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PERSONAL BRANDING SERIES • VOLUME 12

Creating Your Content Strategy

Build a publishing routine you can keep up with, one that teaches your audience and supports goals you can measure.

12

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A note before you dig in

Let's clear something up. A content calendar is not a content strategy. A calendar tells you when to post. A strategy tells you why, for whom and what you're hoping happens after they read it.

Without a strategy, content turns into a treadmill. You're posting because you feel like you should, it's eating your time and you can't tell if any of it is working. With a strategy, every piece has a job.

This guide helps you build that strategy, then turn it into a schedule you can actually maintain alongside everything else you've got going on.

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YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- A clear difference between strategy and a calendar
- Three to five content themes tied to your audience
- An editorial checklist that keeps your content accurate and honest
- A realistic production plan that gets more from every idea
- Simple ways to measure what's working

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Start with strategy, not posting

02 Develop your content themes

03 Create useful, responsible content

04 Plan production and reuse

05 Share it and measure what matters

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

Start with strategy, not posting

Every piece needs a purpose. Not every piece needs to sell.

Strategy versus schedule

A content strategy defines why you publish, who you serve, what information you provide and how you share and evaluate it. A content calendar is the schedule. Strategy decides what belongs on that schedule.

Match content to the journey

Choose a goal and figure out what your audience needs to know. Content can support awareness, evaluation, purchase or long term customer success. Not every piece has to sell something, but every piece should have a purpose.

WORTH KNOWING

Content strategy	Why you publish, who for, what you share and how you'll measure it.
Content calendar	The schedule of what gets published when.
Customer journey	The stages from first hearing about you to being a long term customer.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A bookkeeping business publishes a guide to getting tax documents ready, a comparison of monthly bookkeeping options and an onboarding checklist for new clients. Each piece serves a different stage of the relationship. Nothing is random.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Starting with a posting schedule before you know your goal
- Making every piece a sales pitch
- Creating content with no clear audience

YOUR TURN

Choose one goal and one audience.

What three questions do they ask before working with you?

What three questions do they ask after?

LESSON 02

Develop your content themes

Pick the topics you can cover well, over and over.

What themes are

Content themes are recurring topics that connect your audience's needs with your expertise. Evergreen content stays useful for a long time. Timely content responds to events, trends or deadlines and may need frequent updates.

Choose a manageable set

Pick three to five themes you can cover accurately. For each, list common questions, the evidence you'd use and a good format. Balance timely topics with the effort it takes to keep information current.

WORTH KNOWING

Content theme	A recurring topic area that connects audience needs to your expertise.
Evergreen content	Content that stays useful for a long time.
Timely content	Content tied to a date, event or trend that may go out of date.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A career educator picks four themes: resumes, interview prep, career exploration and workplace communication. A resume checklist is evergreen. An announcement about a local hiring event is timely and will need to come down when it's over.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Too many themes to cover well
- Choosing topics outside your real expertise
- Forgetting that timely content needs updating or removing

YOUR TURN

Create four themes and three specific questions for each.

Mark which ideas need current research.

Mark which could stay useful for a year or more.

LESSON 03

Create useful, responsible content

Accuracy beats volume.

What makes content good

Good educational content helps people understand something or get something done. Originality can come from how you explain things, how you connect ideas, your examples or practical tools you create. Being accurate and transparent matters more than producing a lot.

Use an editorial checklist

Before you publish: verify facts, name your sources, label made up examples, disclose any business relationships and get permission for anything you didn't create. Don't copy another writer's structure and wording. Be upfront about uncertainty when it exists.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Someone writing about small business grants uses official eligibility rules and real application deadlines. She explains the difference between a grant and a loan, and she updates or archives the article when the deadline passes. Readers can trust it because she keeps it current.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Publishing facts you haven't checked
- Copying someone else's article and changing a few words
- Leaving outdated information up long after it expires

YOUR TURN

Outline one article: the reader's question, three teaching points, an example, your sources and a practical takeaway.

What facts need to be verified before publishing?

When will this piece need to be reviewed?

LESSON 04

Plan production and reuse

Make one strong piece, then adapt it.

Build a workflow

A production workflow is the steps from idea to published piece. Reusing content means adapting one core idea into different formats, not posting the same thing everywhere.

Be realistic

Set a pace based on how long research, writing, design and review really take you. Batch similar tasks when that helps. Keep an editorial calendar with who owns each piece, the deadline, format, channel and status. Build a backup supply of evergreen content for busy weeks.

WORTH KNOWING

Production workflow	The steps from idea to published content.
Batching	Doing similar tasks together to save time and focus.
Repurposing	Adapting one core idea into several formats.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A small business owner has four hours a week for content. She spends two on research and writing, one on editing and one on sharing it. One monthly guide becomes several shorter posts and an email. Four hours, a whole month of content, and she's not up at midnight scrambling.

WATCH OUT FOR

- A posting schedule you can only keep up for two weeks
- Posting the exact same thing on every platform
- No backup content for busy weeks

YOUR TURN

Plan four weeks of content.

Assign time for research, writing, review and sharing.

Choose one substantial piece and three ways to adapt it.

LESSON 05

Share it and measure what matters

Different numbers answer different questions.

Know your metrics

Distribution is how you get content in front of your audience: email, search, partnerships, social media or events. Reach tells you how many people saw it. Engagement tells you how many interacted. Conversion measures a specific action you defined. Each answers a different question.

Measure against the goal

Compare each piece's results with its purpose. If you send commercial email in the United States, review FTC guidance on honest sender and subject lines, including a physical mailing address and an easy way to unsubscribe. Build an audience that expects your content and values it.

WORTH KNOWING

Reach	How many people saw it.
Engagement	How many people interacted with it.
Conversion	How many people took a specific action you defined.
Rate	A result divided by the group it came from. Always know both numbers.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A newsletter sends readers to a downloadable guide. Of the 100 people who clicked through from the email, 20 downloaded it, a 20 percent visitor to download rate. That doesn't mean 20 percent of all subscribers downloaded it. Knowing which number you're dividing by keeps you honest.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Celebrating reach when your goal was conversions
- Calculating rates without knowing what you divided by
- Emailing people who never asked to hear from you

YOUR TURN

Choose one channel and two measures.

For each rate, write down what you're dividing and what you're dividing by.

What result would make you change your strategy?

WORKSHEET

Four week editorial calendar

One substantial piece plus its adaptations. Fill in owner and status as you go.

WEEK	THEME	PIECE AND FORMAT	CHANNEL	OWNER	STATUS

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 A calendar is a schedule. A strategy is the why, the who and the what.

02 Every piece needs a purpose. Not every piece needs to sell.

03 Pick three to five themes you can cover accurately.

04 Mix evergreen and timely content, and update or remove what expires.

05 Verify facts, cite sources and label made up examples.

06 Set a pace based on the time you really have.

07 Make one strong piece and adapt it into several formats.

08 Know the difference between reach, engagement and conversion.

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 content and choose themes tied to audience needs.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 2

Plan

Build a four week editorial calendar and research your first topic.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 3

Publish

Publish one substantial piece and adapt it into two other formats.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 4

Review

Look at the results, gather reader feedback and refine your next calendar.

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.

Which piece did the best against its goal?

Was my publishing pace realistic?

What will I change in next month's calendar?

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Personal Branding Expertise Guide, content strategy section. Supplied reference.
- SMART Challenge Action Sheets, social media and marketing sections. Supplied reference.
- Google Search Central, Creating helpful, reliable, people first content.**developers.google.com**
- Federal Trade Commission, CAN SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business.**ftc.gov**

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.