

THE
BRANDING
MUSE

Crucial
Components
for an
Effective
Personal
Website



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Emmelie De La Cruz is Founder of The Branding Muse, a consulting firm that develops personal branding programs, resources and services. With these tools young professionals, entrepreneurs and college students learn to take control of their personal brand and properly market themselves using digital tools.

You can find her on Twitter: [@HerMusings](https://twitter.com/HerMusings)

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FROM EMMELIE:

Hello Readers,

Thank you for downloading my e-book, Crucial Components for an Effective Personal Website. In this short publication, you will learn why a website is so important in the development of a polished professional brand. Unlike many of the resources available on the internet, I won't just provide the "why," I will also provide the "how." I am a firm believer that we are all capable of building brilliant brands with the proper guidance and right amount of commitment and hard work. I am familiar with the difficulty of building a brand and know what it is like to have no idea of where to start. I am aware of the challenges and time constraints that many of us face while trying to start our careers and grow our businesses. I also know the benefits of having a strong personal brand that attracts employers and multiple opportunities. I wrote this e-book for that very purpose. So that someone who reads it might benefit and be one step ahead in creating the career or business that they dream of. I have done countless hours of research to save you time and energy and hope that you will feel empowered and prepared to take control of your personal brand. Here is to your success!

With Love,

Emmelie De La Cruz
Founder, The Branding Muse, LLC

INTRODUCTION:

Benefits of a Personal Website



A website is the hub of your personal brand online. In an era where the Internet is the go-to tool for researching products, businesses and people, your website is the first impression that many will get before they are able to interact with you in person. It is the perfect place to share what makes you different from your peers and provide reasons and evidence of why you are the right choice for a particular position or opportunity.

By populating your pages with information that brands you as an expert, your website becomes your best sales tool, marketing your skill set, knowledge and services passively while you work and even sleep. A website speaks volumes about your talents and interests and allows for your visitors to learn about you at their own pace and at a time that is convenient for them.

Your digital presence is not complete without a website. Because of time and energy, many businesses and other brands try to substitute their website with a Facebook page or some other form of social media. However, a website is an entity that you own and have jurisdiction over. In order to be found, you must be searchable. A personal website not only provides search engine optimization but, it also increases the chances that you will be found when your name is searched online. Recruiters, employers and potential clients immediately search for your name when reviewing an application or considering a service. Why not impress them by having a positive and well-presented online presence that showcases your talents and expertise?

PART 1:

7 Website Essentials that are Overlooked

KERRY NEHIL
design & development

[WORK](#) [PROFILE](#) [CLIENT LOGIN](#)

kerry@kerrynehil.com

From design to execution, each new project presents the opportunity to push limits creatively and technically. Your site will be beautiful and highly usable all while being built with clean, semantic code. This results in fast loading sites, improved accessibility, simplified maintenance and lower costs. [Get in touch.](#)

BIO

I graduated from Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids, Michigan with a B.F.A. in Graphic Design. With over six years of freelance experience and a broad work history, my abilities cover many facets of graphic design, web design and technical knowledge.

SERVICES

- Web Design
- User Interface Design
- Information Architecture
- HTML/CSS
- Wordpress CMS
- Payment Integration



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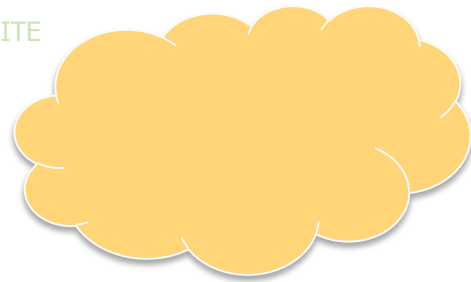
1. Welcome Message



It takes a website visitor a few seconds to evaluate your website, your skills and your brand.

Do you have a welcome message that is clear and concise? You need to put yourself in your visitor's shoes. Can you clearly identify what it is that you offer with a quick glance at the homepage? If your visitors are confused, it is likely that they will not be wasting time trying to find out who you are and what you do. If their needs cannot be met quickly, they will not be returning. Make sure that your welcome message, header and the titles of your pages clearly describe what the content of the site and pages are.

Catchy creative names are fine, but they should be reflective of your personal brand and the message that you want to deliver. For example, when I was first developing my brand, I had chosen the name The Content Muse, because I would be providing useful content to college students and young professionals who were looking to develop or improve their personal brands. What I failed to realize however, was that the name was confusing and did not speak to what I really did which was branding. I had to take a step back and look at the big picture to realize that the name was not accurately descriptive of what my mission and work was.



Musing Moment:

Ask yourself if your header, website name and welcome message quickly communicate who you are, what you do and what you offer.

Personal Domain

A domain name is the first key to determining whether a site is legitimate or not. The Internet allows for the creation of many spam pages, and inaccurate, illegitimate information is freely flowing throughout the web. Websites with your full name in the domain generally ranks first when someone searches for you. Have you registered your domain name? Professional websites do not have .wordpress or .weebly attached to the end of it. It should be your name and end in .com. Unless it's your business name, anything else is unprofessional and unpolished and reflects poorly on your brand.

About Page

Your About Page is an important asset to your website because it introduces us to YOU. This is an often neglected yet critical piece of your brand because it tells your readers about your experience, expertise and qualifications. Your About page should connect you to others and help to accomplish your goal. Consider who your audience is and what information they need to know about you. The About page should tell a story, and the way you craft and present, depends entirely on what you want to achieve with your site.

CRUCIAL COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PERSONAL WEBSITE

ABOUT TRAVIS

I'm a multi-faceted user experience designer and have been working on the web for 9 years. Being part of small teams has given me a good working knowledge of how all the pieces of digital communication and applications come together to form a whole. Over the years, my roles have shifted to encompass all points of the process at one time or another, but always with a heavy emphasis on the concept, visual design and interactions users face.

The ability to see the big picture as well as obsess over the minute design details makes me capable of working in areas of all types. Innovative interface, usability, and web standards methodologies have gained industry wide recognition and allowed me to work with clients and projects of all sizes.

I speak both geek and client alike. I love design and clean (like anal retentive clean) markup.

[DOWNLOAD RESUME PDF](#)

Previous Clients

HASHROCKET Century 21 POP! TECH
UF UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA AIGA CHASE

[TWITTER](#) twitter.com/travisat

Work Experience

User Experience Lead & Partner nGen Works 11/08-PRESENT
RESPONSIBILITIES: User Experience, Art Direction, Design, Front-End Development, CMS Implementation (ExpressionEngine), Information Architecture, Client Services, Project Management

OVERVIEW: The role of designer naturally grew into being mindful of the bigger picture for each project and making sure it accomplished the client's goals. This includes creating and managing the internal processes and systems that plan, document and produce all projects. During this time period, I've also designed and curated features for some of the top 3rd party software within the ExpressionEngine community.

Designer & Front-End Developer nGen Works 2004-2008
RESPONSIBILITIES: Design, Front-End Development, Maintenance, Project Management

OVERVIEW: I implemented web standards and modern development techniques within the company, forming the base processes used to this day. Working alongside another designer and a developer, I designed and/or produced part of every site that left the shop.

Designer & Front-End Developer Productivity Central 11/08-2012
RESPONSIBILITIES: Design, Front-End Development, Maintenance

OVERVIEW: As the lead designer I crafted all the interfaces for various small to medium size websites and applications, working closely with the development team during implementation.

Designer & Front-End Developer UNF Academic Affairs 11/08-2012
RESPONSIBILITIES: Design, Front-End Development, Maintenance

OVERVIEW: Maintained and designed websites for all public facing university information within Academic Affairs. These responsibilities eventually grew into several university level projects outside the department after recognition of our internal standards.

Education

Bachelor of Fine Arts University of North Florida 1999-2003
Multimedia Program (web emphasis)

Recognition

Your About Me page should contain the following:

1. A professional bio
 - Name and profession
 - Specialty, niche, or area of focus
 - Experience and Credentials
 - Education
 - Notable Achievements
 - Location
2. Additional Skills and Personality Traits
3. Headshot
4. About the Site and what it contains
5. Contact Information
6. Resume is optional but highly encouraged for job seekers

home **about** work contact

me.

My name is Suzy. I'm 23. I live in Northern Ireland. I like making connections

Right now I'm in my final year of a Bsc Hons degree in Interactive Multimedia Design at the University of Ulster. I'm passionate about all things web, but if you made me choose an area, it'd have to be the social web.

Connecting with others and sharing experiences online is one of my favourite things to do.

This is my online home, launched in March 2009. It's a little slice of me, my work and some more, but it's still a work in progress. Over the next month I hope to implement more changes so check back for updates!

If you want to get in touch, you can do so [here](#), I'm available for employment and / or freelance work from June 2009.

services

- + web design & development
- + usability & accessibility
- + branding & identity

lets talk

In June '09, I'll be available for full time employment and/or freelance work.

If you have an upcoming project why not [get in touch!](#)

Contact Page

A contact page is one of-- if not the most-- important page within your entire website. Many people wrongfully assume that because they have their contact information available on other parts of their website, they do not need to have a contact page. This is false. A contact page takes your visitor into consideration by making it simple to find information that allows them to get in touch with you . You should include your name, title, phone, email, social media channels and any other ways that they may learn more about you and connect with you.



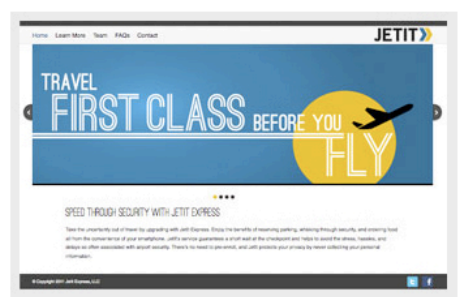
By including a contact page, you remove the guesswork of someone trying to figure out how to contact you and allow them to have a better experience on your site.

Portfolio

A portfolio is a collection of work samples that you use to showcase your talents and skills to employers or potential partners and clients. Portfolio pieces include but are not limited to: writing samples, design work, presentations, testimonials and reviews, programs you have implemented or videos you have produced. By having your portfolio available online, you do not have to limit yourself to what can be reviewed on paper and allows you to expand beyond the conventional format of a portfolio. Your portfolio can be an embedded PDF using sites such as Scribd, Docstoc and Slideshare; it can be in the form of a gallery or a list of links. You decide what works for your audience and industry.

- Home
- Portfolio**
- About
- Contact
- Blog

Portfolio : //



[view project](#)

jetitexpress.com

Jetit Express is a service application that better your travel experience. I collaborated with [Daniel Neale](#), who did the lovely motion graphics

My Involvement:
Wordpress Development
HTML, CSS
Overall Website Design



oneinseven.ca

I built this affiliate site for Express Pardons as an information hub to house their media. I've also built them a facebook page and a twitter page.

My Involvement:
Wordpress Development
HTML, CSS
PHP Development
Twitter page customization
Facebook page customization
Social Media Integration

Call to Action

Instructions make things run more smoothly don't you think? In order to get your audience members to contact you, buy your product, or sign up for your newsletter, you need to ask them to do so and give them clear instructions on how to go about performing the action. A call to action is not only limited to those selling something, it can also be used to encourage your site visitors to email you, connect with you on social media or leave a comment on a blog post.

On TheBrandingMuse.com, you will see that the site is populated with calls to action on every page to help guide each visitor to actions that we want them to take by using graphics, buttons, hyperlinks or forms.

Bonus: By having calls to action, you are also able to more accurately measure the success of your site using click-through analytics.

Site Map

By adding a site map to your website, it not only makes it easier for the visitor to find information they are looking for, but it also allows search engines to find all the information contained within your site. This increases your search engine optimization and makes your site---and therefore your brand or business-- searchable.

Tip: Be sure that your pages have descriptive names that identify the information within each page, but also be sure that those titles include keywords that are relevant to your topic and site. (more on this in the next section)

Bonus: Blog

Blogs are one of the most powerful tools to establish your personal brand. Thought leadership is highly valued in the professional space and by showcasing your expertise, you differentiate yourself from your peers or competitors. Companies want employees that can add value and contribute a unique perspective to a problem or situation. Clients want to work with experts who will deliver results. By blogging, you can showcase your research, writing and critical thinking skills. Blogging develops your unique writing style as you begin to reveal more of what you know and how you think. By writing on topics that relate to your craft, you position yourself as a thought leader and expert in your field.

PART 2:

Optimizing your Site (SEO)



What is SEO? SEO is an acronym for Search Engine Optimization, the process of improving the visibility of your website on search engine results. This simply means that your webpage is more likely to come up on search engine results easier and earlier than other websites. When you search something, how likely are you to click through 10 pages? Not many of us click past the first few pages of search results, and SEO is a way to ensure your site appears closer and closer to the top of the results.

Want to put your best foot forward in SEO, but don't have the knowledge? Here are some tips to keep in mind:

✓ **1. Don't overwhelm your pages with graphics**

Take a good hard look at your website. Any text that is in a graphic or flash animation will not be read by the search engines. Is your logo graphic the only place the name of your company appears? Then you are virtually invisible. For the graphics that you do have, be sure to include the alternate text (alt text) and captions describing what the photo is and have image names for each.

✓ **2. Find your keywords**

Effective keywords can direct a large amount of traffic to your site without you having to do any promotion or marketing. Choosing the right keywords however, is not that easy and takes constant monitoring and updating to get right. Tools such as Google Adwords and Google Insights for Search can help you test the effectiveness of your list and find the terms that people are searching most.

Create a list of 15 – 30 search terms that will be used throughout your website. It is best to use three to four keywords per page.

✓ 3. Create Content

Seems simple enough, but a stagnant web page is not appealing for search engines. Write blog posts, update your “about page” and add portfolio pieces to keep your website fresh. As an entrepreneur, add articles, press releases, information about your products and updates on services to increase the amount of relevant content on your site. Search engines like pages, especially homepages, that are updated frequently and that have longer text because they are considered more beneficial to the reader.



Musing Moment:

Think like your audience members. Anticipate the words and phrases they are searching online and use those terms to begin crafting your list of keywords.

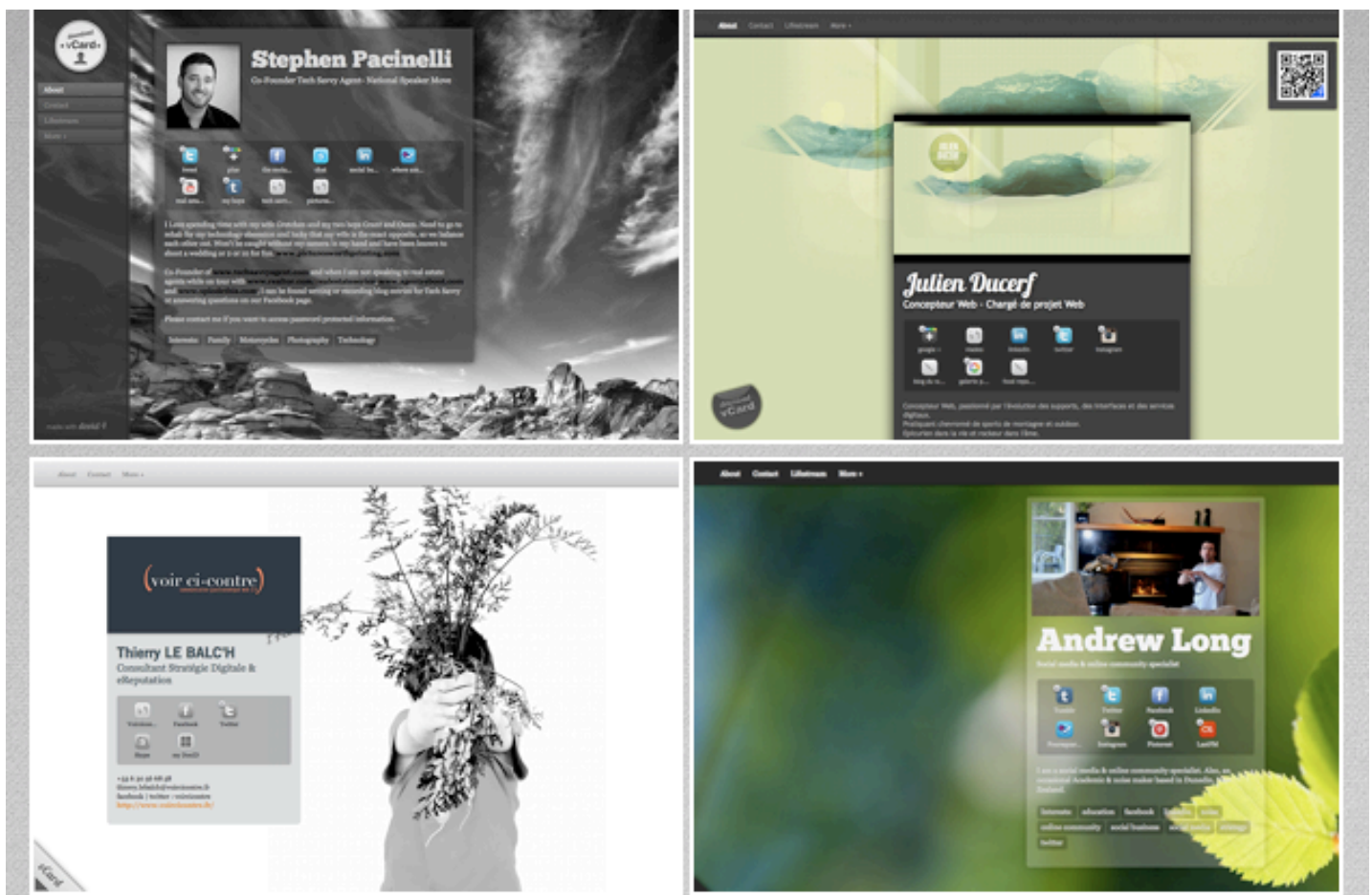
Make your writing flow and seem like normal language. It takes much practice and effort to learn how to integrate keywords into your writing in a way that makes sense. Keywords should be inserted in titles, site headings, meta tags and links. Don't forget that your website has many places you can use to optimize it for search engines.

These easy steps will have you on your way to a more searchable webpage. The more people that find you, the more traffic you will have and connections you will gain.

PART 3:

Different Kinds of Websites for Branding

A personal website is the main component of your online brand presence. It is the domain that houses brand "You" and can be a great tool to attract employers or potential clients for business. There are various ways to present yourself online and you must consider what is best for your industry, skill set and personal goals. Below is an overview describing the different kinds of website resources available for various experience levels.



Beginner

Introductory sites or virtual business cards are for those just getting started on their personal brand. This kind of site is usually a simple landing page that has a brief description about yourself, contact information and links to all your social profiles. This is a very straightforward way to present information and begin making your name searchable online.

Tools: [About.Me](#), [Wix](#), [Doid.me](#) and [Flavors.me](#)

Experienced

A website that is also able to host a blog is important to begin branding yourself as a thought leader. By writing about topics that interests you and your audience (whether an employer or potential contact) you can drive traffic to your site and begin branding yourself as an expert in your field.

Tools: [Wordpress.com](#), [Blogger](#) and [BrandYourself](#)

Professional

Sites that contain multiple pages allow for more detailed information and the ability to host a digital portfolio, blog and more. By creating a site that is uniquely your own and free from the restrictions of templates, you are able to craft your website to be fully aligned with your brand. These websites take time to create and may require hiring outside help.

Tools: [Wordpress.org](#), [Weebly](#), [Dreamweaver](#), [CSS & HTML knowledge](#)

CRUCIAL COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PERSONAL WEBSITE

This ebook is just a brief guide to assist you in developing and improving your personal brand and website. Previously, you had to be a HTML master to develop a site. Now you have multiple tools and resources online to get started. Many website platforms are easy to use and cost effective so take advantage.

If you are pressed for time or would prefer that a professional creates your site for you, consider The Branding Muse. It's a great alternative to expensive web designers and allows you to be able to control and edit your site as you please on the web platform of your choice.



Email
info@thebrandingmuse.com and learn
about our
web design
services.

Resources



Here are free sites I like for creating a website or hosting an e-portfolio:

- WordPress
- Behance
- FolioHD
- Wix
- Carbonmade
- WorkSimple
- Flavors.me
- BrandYourself
- About.me
- Blogger

THE BRANDING MUSE

If you're interested in receiving feedback on your current website or getting started with your online brand, email us for a free session to identify your needs.

info@thebrandingmuse.com

Connect with us

Twitter: @BrandingMuse

Facebook & LinkedIn: The Branding Muse