I want to be the person who completes everything and gets results and wants to show up. And I had the same thing in video games, but I was not good at it. So, it really helps that I could do it at the lower levels and I could gain experience and I could improve my skills. And I could come and do it at the harder level and continue do it.

Eric: My game was StarCraft. And I always like doing the campaigns because you get this sense of accomplishment. But after the campaigns you can do more advanced stuff. But I was like, "Oh no, I finished the game." Or you could go on battle net and you could play all these crazy people. I've got their micro down, I'm like, "No, that's too stressful for me. I'm just going to play the campaigns. That's good enough for me follow the storyline, and I'm good."

Esai: Exactly. So, you have to create scenarios for people to continuously win inside your membership. And you have to make it a win. You have to make it feel like a win. If they can check something off, if they can submit something, can set a progress bar, if they can set a badge, all of this actually looks like winning. And this is again very, very easy to do based on the analytics that you can get inside MemberMouse. If you go back in there and you see the reports on completion levels and other analytics, it gets very easy to identify who these people are who are winning. So, that's easy to engage with.

Eric: And I think that there are other plugins for WordPress that allow you to do progress bars and check. Because even just having a thing where you can check off that I've completed this lesson and the progress bar shoots up a little bit every time you do that, that's helpful to get people to propel them through the content.

Esai: Exactly. That's just super easy. The second type of personality that you see within your community, the second type of member is people who like to be challenged. They want to be challenged, they want your content to be different. And they want to be people who accomplish things. So, these are people who are, in video game terms, these are the people

who reach the end game. So, one of the first MMO's that I started playing was Dungeons & Dragons Online. So, in DDO, these will be the people who have TR'd multiple times.

They TR, it's called true reincarnation, where once you hit the highest levels, it's level 20, you start back again on level one. But you have these wings next to your name which shows that you're not really a level one character, you are a TR'd level one. You're a true reincarnation. And you get additional stats to start at level one.

Now this is a really simple way. People who like a challenge, it's a really easy way for you to create that for them.

Another concept for this in video games is called end game. What happens when I beat the campaign? What is next for me? And the easy way to engage these people, one way is obviously you can keep creating content, you can keep creating things for you to do. But here's a really another way for you to do them. For instance, let's say you teach somebody how to cook. Maybe you have a membership where you give out recipes. Now these could be people who have mastered all the recipes that you've taught them. You can then invite them to record a video and show their take on the recipe that you're already teaching. Maybe they do something different, maybe they have a different kind of pot, they have different kind of kitchen. They are live a different country that they don't have all of the ingredients so they have to improvise. Now it's a win-win for your members because they see a different version of your recipe. Maybe that's more suited to them.

And remember in class when a teacher who's accomplished, who's educated, who actually knows how to teach, we don't understand. But an hour before the exam, we ask a friend, "Can you explain it to me again?" And your friend who's in the same class as you has no experience teaching, has not noticeably smarter than you, but explains the same concept and now you know. Now you understand it much better just because it's coming from a different source. It's a source that you relate to. So, that's the fantastic way to engage this type of people. Because they constantly like to be challenged and they like to be doing different kinds of things. There are multiple ways to engage them but this is one of the easiest way to do.

Eric: Yeah. That reminds me of Mario Cart where you can race all the Grand Prix, and you can get the trophy. So, you can basically win the game with a bronze, silver, gold trophy. But then you can go back and you can get trophies with different stars amounts. So, you can win one-star, two-star, three-star to increase the challenge, to go back and have a reason to play again.

Esai: And these people, if you don't have... Because hardcore video gamers are like that, what is the end game? If you don't have strong end game content, I will not play in the game from the beginning. The same thing for membership, especially when you want long term retention, you need to have an idea of what does it look like when somebody has complete consumed all of the content in my membership. Or when somebody's grown beyond the level of what is required to be in a membership, it's a recipe, an accomplished shift does not need a recipe membership. So, what are the different ways in which I can engage that person? I can challenge them and make this membership interesting for them. So, this is, like I said, everything that you said is a fantastic way to keep that going.

Eric: Yeah. And it's critically important to capitalize on this type of member engagement. Because if you don't do this, then people just consume your content and maybe they have a good experience. But they have no reason to continue interacting with the community, which then is detrimental for new people coming on this, say like, "Oh, this is a ghost town, nothing's happening here." And then, of course, when we talk about analytics and growing subscription-based business, any little increment in retention, dramatically increases profits, profitability of the business. So, all of this stuff ultimately has a very critical attachment to the numbers of the business.

Esai: Exactly. And one of the clear examples of this is when you have a coaching call or a Q&A call as a part of the membership and people come in. And the only person answering questions is you as the membership owner. So, what happens then is the only people who are going to show up to the call are people who have questions. Others are not going to show up because I only talk to you, so what is the point? But when you make these Q&A calls, when you structure them as everybody weighs in, most people weigh in on the answers, and most people answer your questions and support. Then people of the challenger personality and the helper personality, we're going to look at all of them, they're all going to want... The community personality, they're all going to want to come on the call as well. Because they're going to get a chance to answer questions and help out the other members.

So, it also makes it easy for you as a membership owner. Because now the burden is not on you to provide solutions to everybody's problems, which you can't. No matter how much of an expert you are, you're not going to have all of the answers. Whereas together your community will have a lot more answers as a sum total of the community than what you could have as a person. And these calls will become much easier for you to manage if you're there as a facilitator rather than just the expert with only one. So, then more people are incentivized to show up to the call. And like you said, it won't feel like a ghost town anymore. Because the only people are showing up to the calls are the people with questions, it's soon going to reduce. Because that is the goal of your membership; people get better and better, so have fewer and fewer questions. Then the calls will become ghost towns.

But if you engage everybody, these calls will be a place for the community to come together, talk to each other, help each other more. And then this becomes a case of activity and a sense of connection. So, it's going to help you a lot in engagement.

Eric: Now, sounds like we're getting into the helper personality a little bit, or are we?

Esai: So, here's a crucial difference between the helper and the challenge. The challenge personality will only want to answer questions. And that's my secondary trait, I'm a challenge personality. I wouldn't jump in and answer all the questions. I will only answer questions which I feel I am the most knowledgeable with. My goal is not to help somebody. My goal is to, using myself as an example, because it might come off as a little bit negative but my goal is to show off. My goal is to show off my expert status. I've spent decades honing my skills on gamification.

Now I want to show it off. I want more people to know. And it's an inherent talent, and that comes off as helpful.

But the third type people who are genuinely helpful in the community, this is what they will do. When you ask a question, sometimes they will tell you tools that can help us. They will find other things for you and they'll do it. They will connect you with people who have done it. They will follow up, remember and ask you, "Hey, you said you had that problem. Were you able to do it?" They genuinely get joy out of helping people in the community. Most people do it. But for this type of personality, it is the biggest thing they get out of that community, helping other people.

And if you are not that personality type, it might sound absurd to you. But if you go into Facebook group, you will see so many people who answer so many questions without any ulterior motive. They just want to help. And that is a third personality type.

Eric: So, you brought up Facebook groups, and I was thinking about... Because we're talking a lot about communication between you as the site owner with members and members amongst each other. So, taking a little bit of tangent and talking about technology and tools, what are some of the tools that you find are most helpful for facilitating this type of communication among the members?

Esai: Personally, I do not like Facebook as a place to host a membership. But the idea is that wherever you host your community, it has to be a place where your people, your community members, they naturally visit every day. Unfortunately, that's Facebook right now. There's very limited number of options as an alternative Facebook. There's Circle, there's Slack, but again, if you're not catering to a business, if it's not business marketing or business related where people naturally sign into Slack a lot, your people might not sign in.

So, your community has to be hosted by people naturally go to communicate. You have to create that context. For now, that's Facebook. If you're not hosting it in Facebook, if you're hosting it in other places like Slack and Circle... One of the tools that I recently found out about is this tool called Burb, which is B-U-R-B. And it gives you fantastic analytics to really learn about how your members are engaging within the community and how they are communicating with each other. So, that's number one.

The second tool that I have found personally helps is... And this is specifically for Slack. Slack has this ton of different bots. So, for my team, because I wanted to check what my team were doing, working on every day. And I didn't want to be the kind of boss who every day asks them, "So, what did you do today? What are you going to do today? Yesterday, you said you'll do something, did you finish it?" And I don't want to do that. That's not the culture that I want to build. So, we use a tool called gig bot. Now the what gig bot does is like a friend, he asks you, "Hey, how are you doing today? What did you do yesterday?" And my team love him so much. They think of gig bot as another team member. And they don't feel like it's me asking them annoying questions, they feel like they're having a conversation with a coworker.

So, now every day I get an automatic report on what my team is working on. So, if they're deprioritizing something, I'm able to quickly tell them, "Hey no, this is far more important. So, focus on this about the other thing." And they don't feel like I'm checking up on them every day.

Eric: So, you can actually not only program the bot to ask questions, but you can also have a conditional response based on their answers?

Esai: With gig bot, no. But I'm sure there are bots which can... Chat bots can easily do that for you. So, I'm part of an app, a wellness app called InnerHour, which has a bot where if you're not feeling well, you can quickly talk to the bot. And the bot can actually talk you through a guided meditation. It can ask you to do things. It often feels like having a conversation with the real person. And this a simple tool that... And it's one of the reasons that I continue. Because a lot of times when I feel a little bit overwhelmed, and because I sit alone and I work alone from home all the time, it's good to have that bot quickly tell me, "Hey." It asks me a bunch of questions. "How are you feeling? Are you feeling sleep deprived? Are you hungry?" It is. And it can quickly tell me, "Have you tried this, this, this?"

It's a quick reminder for me based on that. So, I don't have to go in and search and find out all of these things. So, that's a great way to create that tool as well. So, chat bots are fantastic for that. But there are tons of tools that can help with this as well. For me, I don't think you even need to go high tech. A lot of people make the mistake of, "I need to go very high tech if I want to monitor all of this." You can do all of these things with Zapier, Google Docs and the basic analytics that you get from MemberMouse. You just have to create a Google Doc for each member.

One of the things I would say when they join, ask them what they want to accomplish this quarter. Capture it in a Google Doc, check every month, automate a message that goes in that message they get saying, "Hey, you said, this is what you wanted to do. How are you doing?" That's it. You can do that through Zapier. That itself will put your head and shoulders above what everybody else is doing. I can talk about a lot of tools in many different ways. But unless you have the basic foundation, unless you have the system set up, you have an understanding of how you want to accomplish all of these goals, the tech is not going to solve that problem for you.

Eric: Right. And I think it's really wise not to go too deep in the tech because then people can use that as an excuse to actually get further away from the goal, "Oh, I need to set this up," and "Oh, I'm feeling a barrier because I don't understand," And then they just abandon. So, it's critical to understand that. There are ways to implement what we're talking about that doesn't require purchasing anything, signing up for anything. You can just do it.

Esai: Yeah. And I'll tell you, MemberMouse gives you analytics. The basic, I'll tell you what you can do right away. Just have a way to get the analytics onto a spreadsheet. And set up this app saying, anytime the columns in this number, when they fall below a certain number, trigger this

app that sends you an email or sends you a message saying, "Hey", these, these, these people are starting to engage." Now, when you look at churn, people are not going to suddenly one day cancel their membership. They're first going to stop engaging. Then they're going to stop consuming content. So, you can have it set up so that anytime you see somebody has stopped engaging in the community or starting to fall back in terms of engaging the content, right then you can have a trigger set up. So, even before they mentally decide to leave, you can reach out and reconnect, and make sure they continue with the connection. That makes sense…

Eric: Right. And of course, when you talk about triggers and all this stuff, if you're dealing with a membership community of less than 100 people, you don't need to worry about that necessarily. But that's a scaling issue. You get into triggers and stuff when basically, the point at which it's taking too much of your time to go through the numbers. But if you're under 100, you can do this just manually, just every once a week set a task to go in and look.

Esai: Oh, absolutely. In fact, if you capture it into a spreadsheet, just sort the numbers from lowest to highest. And you're automatically going to have a list of people that you can engage with easily.

Eric: Yep. So, now the fourth type is the community personality.

Esai: And these are people who want to be in the community. They're not going to consume most of the content you put out. They're not going to be engaging with your tools. What they will be engaging with all of these people. These are people there solely because they want to be in a group like this. A great example for this is a lot of these parenting groups, lot of new moms, they don't have time to consume a lot of content. They may not be in a place where they can implement a lot of the things you're teaching. Maybe it's a fitness for new parents or whatever. But they will continue to be in the community as long as they feel a connection with other people, and they feel like they're not alone anymore because I don't have people like this to hang out where I am. And this type of people are very easy to retain and have them continue to be a part of your membership as long as you help them make meaningful connection in the community. That is another huge mistake a lot of people make and I would like to list a few of them.

That's number one, tell people, "Hey, if you ever need anything, if you ever need any support, speak up." Most people won't speak up because I don't know what's okay and what's not okay. I don't know what's okay to ask, not okay to ask. I don't know where to ask. And I don't want to impose. So, you have to create these places where people have to have these conversations. So, I'm a part of this membership, like a Circle membership with Brian and Phil. And one of the things that they did have is a connection call where everybody comes together and they put us into this different breakout rooms with prompts, and we have to talk to each other.

It's a very simple activity. But it made me feel like I knew the people that I'm getting in the membership with. And I have things that I can actually talk to other people about because now there's no awkward silence cause they've given us a prompt. And now they've put us in small

breakout rooms so I can connect with people in a meaningful one-on-one way. So, even though there were 50 people in the call, we made these personal connections.

Eric: And also, isn't that basically one of those exercises how you ended up here on the show?

Esai: 100%, yes.

Eric: Yeah. That's pretty cool. Because you're then the ancillary benefit of being a part of that membership is now you're being able to network with people.

Esai: Exactly.

Eric: Who knows where that can lead?

Esai: Exactly. There are memberships that I'm a part of, 100% only for the community. Because I want to be connected, I want to be in the radar of certain people, I want certain people to remember me. I just want to be amongst friends. And let me tell you, people will leave content and people will leave all of that a lot sooner than they will leave people that they've built relationships with. So, this is the most important type of people to engage with because they're the ones who are going to bring the most amount of engagement within your community if you can help them make meaningful connection with other people in the community.

Eric: Now, when people are listening to this, and say they get an understanding of a grasp of, okay, these are the four different types of people, is it important that they actually identify who these people are? Or is it just important to be able to offer things that are tailored to these four different categories of people?

Esai: That's a really good question. While I tell you that, "Hey, these are four different people," often you will find and as you talk, you realize how I describe myself as different personalities. Often you will find that people are a combination of these things, often based on where they are in their life, the reason they join the community. Because I'm a community personality in certain group, win personality in certain group, and I'm a challenge personality in certain groups. So, it depends on what the community is, why I'm there, what stage of life I am in, so rather than trying to classify.

And people will change within the community as well, depending on the season of life. So, you want to make sure that you have systems built into your membership that caters to all of them and let these people sell segment as they choose. So, that's why when you're building analytics, you cannot just... So, this community personality if you look at their content, it like they're not consuming any content. Because they're most likely are not. That's why it's important to measure everything and really have an understanding of who these people are so you don't miscategorize saying these are people who are not engaging with their content.

And if you push them to engage with the content, they're likely to leave. Because if feel like, "Yeah, maybe I shouldn't be here if I'm not using the content." So, that's why it's good to have a balance and good to have an understanding of where your group is at.

Eric: Yeah. Well, I really appreciate the way you've broken down, helping people understand how they can actually make a difference in their retention numbers with talking about the gamification being of service as a starting point. And then also breaking it down into the four different types of members that you'll have in your community. And of course, you have all these great lists. There was one of three things. And the first one was service. And then the second one was understanding the customer. And what was the third one again?

Esai: Third one was creating the right context, behavior changes when the context is different. Everything we talked about, gamification and the type of personality, all of that falls into us understanding what type of community, what type of context we want to create. That I would say is very challenging, but a very rewarding thing to do.

Eric: So, coming away from this conversation because we basically presented all of this, now people probably understand it, you laid it out very nicely. But as an action item, sometimes people would be like, "Okay, there's so much." What are some advice you have? How can they take walk away from this and actually make sure that they don't, "Okay, I just listened to a podcast and that was all great. And I understand, it makes sense." How can they chunk this down and actually make a plan?

Esai: So, number one, what I would say, make it a practice, have a way in which you can easily access your analytics, that you look at your analytics every week and you have a way to easily update it and take a look. That's number one. Number two, learn to understand your numbers based on the types of personality that I've said, segregate, content consumption, community engagement. And some people won't message, but they will show up for a call, look at that. And if that's possible, try and identify ways in which you can measure where the community is engaging one on one with each other.

So, within Slack, Slack can tell you how many Slack channel messages and how many private messages were sent, if there's a way to track that. So, essentially you have to track how much at what people are getting out of the partnership. That's number one. Learn to look at your numbers.

Number two, identify when people start falling off. Identify simple things that you can do. Step one would be to just send an email saying, "Hey, if there's any help that you need or anything that we can do, here's how we can help." And then send them a link to where they can help themselves, which is your help document and all of that. Send them a link to where they can get additional support in terms of calls, group calls or any of those things.

And third, ask them to just reply to the email and reach out to you personally and say what's getting them stuck. That is second thing that you can easily set up right away. And the third

thing that I would recommend you'd set up, and this is slightly long term, is have a way in which you can look at every single person's journey in your membership separately. And it is not as complicated as you think. The simple way, anytime when somebody joins, you can have Zapier create another spreadsheet, copy your spreadsheet template and create a new spreadsheet for them. Once that is done, once they do any activity or consume content or make become a part of the call, ask them to go and update their spreadsheet.

And then you can just go through those spreadsheets when you have time and look at where people are falling up, what people are doing. And you don't only want to have to look at everybody's spreadsheets. You just need to look at the spreadsheets of the people who you've identified. They're the ones who are falling behind. They're the ones likely to churn. So, then you can go to the spreadsheet and look at what were the problems they were having after which they started flagging down.

So, for instance, somebody says, "Hey, the recipes are great, but I can't find most of the ingredients in my country." And after which they stopped consuming the content. Then you can easily reach out to them, "Hey, we noticed that you said all your ingredients are not there. If you can send us specific, if you tell us where you're from, or what are some of the common ingredients, we can give you alternatives. Or we can support you in all of that." This simple email will go a long way. Because now you have more personal details of the person and you can make your outreach a lot more personalized.

Eric: Yeah. That's great advice. Now as we wrap up here, do you have any closing thoughts, words of wisdom from your journey as an entrepreneur that not necessarily related to membership or anything, but just things that you found that maybe if you knew at the beginning would be helpful to you?

Esai: So, when I started, one of the things that I didn't do enough was have conversations with people and build my network. And that is something I speak passionately about now. We are in the process of launching a premium region service, region and social media service called Social Catalyst, where we talk about if you have a great product that your ideal audience will love and will solve a great pain point for them, then all you need is a catalyst. You need a system by which you can have these people come through your funnel, connect with you, and actually have a conversation with you. And we're in the middle of launching this service. And as I do this, I realize one of the things that fast tracked my career today... And I'm from India, and I don't have any connections in the US, I don't know people there. And all of this happened because of me having conversations with people on social media.

And today, the position that I'm in and everything that I've accomplished is a direct result of meaningful relationships that I have built. So, the first thing, if you're starting on a journey, I would say automation is not the opposite of having this personal outreach. Have automation help you improve these personal outreach. No matter what scale of business you are, you need to make it easier for yourself to have that connection and have that relationship with people, whether it's your community, your peers, or whoever. Once you make that easy, your growth

will be exponential because what you can accomplish just by yourself is just dependent on you. But your network and your relationships, can take you a lot further than that. And I am the perfect example for that happening.

Eric: Yep. I really love that advice. And actually, it applies in every area of life. I'm traveling in the UK right now. And I'm doing pet sitting and I'm meeting people. And each person I meet helps me know how I'm going to do the next part of my journey. I'll meet somebody, they'll say, "Oh, this person here is going to be away for this period of time. And you could do this at," whatever. And of course, you talk to Matt, a member of our team in the membership community you're on, and here we are on this call. So, it is really important to have these conversations. You never know where a connection might lead.

And of course, again, going back to your initial comment, when you're looking to talk to people, don't make it about what you're going to get. And you don't even need to necessarily make it how you can be of service. But at the very least, don't look for what you're going to get out of it, just be interested in meeting people and having conversations. Magic can happen from that.

Esai: Absolutely. Two years ago, I was struggling to grow this business in India where the awareness on marketing and all of that is very low. And people did not appreciate all the things that I could do. And two years later, I'm here, I've built this huge business and I have, this team that's working with a list of clients. And all that has happened because like I said, my focus was on building meaningful relationships with people, and coming from a place of service, and a place of helping, in a place of building meaningful relationships. And that's been the key.

Eric: Well, I certainly appreciate you taking the time to come and talk to me and share with my audience everything that you have. I really appreciate how you break it down. Because of course, I've talked to many people about how you grow membership sites and it's definitely interesting how everybody takes that topic, and through their own personal experience and education, explain it in different ways. And your approach and the interest of how you bring gaming into it, I think is going to land well with a lot of people. So, I really appreciate you sharing that. If people want to learn more about you and what you're doing, where can they reach out and find more about you?

Esai: So, the best place to connect with me is LinkedIn. Right now, we are actively promoting Social Catalyst, which is our social media and region service, where we are using gamification as a marketing and sales development process. So, you can find me on LinkedIn. But I am also offering consultation calls. For anybody who want to implement gamification within your business, I'm offering a one-hour consultation calls where you will walk away with exactly the plan.

Like I said, the tech and all of that is secondary. What's critical is the plan. You have a plan that you can implement right away. So, if they want that, I will share the link with you so you can put in the show notes and people can book to speak with me as well. But the best place to find me is on LinkedIn.

Eric: Well, thank you again so much for joining us. And I look forward to speaking to you again in the future.

Esai: Absolutely. Thank you so much for having me, Eric, it was wonderful. And I look forward to listening to this as it comes out.

OUTRO:

Thank you so much for listening to my entire conversation with Esai.

I hope you're walking away with some valuable ways you can build engagement and boost retention in your membership.

Many thanks to Esai for coming on the show and sharing so freely from her expertise.

If you'd like to get links to all the resources we mentioned in this episode, head on over to subscriptionentrepreneur.com/183.

There you'll also find the complete show notes and a downloadable transcript of our conversation.

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