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NEXT STEP

JOB HUNTING? GET A PERSONAL WEBSITE

With your résumé needing polishing and your cover letter customising, creating your own corner in the World Wide Web might not be at the top of your job hunt to-do list. But having an awesome personal website might actually give you the leg-up that you need. Here are five reasons why.

1. Show 'em what you've got
With your résumé and your cover letter, you have to tell hiring managers all about your skills. But why tell them, when you can show them?

With a site full of work samples, testimonials and links, you can give a far more dynamic sense of what exactly is on the menu. If you're in PR, for example, fill your website with articles you were able to place for various companies in local or national media outlets. If you've been learning Photoshop or web development, show off your new skills by uploading your designs and applying the very tools you've picked up on your own website. While your work is a click away, others will have to wait for in-person opportunities to share theirs.

2. Stand out
Even if you're applying for technical positions that don't typically require a portfolio, the addition of one might just be the thing that sets you apart. Showcasing your projects, your fortes and examples of thought leadership gives you the opportunity to really stand out amongst dozens or hundreds of applications. For example, if you're applying for a financial job, show off your ability to make complex topics

easy to understand with analytical and insightful blog posts on the different projects you've been involved with.

A portfolio can also help set your interview in the right direction, without the recruiter having to go through a deluge of unnecessary questions to get to the real you. Instead of scanning through lines and lines of text on your résumé, he or she can easily identify your achievements and proceed from there.

3. Control your branding
If you're trying to shift careers, your résumé might only get you so far. Chances are your past work is going to overshadow new skills you're picking up that you haven't had the chance to apply in projects or have only applied on a limited scale. That's why you're changing gears in the first place, after all.

With a personal website, the brand you portray to the world is totally up to you. Focus your site on solely the jobs or work you want to, so that when the recruiter sees it, he or she sees, say, "a data visualiser" instead of say "an interesting person who does some data visualisation".

4. Build your network
If not directly related to job hunting, a

personal website also gives people an easy way to get to know you, helping you connect with people who work in the same sector. For example, if you're considering building a career in the development or non-profit sector or just work with a lot of volunteering and organising, consider the inclusion of a blog that you regularly update with your experiences. This way other people in the sector (and even sector leaders) can get to know what areas you work with, which could eventually lead to job opportunities, collaborations, and technical or financial assistance.

5. Enhance your searchability
Getting a URL and a site with your name, filled with keywords related to your field, means you won't just be reaching out to recruiters—it'll be more likely that they'll stumble upon you. A simple search would also direct them to one place with all the information you want to put out there instead of disorganised links, embarrassing social media accounts you've completely forgotten about, or somebody else who just happens to have the same name as you.

For those who don't work in a particularly visual field, it can seem like you don't

have enough content to make anything substantial. But even if you feel like you only have a page of info, putting it out there under www.yournamegoeshere.com still makes it easier for recruiters to find you, learn about you and reach out to you.

More importantly, you probably have more to fill a website with than you realise. An elevator pitch, samples of your best work, social and professional profiles (i.e. LinkedIn, Behance, Instagram), a professional blog, testimonials, and visualisations of yourself or your achievements—all of these should be included in your personal website.

There may come a time when you look at your website's traffic and think it was a complete waste to have meticulously created content for days on end. While it's certainly not as easy as updating your résumé, the work, creativity, and oomph put into a website trumps a boring old Word doc any day.

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6 STEPS TO GET PEOPLE TO TRUST YOUR E-COMMERCE SITE

You have a site or Facebook page for your business. You have great products. You also have a good amount of people that know about you. But no one is buying. Where lies the mystery? How do you turn those visitors into buyers? You create trust. Here's how.

Communicate
The hot thing for all business now is to have a Messenger bot. These are integrated in Facebook's Messenger so that customers can ask questions and receive automated replies. Done right, this will free up a lot of your PR and communication time. But people will

still need specific answers. Never ignore a customer. And always follow up. For a website, consider having a chat window.

Talk to customers and they feel you care. It is a psychological thing. Boosted, which sells t-shirts on Facebook, replies instantly, calls you to verify orders, calls again to let you

know when your delivery will occur, and asks for feedback afterwards. This builds a connection.

Clarity of language
Every written word is an extension of your credibility. Keep it brief, keep it correct. If needed hire someone to do it right.

Bangladeshi companies like Walton have a strong sales record but their websites are populated by poor grammar and unnecessary, often incorrect jargon. But they rely on physical shops to entice buyers. E-commerce people have to rely on what the buyer sees on-screen.

Highlight those that love you
As Spiderman would say: with great products comes great satisfaction. If you start getting positive reviews, promote them on your site or Facebook page in the form of briefly worded image posts. This is social proof and should be visible as soon as people visit your page.

Similarly, include a social media count showing how many people are currently following you and what they are saying. If random strangers care, it creates the impression the product must be worth a try.

Guarantee your products
Look at Bangladesh's roads. People cannot go out to shop anymore like they used to. But they will still hang back from making a decision if they feel the product they receive may not be to their liking. Include a refund policy. It worked very well for ROSA Wearable Art selling children's clothing based in Dhaka. You will be surprised: most people simply want to buy a product and not keep sending it back.

Images are everything
Use high quality images. Either buy excellent stock images if your budget allows or shoot your own. Never, ever, ever use pixelated or grainy images such as the ones used on the

Helio site for their mobile phones. Excellent locally built devices marred by poor visuals.

Some Facebook pages go as far as to blatantly use images from other business, artists or sites. If you appear to cheat on simple imagery, imagine what buyers will think of the rest of your business practices.

Less is more
If people need to fill up forms or subscribe, keep fields to a minimum. Studies have shown that each additional form field can reduce your conversions by 11 percent.

A study by the Centre for Enterprise & Society (CES) at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) found that 69.3 percent respondents reported to purchasing products online one or two times a month. These people are being served by 1,000 e-commerce businesses and 8,000 entrepreneurs on Facebook, based on a study by E-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB). That is a lot of people vying for the same attention.

A website or a social media account is the first introduction with your customers. People spend 10 seconds to judge a page. If they like it, they may still leave during the subsequent 20 seconds. Make it count.

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