PERSONAL BRANDING SERIES • VOLUME 02

Discovering Your Skills and Expertise

See the real value in what you've already done, name the skills that carry over and choose a direction you can actually back up.

02

START HERE

A note before you dig in

Most people undersell themselves. Not because they're modest, but because they've been doing something so long it doesn't feel like a skill anymore. It just feels like Tuesday.

If you've ever run a schedule, calmed down an upset customer, kept a household budget on track or trained a new hire, you've built real skills. The trick is learning to see them, name them and prove them.

This guide helps you take inventory of everything you bring to the table, including the experience that never came with a paycheck, and then decide what's worth developing next.

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YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- A full inventory of your experience, paid and unpaid
- A list of skills translated into language employers and clients understand
- Evidence stories you can use in interviews, proposals and bios
- One area of expertise to develop, chosen on purpose
- A small, realistic learning project with a deadline

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Take inventory of your experience

02 Recognize what carries over

03 Build your evidence

04 Choose what to get really good at

05 Make a plan to grow

Time: 60 to 90 minutes, then a month of small steps

Best for: working professionals, business owners, career changers and anyone figuring out what is next

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read a lesson, look at the example, then answer the questions in your own words. Pencil is fine. Messy is fine. Treat your first answers like a rough draft and check them against real conversations and real evidence before you put serious time or money behind them. Then come back to the 30 day plan and actually do it. That part is where the change happens.

LESSON 01

Take inventory of your experience

Job titles hide a lot. Start with what you actually did.

Look past the title

A job title tells people your role. It doesn't tell them what you did all day. "Office manager" could mean anything from answering phones to running payroll, vendor contracts and the entire IT closet.

Experience also comes from places that don't show up on a resume: school, volunteering, caregiving, church committees, side projects. Start by listing the activities themselves. Then figure out which skills those activities required. One caution: doing something once doesn't make you a master at it. Be generous in what you list and honest in how you describe it.

Know the kinds of skills

It helps to sort what you find. Technical skills involve specific tools or methods, like spreadsheets, design software or bookkeeping. Interpersonal skills involve working with people: communicating, negotiating, resolving conflict. Organizational skills cover planning, tracking and prioritizing. And industry knowledge is your understanding of how a particular field works and how decisions get made in it.

WORTH KNOWING

Technical skills	Know how with specific tools, software or methods.
Interpersonal skills	How well you communicate, cooperate and handle people.
Organizational skills	Planning, tracking, scheduling and prioritizing.
Industry knowledge	Understanding how a specific field operates and makes decisions.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Andre was a retail supervisor. When he listed what he actually did, it included building weekly schedules, running inventory counts, handling customer complaints and training new staff. Translated, that's workforce planning, recordkeeping, conflict resolution and coaching. Same job. Much stronger story.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Listing job titles instead of the work behind them
- Leaving out unpaid experience that clearly built real skills
- Calling yourself an expert in something you've only done a few times

YOUR TURN

List three roles or experiences you've had, paid or unpaid.

For each one, write down two skills you used to do it well.

Which skill surprised you once you wrote it down?

LESSON 02

Recognize what carries over

A skill is transferable when you can explain how it works somewhere new.

Turn the task into a capability

A transferable skill is one you can use in more than one setting. To translate it, describe three things: what you did, why you did it and the conditions you did it under. "Handled customer complaints" becomes "resolved escalated customer issues during peak hours while keeping the line moving." Now someone in a totally different industry can picture it.

Be honest about the limits

Some skills move straight over. Others need new context, new software or new credentials before they're useful in a different field. The best way to find out is to compare your experience with real job postings or real client requests. Mark what you can show today and what you'd need to learn. That list becomes your roadmap.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Lena was a restaurant shift lead. She managed schedules and solved customer problems on the fly, which lines up well with operations coordinator roles. But when she read actual postings, she saw that most companies use project management software she'd never touched. So she's not starting from zero, and she's also not pretending. She knows exactly what to learn next.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Assuming every skill transfers perfectly without checking real requirements
- Describing tasks so vaguely nobody can picture them
- Ignoring licenses or credentials a new field requires

YOUR TURN

Pick one skill that could work in another field. Describe what you did, why and under what conditions.

Find two real job postings or client requests. What matches? What's missing?

What new knowledge would make that move realistic?

LESSON 03

Build your evidence

A good story plus a real sample beats a long list of adjectives.

Turn experience into a story

A strong evidence story has four parts: the context, your responsibility, the action you took and the result. What was the situation or goal? What was your piece of it? What did you actually do? What happened? Use real numbers when you have them, and if there's a result you can't verify, say so or leave it out.

Gather the proof

Evidence can be a finished project, a report, a design, training materials you created, a certification or written feedback. If you can't share client or employer work, create a sample from scratch and label it clearly as a sample. Keep these documents somewhere safe and organized, and respect anything confidential.

WORTH KNOWING

Evidence story	A short account of context, responsibility, action and result.
Artifact	A tangible piece of proof: a document, design, report or sample.
Sample work	A piece you created to demonstrate a skill, clearly labeled as practice.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Joy volunteered to fix a messy event sign in process. Her evidence story explains the original confusion, the simple registration form she built and the clean attendance list it produced. She doesn't claim attendance went up, because nobody measured that. Her story is still strong, and it's completely true.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Claiming results you can't back up
- Sharing confidential work to look impressive
- Telling the story without explaining what you specifically did

YOUR TURN

Write one evidence story: context, responsibility, action, result.

What artifact could back it up?

If you can't share the real thing, what sample could you create?

LESSON 04

Choose what to get really good at

Interest, skill and expertise are three different things.

Know the difference

Interest is what you enjoy learning about. Skill is what you can do. Expertise is deeper: lots of practice, good judgment and a track record of doing it well. It's completely fine to share what you're learning. Just don't present yourself as the expert while you're still in the learning season.

Compare your options

If you have a few directions in mind, weigh each one by the evidence you already have, whether people actually need it, how much you'd need to learn, how much you enjoy it and whether you have access to the training or opportunities. The strongest direction has a believable starting point and a clear path to getting better. You don't have to pick a lifelong specialty today.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Brianna is a graphic designer who keeps getting pulled into the analytics side of campaigns, and she likes it. She decides to develop marketing reporting as a specialty. Her plan: take a training course, build a few sample dashboards and use the skill on projects where she has permission. Design gave her the starting point. Reporting is the path.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Confusing "I enjoy this" with "I'm qualified in this"
- Picking a direction with no evidence and no realistic way to learn
- Waiting until you're certain about a lifelong specialty before taking a step

YOUR TURN

Name two areas you could develop further.

For each one, rate your current evidence, the demand and the learning required.

Which one has the stronger starting point and a more realistic path?

LESSON 05

Make a plan to grow

Courses help. Practice and feedback prove it.

Use small learning experiments

Pick one specific skill to improve and a project that would show it. A course by itself isn't always proof you can do something. Practice and feedback show how you apply what you learned. Find a mentor, coworker or peer who will look at your work honestly.

Connect learning to a real opportunity

Set a deadline. Define a deliverable someone could actually look at. Decide where you'll use it. Before paying for an expensive program, check your free options: public libraries, professional associations, community programs and training your employer may already offer.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Terrence wants to move into project management. Instead of signing up for an expensive certification right away, he builds a sample schedule for a real community project, asks an experienced coordinator for feedback and revises it within four weeks. Now he has a work sample, real feedback and a much better idea of whether this is for him.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Collecting certificates without ever applying the skill
- Paying for programs before checking free and low cost resources
- Learning with no deadline and no deliverable

YOUR TURN

What skill will you develop in the next month?

What will you produce to show it, and by when?

Who will give you honest feedback?

WORKSHEET

Skills inventory

List ten tasks from work and life, then translate each one.

TASK I DID	WHERE	SKILL IT SHOWS	TYPE OF SKILL	PROOF I HAVE

QUICK REFERENCE

The short version

Tear this page out, screenshot it, tape it by your desk. This is the whole guide on one page.

01 Start with what you did, not your job title.

02 Count unpaid experience. Caregiving, volunteering and side projects build real skills.

03 Sort skills into technical, interpersonal, organizational and industry knowledge.

04 Translate tasks by explaining what you did, why and under what conditions.

05 Compare yourself to real postings to see what transfers and what's missing.

06 Tell evidence stories: context, responsibility, action, result.

07 Interest is not expertise. Share what you're learning honestly.

08 Grow through small projects with deadlines and real feedback.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your 30 day plan

Small, real steps. Pick the dates now so this does not turn into one more thing you meant to do.

WEEK 1

Take inventory

Write down ten tasks from your work and life. Group them by type of skill.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 2

Gather evidence

Write three evidence stories and collect supporting artifacts you're allowed to share.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 3

Explore

Compare two possible directions and list the skills each one requires.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 4

Practice

Finish one small learning project and ask someone for specific feedback.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

My very first action, the date I will do it and how I will know it is done:

What support, time or resources do I need to line up?

THIRTY DAYS LATER

Look back, then keep going

Come back to this page a month from now. Compare what you planned with what actually happened. No judgment. You are collecting information, not grading yourself.

What did I discover about my skills that I didn't see before?

Which assumption about a direction changed?

What will I keep practicing next month?

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Emily Wale Koya, Personal Branding Roadmap, pages 3 to 10. Supplied reference.
- Personal Branding Expertise Guide, pages 3 to 15. Supplied reference.
- Business Start Up Training Programme, Trainee Workbook 1, pages 4 to 14. Supplied reference.

Examples in this guide are made up to teach a point. They are not real clients or documented results. This guide is educational and does not guarantee any professional, business or income outcome. Rules change, so double check anything legal, tax or regulatory before you act on it.