

BUILDING YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS

Right from the Start

The 8-Step Process for Planning, Building & Growing a Solid Foundation and Imagining the Possibilities

Welcome! Congratulations for taking your first step into the online learning space. You're here because you're interested in learning more about starting an online business, have put off starting up a dream you've had on hold, or are looking for an alternative income to the 9-5 job, right? Then you're in the right place – and that's a fact!

It's time to get your reading spectacles out, because this is a comprehensive overview of what I've come to learn over the several years. You get the advantage of having someone else do the leg work so that you don't have to -- and it's all summarized in this guide.

Ready to get started?

OVERVIEW

When people are thinking about starting their first online business, in general they think it sounds *super simple* or they think it's *really complicated*. The truth of the matter is both of those statements are *false*. If you've already established an online presence, you understand this.

While it's not hard to start an online business, it requires more thought than just creating it and hoping people will visit and buy. Too many businesses have heard too many crickets and found no customers from being hasty.



THE TALE OF TWO ENTREPRENEURS: HOW TO ADJUST YOUR MINDSET

While there are as many different personalities as there are people on Earth, there are two types of entrepreneurs. There are those who take fast action and keep falling and getting up, and there are those who get overwhelmed and check out, never to build their dream. Let's take a look at the two and make sure you find an acceptable balance for your lifestyle.

THE FAST ACTION ENTREPRENEUR

The person who thinks it's super simple will jump into building a website, adding a product and waiting for customers to come along and make them some money – preferably a LOT of money. Easy, right? The thought process might be “I love this product (either physical or digital), therefore I'm going to sell this product, because if I love it everyone else will, too, and I will make money.”



If you're all about jumping in and “just doing it” Nike style, you are a fantastic action taker and I applaud you, but did you lay a proper foundation? Did you do proper research and make sure customers want and need what you are offering? Are customers crystal clear on knowing who you are and why you do what you do?

It can be simple to set up a website with all the done-for-you technology available, but if you don't have a clear vision for your business or path for your customer to follow, your chances for success will be slim to none.

THE OVERWHELMED ENTREPRENEUR

If you're the wannabe entrepreneur who hesitates because you feel the process is complicated, you're probably a very analytical person and that can be a good thing.



While I also give you some kudos for your due diligence, you can't make money with an idea stuck in your brain or when you turn around and walk away the minute you

get stuck. You are doing yourself and the world around you a disservice by not sharing the wealth of knowledge you have sitting in your head.

While it's not advantageous to run out and set up a website before you've analyzed it, there's also a real thing called "analysis paralysis."

FINDING A HAPPY MEDIUM

Somewhere between throwing it up there and seeing if it will stick and being too overwhelmed to throw anything at all, is what you're about to learn. Finding a clear path that is both well thought out and easy to understand is essential if you want to be both successful and sustainable.

Let's start with the steps you need to build the core of your online business.



THE 8 PROGRESSIVE STEPS

Step 1

Build a Solid Foundation: Your Why & Your Core Values

Before you even start your business, you need to create a foundation. All solid buildings have solid foundations. When you look at your business as something permanent, something solid that will last a long time, it's easy to see that the figurative ground beneath you needs to be supported. These exercises will help you pour the concrete to hold your business in place firmly.

FINDING YOUR WHY

You might be thinking "what the heck is a 'why' and 'why' do I need one?"

The reason is simple. *If you don't know why you're starting a business and what drives you to run that business, the chances of sustaining it are low. By taking the time up front to think deeply about what drives you and lights you up every single day, you'll be able to build your business for the right reasons from the start.*

Spend some time jotting down the reasons you have for wanting to start a business. What's the end goal? What would your life look like both personally and professionally when your business produces income? Who would benefit and why?

DETERMINING YOUR CORE VALUES

By deciding on who you are and who your company is from the start, you'll always have written guidance in all decisions made in the future. As a business owner, and possibly future employer, you will constantly navigate a field of dilemmas that are financial, moral, ethical, personal and altruistic.

Determining your core values will be similar to writing a personal manifesto – instead it will be for your business. Aligning your personal values with your company values is critical. They are the guidelines by which you, your customers and your employees do business. Think of it as a baseline roadmap that can help you in future decision-making. It offers your customers an insight into how you conduct business. Core values also help companies to determine if they are on the right path and fulfilling their goals by creating an unwavering guide.

Here are some examples of core values:

- A belief that family is of fundamental importance
- A belief that honesty is always the best policy and that trust has to be earned
- A belief in maintaining a healthy work/life balance

Spend some time writing down values that are important to you and translate your non-negotiable principles into a list that will be relatable for the customers you hope to attract.

Step 2 Finding the Perfect Niche for You

If you want to build an online business, you will need to have a product or service to offer. A **product** can be physical (a widget), a course (training/teaching), a coaching program (meetings), or an event. A **service** is typically something you do for others in exchange for money – building websites, mowing lawns, training dogs, home repairs, etc.

A **niche**, or specialty, is your expertise around the product or service you offer.

WHY BEING KNOWN FOR YOUR NICHE IS IMPORTANT

Thinking of the knowledge and skills you possess and the passion you may have for certain topics or skills, there's one thing that will bring your

product or service to the forefront -- your ability to solve someone's problem.

- Plumbing leak? *Solve my problem.*
- I can't dance and my wedding is in a week! *Solve my problem.*
- I can't figure out Facebook ads and I'm opening my doors next month! *Solve my problem.*

People WILL PAY YOU to solve their problems. It's that simple. If it were easy or they knew anything about it, they'd do it themselves.

VERIFYING THERE'S A MARKET FOR YOUR PRODUCT

Whether you've always known exactly what you'll be offering or have had an "a-ha" moment doing the exercise above, there's one very important step you need to take before hanging out your shingle and opening up shop. ***You need to make sure it's something that people want and will pay for!***

This is called "proof of concept." It would be a shame to spend weeks and months and maybe even years planning and producing your products without knowing whether your offer will sell to anyone. And it is also very difficult to pivot away from what you've decided on. Maybe it will only need tweaking or maybe it will need a different mechanism for delivery, but you need to go into this venture with your eyes wide open.

To validate your product or service, start by asking friends and family if that's something they would pay for. Join Facebook groups around the topic and ask members their thoughts or create polls within the group. You could also put together a 1-3-page document outlining your offer and solicit comments on your own Facebook page.

The key here is to listen to the feedback, take it in a constructive manner, and don't be afraid to pivot if it's not resonating with people.

Step 3

Determining Your Perfect Customer Avatar

You know your “why,” you’ve established your core business values, and you’ve decided on your business niche. Now it’s time to determine what your perfect customer looks like. Who will you be serving and how will you impact their lives or businesses?

WHAT IS A PERFECT CUSTOMER AVATAR (OR PCA)?

Avatar -- sound a lot like a movie you've seen? Well, not quite. An avatar in the entrepreneurial space is a representative fictitious being that you create. The avatar represents a body of people who would most likely relate to and buy your product.



Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

You don't want to cast a wide net and catch everyone – all ages, sexes, geographies, interests – because you will only appeal to a chosen few. So why spend your time and effort working with people who will never relate to you or buy from you? Nurturing relationships with the perfect customers take time, so don't waste it on the wrong people. You can't be everyone's person.

Think of someone who either has been a perfect customer, or someone who you picture in your mind buying and loving your products.

Some things you'll know right away. If you are targeting millennial women, for example, then you know your PCA is born between 1981 – 1996. Your PCA will be women, ages 23-38. But there's more to look at. If you're selling weight loss, then you will be looking for people with some pounds to lose. If you're selling effective parenting, you'll be looking for mothers and fathers.

Write down the characteristics of your Perfect Customer Avatar. Include age, gender, income, geography, hobbies, family life, work life, hopes &

dreams and even struggles. Get into the nitty gritty of your person and bring them to life.

This is the person you'll be thinking about and speaking to throughout your entrepreneurial journey.

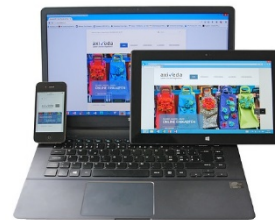
Step 4 Create Your Platform

If you don't have a platform, you can't be heard. What is a **platform**? It's your stage – the place where you talk about your products and services to your customers.

Depending on what niche you've decided on, there are a variety of options and places to be present.

WEBSITES

Regardless of what business you are in, you must have a website.



While all other ways of delivering your message can be mixed, matched or optional, having a website is something that is non-negotiable. It is your home, your place of business, your headquarters where people can virtually come in and look around. If you're serious about being in business, then you must seriously open the door to your business! This will be your identity with your own business name and structure.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

In addition to a website, what you use to talk to your customers is up to you; however, you want to make sure you are speaking where they hang out. Talking about your cattle ranch at a vegan convention would be a real waste of time, no?

If they're on **YouTube**, then videos would work well. If they're on **Facebook**, then setting up a group and speaking to them is essential. If your posse of people are a chatty bunch, then **Twitter** is a great place to spread your message. If you're working with a visual crowd, then **Instagram** or **Pinterest** might be the place you need to be. If your customers are businesses, you should be set up on **LinkedIn**.

There are so many options that you need to be careful not to put too much on your plate and be everywhere. Consistent messaging from your chosen platforms is key, and you won't have time to post multiple items per day and be effective. **Choose the top one or two and start there.**

Step 5

Develop a Brand & Communication Strategy

WHAT IS BRANDING?

Branding is one of my favorite topics because it's the creative part that's unique to you and your company. It's the messaging, tagline, look, feel, colors, layouts and patterns of what you want to convey to your avatar.

Branding should symbolize your business as easily identifiable and belonging to your company. It helps distinguish you and your brand from all other products and services. Your brand is derived from who you are and who you want people perceive you to be (think core values).

Branding includes 4 basic components to get started:

1. Start with a name for your company
2. Choose themed colors for a consistent look
3. Choose a logo and/or symbol that best represents your company name
4. Create a tagline that is short, simple and to the point about who your company is and what it represents.

CREATING A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Your brand strategy is how, what, where, who and when you plan on communicating and delivering on your brand's messages. Where you advertise is part of your strategy. Your platforms and how you align with them are also part of your strategy. What you communicate visually and verbally is part of your strategy, too.

Let's break it down so it's easier to understand:

Who is your Perfect Customer Avatar (PCA)? You will have already gone through that exercise in Step 3, so make sure your messaging and your brand story are clearly spoken to *that* particular customer in *your* particular niche.

How are you going to relay to your PCA that your brand and the services you offer are unique or superior to the competition?

What is your brand and its products all about? What do you have to offer and what do you stand for? Think core values again. What messaging could you craft about integrity or charity or excellent customer service?

Where will you reach your PCA? What platforms, advertising, marketing and messaging will speak to them with both empathy for their struggles and authority that you're the right person for the job?

When will you send your messaging to your customer avatar? This is where a strategic plan comes into play, and a content calendar should be used. Will you email weekly? Podcast weekly? Tweet daily? Post on Facebook daily? Go live on Instagram every other day?

The questions above might have to be answered down the road once your business is established. However, by you knowing and understanding everything about your brand before you even create it gives you complete clarity from the time it's started.

Step 6 Creating Content

If you've made it this far, through all the nuts and bolts of laying a foundation, then you *must* be serious about starting this business. I'm hoping that through the first 5 Steps you start to see your dream, your vision, beginning to take shape.



Now it's time to look at the fluid part of your new business. Content is the key component of every piece of communication you want to convey to...well, just about everyone! It's what you say in a semi-permanent manner (scary, huh?). Never fear.

You've learned a lot of this part already.

Look back at your communication strategy. You've learned who to talk to and how to deliver your message. Now we're going to concentrate on the *what* and the *when*.

WHAT IS CONTENT & CONTENT MARKETING?

Content is the container of words you use to deliver useful, timely, relevant and valuable information to your customers. It can be delivered in any format – written, verbally or on camera – and must be distributed on a consistent basis.

Content can be anything from the tips and facts you share, to the storytelling that will help your customers learn something new or fix something they don't quite understand.

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — your PCA — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

If you are only writing content that leads to the sale of your products, or has no value until someone buys your products, you might just hear crickets at the checkout. This is a day and age of a much savvier consumer, including digital products and services. Give first and build customer trust. Your relationships will lead to sales on a grander scale.

TYPES OF CONTENT DELIVERY

BLOGGING

Blogs are necessary components of a website. They are the place that people get to know you through your written voice, learn what you have to offer, what type of message you have to share and what type of expertise you can provide.

PODCASTING

Podcasting is becoming a popular medium and continues to grow. As more people start to consume knowledge and information through their earbuds, speakers or car stereo, the expanse of what you can learn is becoming equal to that of a blog.

For those who find it easier to deliver a message through the spoken word vs. writing it all down, podcasting can grow an audience by leaps and bounds if people are searching for your topic.

VIDEOS

The third form of content delivery is video. If you've been doing videos in your 9-5 careers or are comfortable shooting videos of yourself through your smartphone, this might be the easiest form of content for

you. You can speak your instructions, you can cut away to your computer screen for tutorials, or you can deliver webinars using videos.

People who prefer videos as a medium will typically use YouTube as their social media platform of choice. It's not hard to set up an account and you have control over who can access or view your work.

EMAILS

Believe it or not, your touchpoint with your customer via email is one of the most important forms of content delivery. You might be thinking that people get way too many emails to make this an accurate statement. Yes, we all get way too many emails for our own good these days. However, with the right headline, the right content and the right call-to-action, an email is pure gold.

An email can be a quick way to communicate all of your other content. Write a new blogpost? Record a new podcast? Shoot a new video? What better place to let your customers know about it than in a quick email?

Just remember the following when using email for content marketing:

- Keep it **simple & quick to read**
- Keep the paragraphs **short**
- Keep it **interesting & engaging** (*tell a story*)
- Keep the audience focused by **asking them to only do one thing** (*click a link, read a newsletter, sign up for your FB group, etc.*)

Step 7

Marketing & Sales

Marketing is such a broad term to digest that I'm going to break it down into the smaller pieces that you need to be familiar with to move forward in your business.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

In the simplest of terms, marketing is almost everything we've discussed above. It's the mechanism to get eyes upon your product or service by using the right content, delivered to your PCA, that solves a problem and aligns with your company's core values. Whew!

Since my main passion and career has been spent in the marketing field, here are 3 of my core marketing beliefs:

1. **MARKETING DRIVES SALES.** I may have some salespeople who would beg to differ here, but I've been in the marketing space for over 40 years and I won't be persuaded otherwise. *Think of*



marketing as the excitement of a race to effectively let new customers know about your company, and sales is the act of helping the customers across the finish line.

Marketing is the act of gathering leads through different mechanisms – whether it be advertising, brand awareness, free offerings, social media, speaking engagements or interviews – each time you put yourself and/or your company out in the public eye, people start to know you and recognize what you offer. Once the leads are gathered is when the sales magic happens.

2. **MARKETING IS NOT A DIRTY WORD.** I've heard so many people automatically react to the word "marketing" with "*I hate marketing*" or "*I don't understand it, so I'm not going to even try.*" Really? If your mindset is in the right place to own and operate your own business, marketing can actually be quite fun, and you simply can't ignore it if you want to make money. It's as imperative as a website.



3. **EFFECTIVE MARKETING CAN BE DONE ONE STEP AT A TIME.** The overwhelm people experience when they hear the word marketing is the misconception that you have to either be good at all facets of it, or make sure you're doing all the marketing at once. Are there lots of marketing steps and tactics? Yes. Do they all have to be moving parts at the same time? No.

Starting with one marketing effort at a time will introduce you to one possibility and it will grow from there. Some marketing efforts, such as brand awareness, can be set up and set aside until that's where you need to be present.

WHAT MARKETING YOU NEED TO KNOW AS YOU START

The bare essentials that you will need to get your business off the ground involve growing your email list, setting up your social media presence and expanding your reach to potential customers.

1. Growing Your Email List

In order to have a business, you need customers to communicate with, whether it's via social media or email. The difference between the two is that you don't own the social media lists – the platform does.

By having people opt-in to your mailing list, you are confirming that a) they are interested in hearing from you, and b) if all the social media platforms of the world were blown up and disappeared, you will still have your customer information.

The easiest way to bring someone into your space is to create what is called a **lead magnet**.

A lead magnet is exactly what it sounds like – a magnetic offer that creates a lead. There is typically no cost to the customer except the exchange of their email address for your offer.

Examples of lead magnets are:

- an instruction sheet (think craft or project pattern, or step-by step guide)
- a 10 things article (10 reasons you should..., 10 things you need...)
- the first chapter of a book you've just written
- an eBook or link to one in another platform such as Amazon
- a free video tutorial
- a coupon for a free widget or service

Make sure it something significant that represents what both you and your business represent. Be generous, be authentically you, and don't disconnect. In other words, make sure what you are offering is aligned with your product or service. It wouldn't make sense to give away an eBook on carpentry if you're offering dog training services.

WORD OF MOUTH

Another very consistent way to increase your email list is word-of-mouth. Always. Be. Talking. – about what you do, what you offer, who it's for, and most importantly, why you're doing it.

USE BUSINESS CARDS

While many influencers and entrepreneurs in the virtual space do not use business cards anymore (goes against the virtual part), I'm old enough to know that they still do work. Go to a site like [Moo](#) or [VistaPrint](#) and put your branding to good use. Order a few cards to get you started and make sure you carry some at all times.

2. Set Up Your Social Media Accounts

The second part of basic marketing you need for your business are your social media accounts. You can't run an "online" business without being present "online." I covered this a bit in Choosing a Platform. Now it's time to figure out where your business fits the best for your customers.

Do you need all to be present on all of the social media platforms? No. But you do need to 100% positively start out where your PCA hangs out. Remember describing your avatar? Do your research and ask them their favorite places – they'll let you know where you need to be present.

While there are many platforms to choose from, here are the Top 6 where you should start your focus: *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Pinterest*, *YouTube* and *LinkedIn*.

Step 8

The 3 P's – Productivity, Processes & Procedures

As you've learned by now, there's a lot to get done, but it's entirely achievable if you have the right processes in place. Remember this step and the 3 P's if you ever start to get overwhelmed, even if you have to take a break to implement them.

WHAT ARE THE 3 P'S?

The 3 P's are **Productivity, Processes & Procedures**. Each has a role in your journey, and each can bring simplicity to your circumstances where there once was none.

PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity can be as simple as shutting down your social media during your designated work time or setting up a quiet workspace.

Productivity is defined as “the effectiveness of productive effort as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input.” In simpler terms, it's the amount you get done in the time you've allotted.

Here are my Top 5 hacks for getting more done in a smaller amount of time:

1. **Focus.** If you can't close a door, then find a quiet, distraction-free space. If your mind races too much use a simple tool like the [Pomodoro Technique](#). There are several apps available based on the Technique, so find one that works if you're having trouble concentrating.



2. **Write down your top 3 "must-do" items every morning.** Using a journal, notebook or app, you can accumulate all your To-Dos in one place. However, it's very important that you don't see a list of 25 items and create brain overload. Put a circle around the Top 3 in order of importance and cross them off the list when you're done. If there's more time? Do more. If you miss the mark on those 3? Carry them over to the next day's list.
3. **Start the practice of "batching."** If you find you have some items on your list that are repetitive (and you will), start doing them in one time-block. For example, you may be spending 4 hours weekly writing one blog post. What if you spent 16 hours two days in a row and you were finished for the entire month? This keeps you from having to change gears for those two days because you are in blog writing mode. Spend some time finding repetitive tasks that you can start batching.
4. **Use tools and apps.** Don't be shy about seeking out productivity tools that can take some of the workload off your plate. One of my favorite places to look for apps is [Product Hunt](#), a gathering place for all the latest and greatest apps and their makers in the marketplace. Just search for what you need in the search bar. You'll be surprised how many are free.
5. **Work with an accountability partner(s).** Join an accountability Facebook Group or LinkedIn Group where others are just starting out. Jump on in to the Second Momentum discussion group and don't be shy about asking for the help you need to get stuff done! You can also look for a local [Meetup](#) in your area to work with others who also may be looking a partner as well.

PROCESSES & PROCEDURES

Processes within your life or your new business are particular to you and your workflow. They are not universal to all companies or business owners. While there are several methods of creating and tracking processes, the methodology that works to get *your* work done should be created and implemented.

The act of creating a process for the tasks you do is a matter of creating a step-by-step instruction for your use in the future, or to hand to a team member so the task can be duplicated with little effort.

To get started, the first thing you have to do is **make a list** of the things you find yourself doing on a regular basis.

Examples: *(these are business-related. You can also add things that pertain to running a household or even your day job)*

- Blog posts
- Newsletters
- Emails
- Podcasts
- Social Media (list)
- Interact with Facebook Groups
- In-person meetings
- Virtual meetings
- Creating web and blog images
- *And anything else you can think of!*

Each of the items on your list will be a **process**.

Every **process** will consist of step-by-step **procedures**.

Eventually you'll know these steps by memory and not need to look at your process. That's okay. If you decide you want to hire an assistant in the future to take some of these processes off your busy plate, you'll have clear instructions ready and waiting for them.

WHERE SHOULD YOU DOCUMENT YOUR PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES?

My favorite tools for the 3 P's include:

- [Google Drive](#) (it's free and easy, and you can share a link to an individual document)
- [Asana](#) or [Trello](#)
- [Process Street](#)

Each of those has a free version so you can give it a test to discover which program works best for you.

Summary

You made it to the end, and if you did read this far – **CONGRATULATIONS!**

This has been a lot to absorb. It was *not* written for you to perform all of the steps overnight. It *was* written so you'd understand that by following these 8 steps, you can build the business of your dreams, make some side or full-time income, live a freedom lifestyle and only set the alarm clock in the mornings if and when you choose.



Here is a quick overview of the steps you need to follow when creating your business.

SUMMARY OF THE 8 STEPS

1. Get clear on exactly **why** you want to start your online business and develop the **core values** you and your business will stand for (only once)
2. Determine the right **niche** for you and **validate** your choice (only once)
3. Define your **Perfect Customer Avatar** (PCA) (only once)
4. Decide on a **platform** and start considering the layout of your **website** (ongoing)
5. Create a name, look and feel for your **brand** (only once)
6. Create **content** to attract your PCA and a **strategy** to deliver it on a regular basis (ongoing)
7. Decide on your **marketing strategy** which leads to **sales** (ongoing)
8. Get your 3 P's in order. Establish a **productivity** mindset and set up **processes** & **procedures** to simplify your tasks (ongoing)

As you can see, half of the steps really only need to be done once for each business. The other half are ongoing and can be used to change as your market does.

While this is only a 30,000-ft view, and there's lots more to list under each step, it should give you a general idea of how to get started.

I can't wait to see what you come up with, and I look forward to helping you get there.



*Here's to your start of
something amazing!*

Julie



A Special Invitation for You

My goal is to have **1000 new businesses** up and running online in the next **three years**. Will yours be one of them?

I'd like to invite you to take all this information you've learned in this Guide and **join me for a 21-day daily journey breaking it all down into a workshop/mini-course**. The workshop is only open 4X a year. During the time it's not open, you can join the waiting list and be one of the first to know when it opens again.

When it comes to starting a new venture, you have a wealth of choices in who you choose to mentor you and walk you through the process. I'd be grateful and honored if you decide that mentor was me. I look forward to serving you, and watching you put together the business of your dreams.

Learn more about the **Building Your Online Business: Right from the Start** 21-day workshop below.

Here's to your #secondmomentum!

Julie Humes

Heck yeah! I Want to Know More

