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PERSONAL BRANDING SERIES • VOLUME 11

Building Your Online Presence

Plan a digital presence that's easy to find, easy to use and trustworthy, and that supports your real goals.

11

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A note before you dig in

Your online presence is often your first impression, and you don't even get to be there for it. Somebody Googles you at 11 at night, and whatever they find is doing the talking for you.

You don't need a fancy website or a big tech budget to make that first impression a good one. You need a clear home base, information that's accurate, a site that works on a phone and a plan to keep it up.

This guide walks you through building an online presence that's useful, honest and something you can actually maintain.

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YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- A clear picture of every place people find you online
- One primary destination and a supporting channel
- A simple page map for your website
- A basic understanding of search, accessibility and privacy
- A launch checklist and a maintenance routine

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Understand your digital presence

02 Plan your website structure

03 Help people find you

04 Build trust with accessibility and privacy

05 Launch, measure and maintain

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

Understand your digital presence

Know every place people can find you.

What counts

Your online presence includes every place people come across your work: your website, search results, social profiles, directories and anything you've published. Channels you own, like your website, give you more control than accounts on someone else's platform, although hosting and domain services still have their own terms and costs.

Pick a home base

Define one main goal: inquiries, job opportunities, sharing resources or sales. Check where people find you today and what's outdated. Then choose one central place that supports that goal.

WORTH KNOWING

Owned channel	A space you control, like your website or email list.
Rented channel	An account on a platform someone else controls, like social media.
Primary destination	The one place you want people to land.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A consultant uses a simple website for her services, examples and contact information. Her professional profile mainly exists to help people find the website. Everything points home.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Building your whole presence on a platform you don't control
- Old phone numbers, addresses or services still showing up
- Having no clear place you want people to land

YOUR TURN

List every public channel you use, its purpose, its audience and how much upkeep it needs.

What is your primary destination?

What is one supporting channel?

LESSON 02

Plan your website structure

Decide what goes where before you think about colors.

Organize for the visitor

Information architecture is how your content is organized so visitors can find what they need. A good small website answers four questions: what you offer, who it's for, why you're credible and how to take the next step.

Map it first

Make a page map before you choose a design. Typical pages include home, about, services or resources, examples of your work and contact. Every page needs a clear purpose and a next step.

WORTH KNOWING

Information architecture	How content is organized so people can find it.
Page map	A simple outline of your site's pages and what each one does.
Call to action	The next step you want a visitor to take.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A home repair company builds pages for services, service area, project examples and estimate requests. A visitor can tell right away whether the company works in their neighborhood without having to call and ask.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Picking a template before you know what pages you need
- Pages with no clear purpose or next step
- Making visitors call to find basic information

YOUR TURN

Sketch your page map.

For each page, write the visitor's question, the content needed and the next action.

Which page matters most to your goal?

LESSON 03

Help people find you

Write for people first. Search engines follow.

What SEO really is

Search engine optimization, or SEO, helps people and search engines find and understand your pages. Search visibility depends on many factors, and no honest provider can guarantee you a top ranking.

The basics that work

Use descriptive page titles, clear headings, meaningful link text and useful original content. Make sure your important pages can be found by search engines and check them with the right webmaster tools. Don't write pages just to repeat keywords.

WORTH KNOWING

SEO	Practices that help people and search engines find and understand your pages.
Page title	The headline search engines show for your page.
Indexing	When a search engine has found and stored your page so it can appear in results.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A tutor creates one clear page explaining reading support for early elementary students, including session format and how to get in touch. She doesn't publish dozens of nearly identical pages for every nearby town. One genuinely useful page serves people better.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Anyone guaranteeing you a number one ranking
- Stuffing pages with the same keywords over and over
- Link text that just says "click here"

YOUR TURN

What three questions does your audience search for?

Match each question to a useful page.

Draft a descriptive title and heading for each.

LESSON 04

Build trust with accessibility and privacy

A pretty page that people can't use isn't working.

Accessibility is part of quality

Accessibility helps people with different abilities use your site. Trust also depends on accurate contact information, safe handling of personal information and honest claims. A beautiful page can still fail if people can't navigate it.

The checklist

Use readable text with strong contrast, descriptive alt text for meaningful images, labeled forms and navigation that works with a keyboard. Collect only the personal information you truly need. Use HTTPS, turn on multifactor authentication for your accounts and review any privacy rules that apply to you.

WORTH KNOWING

Accessibility	Designing so people with different abilities can use your site.
Alt text	A written description of an image for people who can't see it.
HTTPS	A secure connection between a visitor and your website.
Multifactor authentication	A second step to prove it's really you when you log in.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A workshop registration page asks only for name, email and optional accessibility requests. Before publishing, the organizer tests the form on a phone and using only a keyboard. It takes ten minutes and saves a lot of frustration.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Light gray text on a white background
- Forms that ask for more information than you need
- Accounts protected by nothing but a password

YOUR TURN

Audit one page for readability, keyboard access, form labels, image descriptions, data collection and security.

What issues did you find?

Which will you fix first?

LESSON 05

Launch, measure and maintain

A website is never really finished.

Keep it running

Your website is an ongoing business asset. Maintenance includes updating content, renewing your domain, testing forms, backing up files and checking performance. Analytics can show you where visitors run into problems.

Measure the right action

Define a conversion that fits your goal, like a completed inquiry or a downloaded resource. Compare conversions to relevant visits and use the same definitions every time. Test one change at a time when you can, and respect your visitors' privacy.

WORTH KNOWING

Conversion	The specific action you want a visitor to take.
Conversion rate	Conversions divided by relevant visits.
Analytics	Tools that show how people find and use your site.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A resource site gets 400 relevant visits and 40 downloads, a 10 percent download rate. Before spending money to get more traffic, the owner checks that the download actually works. No sense paying to send people to a broken link.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Letting your domain expire
- Forms nobody has tested in months
- Buying more traffic before fixing what's broken

YOUR TURN

Write a launch checklist.

Choose two measures and decide who handles maintenance.

Put a monthly review date on your calendar.

WORKSHEET

Website page map

One row per page. If a page has no clear next step, it needs work.

PAGE	THE VISITOR'S QUESTION	CONTENT NEEDED	NEXT STEP I WANT THEM TO TAKE

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 Know every place people can find you, and fix what's outdated.

02 Choose one home base you control.

03 Map your pages before choosing a design.

04 Every page needs a purpose and a next step.

05 Write useful content with clear titles. Nobody can guarantee a top ranking.

06 Make it readable, keyboard friendly and secure.

07 Collect only the information you need.

08 Measure one meaningful action and maintain the site monthly.

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

Audit

Review your existing profiles and choose your primary online destination.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 2

Map

Draft your page map and write the essential content for each page.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 3

Build and test

Build or revise priority pages, then test on a phone along with forms and links.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 4

Launch

Publish, start measuring meaningful actions and set your maintenance routine.

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.

Where are people finding me now?

What did the numbers show me about my site?

What will I improve next month?

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Emily Wale Koya, Personal Branding Roadmap, website and platform sections. Supplied reference.
- Google Search Central, SEO Starter Guide.developers.google.com
- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative.w3.org/WAI

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.