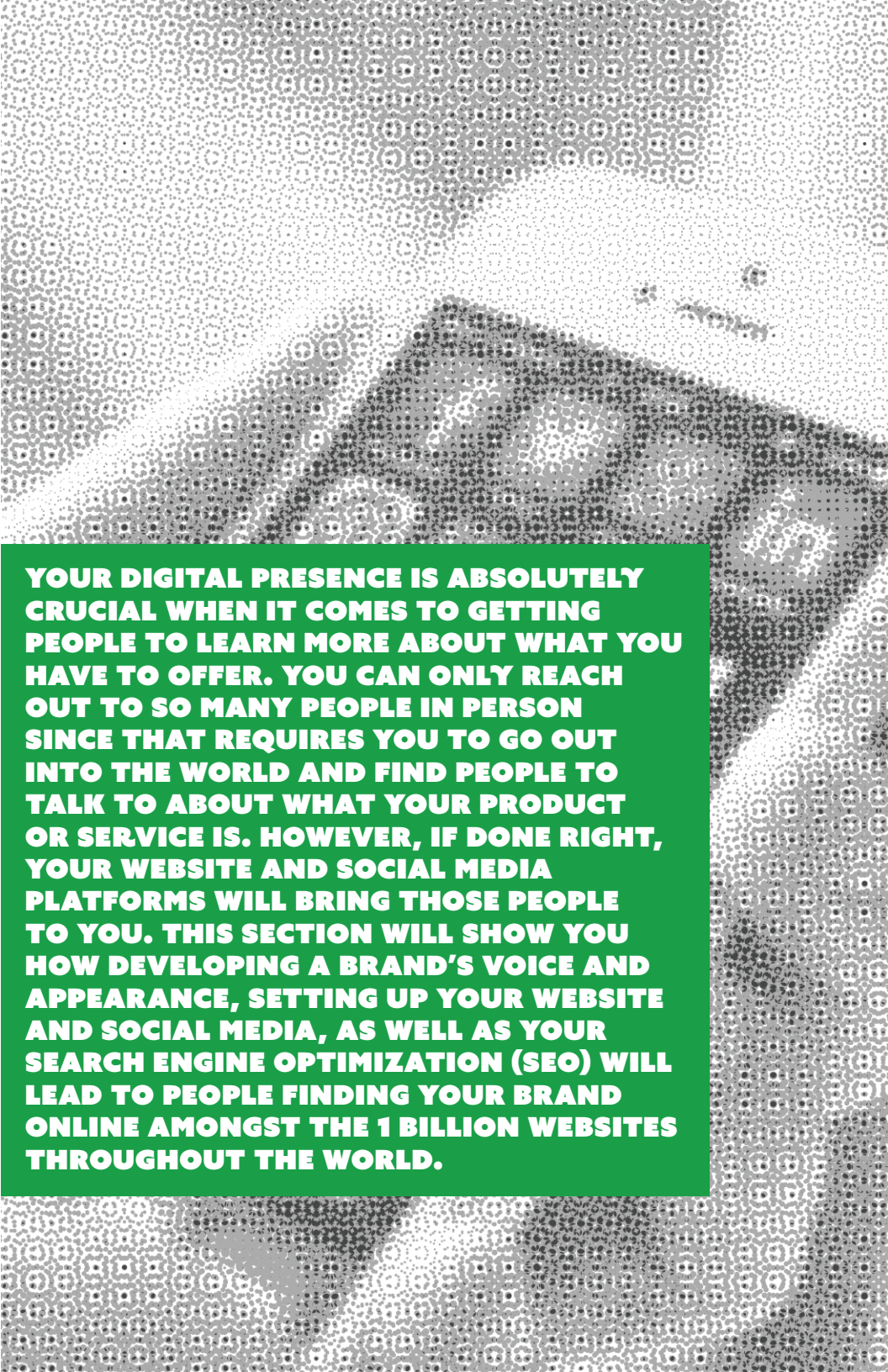


STARTING SOCIAL

A LESSON IN MAKING A SPLASH



AVNU.CA



YOUR DIGITAL PRESENCE IS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING PEOPLE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER. YOU CAN ONLY REACH OUT TO SO MANY PEOPLE IN PERSON SINCE THAT REQUIRES YOU TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AND FIND PEOPLE TO TALK TO ABOUT WHAT YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE IS. HOWEVER, IF DONE RIGHT, YOUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS WILL BRING THOSE PEOPLE TO YOU. THIS SECTION WILL SHOW YOU HOW DEVELOPING A BRAND'S VOICE AND APPEARANCE, SETTING UP YOUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA, AS WELL AS YOUR SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO) WILL LEAD TO PEOPLE FINDING YOUR BRAND ONLINE AMONGST THE 1 BILLION WEBSITES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

BRAND VOICE

“Developing a strong brand is crucial to marketing success. Many brands falter by trying to emulate other brand voices, only for their inauthenticity to become more clearly visible. A strong brand voice is one that is unique and genuine - it has to feel right. It has to come from a nuanced understanding of who/what the brand is, its content offerings (informational, utilitarian, amusing, inspirational, etc.) and the people it’s trying to connect with.” - [Hamza Khan, Co-Founder of Splash Effect](#).

The importance of a brand and a brand voice is crucial to a business or project. Both of these things should be carried out in every stage of the project that is seen by your audience or relevant stakeholders. The best way to approach this is to think of your brand as your project’s face, and your brand’s voice as (you guessed it) your project’s voice.

Before moving forward with setting up a website and your social media, it is key to establish how everything will look. This is usually done through developing a brand guide that outlines all the colours that are being used as well as how your logo or iconography should be used. These colours and images should be present on all your channels to consistently give the page a look that allows your audience to identify with your project. [Example: Starbucks and Coca-Cola utilize the colours of green and red. Both companies have stripped their logos down and placed emphasis on these colours which in turn results in the audience automatically identifying a certain shade of green or red with each brand.](#) This is not to take away emphasis from the logo which should also be developed to capture the essence of your project. Allowing the person who will be creating your logo to have a look at your business plan as well as insight into the members who work for this project may be helpful.

BRAND VOICE

Quick Tip: A logo does not need to be complex or simple in design. A logo should simply accomplish the goal of tying your project to a visual symbol.

A **brand voice** on the other hand is the personality of your brand. This will be carried out mostly through the social network side of things. Remember, when developing your brand voice: *authenticity is everything*. Look to members of your project and yourself, to identify what that collective voice sounds like and adapt it to your project. This will allow for you to merge both the digital and physical interactions that your audience has with your project. You should strive for making your digital voice for your brand, match culture your team embodies. Once you have established your brand and brand voice, you may want to revisit your business plan to make some adjustments that reflect this.

THE WEBSITE

Your website is the home to your project on the internet. It should be where your audience or prospective audience eventually goes to find out all important and relevant information. Today it is relatively easy to set up a web page for your project due to the amount of tools being released daily. There are a few components necessary to set up and determine before you can customize your site to fit your brand.

Your **domain** will be the URL of your project while your **hosting** will be where the data for your website is stored. Providers offer both in packages, and we recommend using one like **HostGator** or **BlueHost** to set you up. These providers have 24/7 support as well as very useful installation tools to help set up websites in one click.

Content management systems (CMS) provide users with a backend to their website that allows for visual and content edits without having to touch any code. A CMS like **SquareSpace** allow for users to build full websites using dragging and dropping with little to no code involved. A CMS like **Wordpress** also carries out similar functions but allows users who are well versed in coding to have the tools they need to fully customize their web pages.

Quick Tip: If you decide to move forward with WordPress, keep in mind that you have to install WordPress through your hosting provider. Often users will log in to WordPress.com and build a site there, however this version of the CMS has a limited set of features.

THE WEBSITE

Once you have set up a domain with hosting and a CMS that you would like to use, you can now build your website. Both CMS solutions outlined here have various themes to build upon, so take some time out to look and see which one will be the best for you. If you are using WordPress and have a developer, you can build the site from the ground up.

When building your website, remember to set up a [Google Analytics](#) account with a google account of your preference. Doing so will allow you to track where your users are coming from, what they are viewing the most, and much more insightful information that you can carry across the rest of your project.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA SCOOP

Social media will be the most immediate and recurring source of your brand voice. It's here where you can establish a direct link with your audience on a digital plane. Like most sections of technology, social media has been steadily evolving with new platforms showing up every day. Brands have utilized newer platforms like **Vine** and **Snapchat** in new and creative ways. Other brands recognize their work and are purposefully only on certain platforms (ex. **Corporate companies with LinkedIn pages**). However there are many variations, the pillars of social media has remained the same for the last 5 years with Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Each channel requires its own approach but in tackling each channel effectively, you can create a diverse online community through your social media. Moreover, it allows for the brand to develop its own personality that the audience can relate to. Let's take a closer look at each of these social networks.

Facebook is the largest social network on the planet and continues to grow. What started as a network for students in postsecondary education is now the go to social network for everyone. The network itself houses personal or business profiles as well as all interactions on these profiles. Facebook, more than any other social network is an interesting case as the sentiment amongst most companies is that it is not effective for brand growth. Regardless, having a page on this platform is mandatory when building a social presence. You can experiment and find an approach that works for you or simply use the network as another page for your search results. Just remember to keep it updated and use the following tips:

- + **Visuals** are one of the main ways to make your brand page a lot more appealing. Use them wherever relevant. To ease the overall workflow, you can share your Instagram posts straight to your brand page (check your settings on Instagram).

- + **Milestones** are often used on Facebook for big life events on personal pages. Pages for projects that you may be working on can also utilize this to tell the story of your brand.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA SCOOP

+ **Schedule Posts** using [Hootsuite](#) on Facebook. Hootsuite is a program that offers a consolidated solution to pushing content out on all your social media networks. You can schedule posts ahead of time and let them shoot out instead of having to manually input it into Facebook. Facebook also has a schedule tool that is helpful. Getting your community manager to schedule posts at the top of the week to allow them to focus on engaging with the community on a day to day basis is a great approach.

[Twitter](#) is a social network that allows users to push out 140 character 'tweets' to their followers. With a character driven social network like this, conversation is the name of the game. Use this platform to really develop your brand voice and interact directly with the community. Several companies use Twitter to develop personalities and have the attitudes tied behind those personalities be the driver to connecting with the community and converting it to business. Taco Bell is a prime example of this as they understand their audience and speak to them accordingly. With this in mind, the platform also allows for several ways to grow your page. Consider the following tips:

+ **Schedule Posts** using [Hootsuite](#) on Twitter. You can schedule posts ahead of time and let them shoot out instead of having to manually input it into Twitter. It is recommended that this approach is used so the community manager can focus on engaging with the community at all times.

+ **Shortlinks** are helpful in the world of Twitter as they allow for the user to post shorter links, allowing for more characters to be used. Consider using a service like [bit.ly](#) or if you are using Hootsuite, schedule your tweets and it will automatically convert your link to an ow.ly link.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA SCOOP

+ **Hashtags** are key in the Twitter system as it connects people who may not be following each other to talk about something. World events can happen and Twitter will have up to the minute updates all tied together with a relevant hashtag. Brands can use hashtags to develop a community, or to dive into other communities to interact with them. Some hashtags are even made with the purpose of connecting people through 'Twitter Chats'. Do your research and compile a list of what your brand can use!

Instagram is the most visual of the social networks and as a result will require the most creative work. The social network allows users to upload images and videos to their profile. While Twitter and Facebook are conducive to meticulously crafting content and scheduling it to be pushed out to your community while you engage with them, Instagram requires some form of creativity. This network is perfect for visualizing your projects story. Use your brand to coat your story in a consistent look (ex. All Instagram posts are black and white images), but use it as an opportunity to tell a long form narrative of your project. This is where your audience can look behind the scenes and see the human component to your project. Refer to the following set of tips to make sure you are pushing out your content effectively:

+ **Peak Periods** of posting include morning commute hours (8am) and rush hour (5pm). Use this time to tap into a captive audience who is probably idle and checking their social media anyway.

+ **Hashtags** are just as important on Instagram as they are on Twitter. It is recommended that you use the search function on a few relevant hashtags to see which ones have the most engagement. From there, cut it down to a group of 10 hashtags that you pull from and add it to the end of each of your Instagram posts. Remember not to spam hashtags as it is a strategy that may yield higher followers, but they won't necessarily be engaged.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

A common theme throughout this curriculum has been tying all the pieces together. It's one of the most simple but necessary steps when working on a project though it is often overlooked. The key to doing this on a digital level is **Search Engine Optimization**, commonly referred to as SEO. **SEO** is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's "natural" or un-paid ("organic") search results. Hamza Khan states, 'many brands neglect the importance of SEO when it comes to tying together online marketing. A good website and active social media are hardly enough, considering that our reflex when trying to discover something online is to simply Google it. A search query is often the first entry point in the sales funnel, and to not ensure that your brand is easily searchable and taking advantage of choice search terms, can prove detrimental. If they're not finding you, they're going to find someone else.'

This being the case, your next question is probably '*How do I do this?*'. Luckily, there are two immediate steps you can take to strengthen your projects SEO.

Website - The wording used in your website is important. Make sure it is consistent across the board. Once that is done, if you are using a dashboard like WordPress or Squarespace for your website, make sure you add relevant keywords to every page. Often you can install an SEO checker to give you a live score on how searchable a page is.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Google+ - While Google+ may not be the most used platform, it does have some SEO benefits. Setting up a page and properly formatting it will allow for your project to be tied to a Google account which will place your project near the top (or at the top depending on the name) of search results. It is recommended that you just port over your Facebook posts here as well. Tedious, but the long term benefits outweigh the redundant work.

Having completed the above steps will help your search results. Remember, you want to use consistent wording across the board on your website, and your social channels to have it all linked together. Doing this will ensure when a person searches you, they will get all your relevant channels and points of contact.

SECTION CHECKLIST



FINALIZE YOUR BRAND VOICE



SET UP YOUR WEBSITE



SET UP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS




FOCUS ON YOUR SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION



CONTINUE TO REFINE AND IMPROVE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + [Why Public Speaking is Good!](#)
- + [Setting Up Your SquareSpace Site](#)
- + [Setting Up Your WordPress Site](#)
- + [Tips for a Facebook Page](#)
- + [Tips for a Twitter Page](#)
- + [Do You Need SEO?](#)



NOW THAT YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED ALL THE INTEGRAL PIECES TO YOUR BRAND, IT IS TIME TO CREATE YOUR MARKETING MATERIALS. YOU'VE ALREADY BEGUN THE PROCESS BY CREATING SOME ASSETS IN THE PREVIOUS SECTION. TO FURTHER TIE EVERYTHING TOGETHER, WE WILL BE USING THESE ASSETS AND FOCUSING ON THE CREATION OF YOUR PROJECT'S PRESS KIT.

OUR SOURCES

- + Branded Conference 2014
- + Brand Channel
- + Business Insider
- + Forbes
- + HootSuite
- + Internet Live Stats
- + Investopedia
- + Pink City
- + Splash Effect
- + Search Engine Land
- + TastyTuts
- + US Small Businesses



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