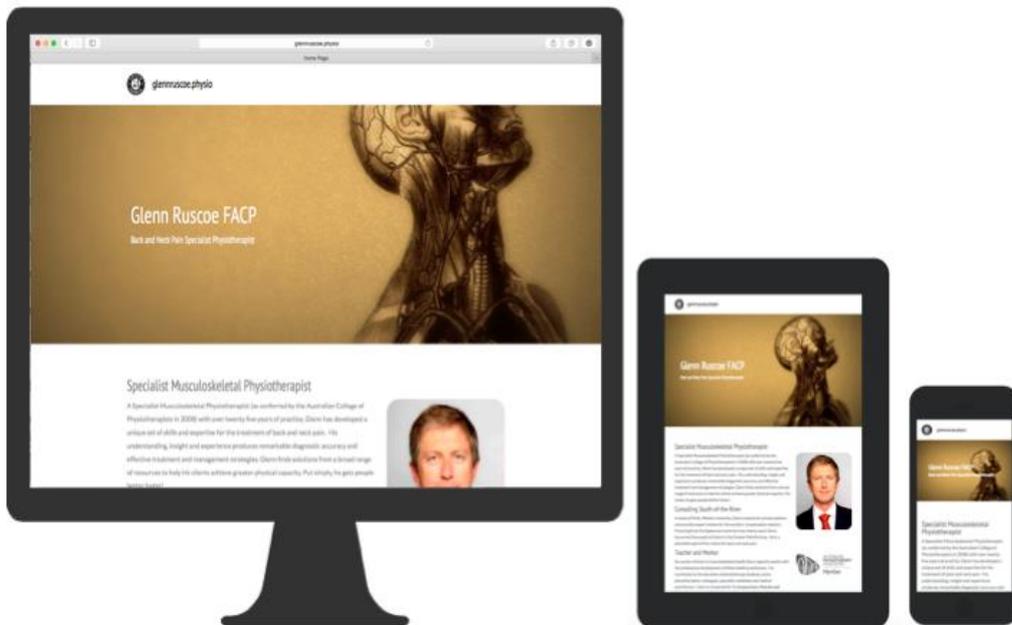


BUILD YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND WITH A PERSONAL WEBSITE



For physio & physical therapists
wanting to grow their career



www.glennruscoe.physio

INTRODUCTION

The term 'branding' once belonged to the world of large companies and their products, however the rise of the Internet has moved branding to the personal level.

According to Google, 80% of people research each other online before meeting for the first time and this number jumps to 95% when talking about employers researching candidates. The ability for potential customers, employers and partners (business and romantic) to find information about you online - while never actually meeting you personally - necessitates the need to present yourself in the best possible light. And that is branding!

So, whether you like it or not, if you have a presence on the Internet you are already a brand. The question then becomes, will you guide and cultivate your brand or will you let your brand be defined on your behalf?

Building your brand with a personal website will help grow your career.

- Building your brand will improve your professional development. Branding is just a form of *purposeful* goal setting. The discipline required for brand development, value-adding and consistency demands the kind of strong self-reflection that leads to more focused professional development.
- Developing and maintaining your personal website will require you to learn new IT skills that are paramount in today's world and will also make you a savvier consumer.
- Raised awareness of your skills and talents will produce greater recognition, greater opportunities and greater rewards.
- Finally, if every physiotherapist was actively developing his or her brand the variety and expertise created would be extraordinary; significantly raising awareness of the profession.

While the Internet may have imposed personal branding upon us, it also provides great opportunities. In this short book I will be sharing with you the six simple steps of how to build your professional brand with a personal website. While each section could cover a book of its own, there is more than enough information within the next few pages to get you up and going.

1. YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND

Officially, a brand is defined as the ‘intangible sum of a product’s attributes’ or in lay terms, what a person thinks of when he or she hears your name.

Your brand is your personality, your name, reputation, behaviour and character. It is what people say about you when you are not present; the way you are represented by others.

Your brand is what differentiates you from others. Subsequently it is a promise or a guarantee of what people can expect from you; it is a primer for future contact.

Most importantly, a brand is a declaration of trust upon which people can base their decisions. And trust is built with consistency.

Define your brand

There are two main questions you need to consider to define your brand. What do you wish for people to associate with you when they think of your name? Or more specifically, is there a certain subject matter in which you want to be perceived as an expert or are there general qualities you want linked to your brand? Next, who is your audience? Remember these aren't necessarily the end users of your service; it is the people who pay the bills, eg., parents not children, employers not employees.

Once you understand how you wish your brand to be perceived and by whom, you can start to be more strategic. From here the messages that you send can start to become more consistent.

Audit your online presence

You can't mould perception without first understanding your current status. So do an online search of yourself and find out what is currently out there. Now you have a starting point and something to compare yourself against as you progress.

Set up an alert for your name on a regular basis so the information automatically comes back to you. And while you are there set up an alert for your areas of special interest so that you can stay up-to-date. Cultivating a strong personal brand is as much about being responsive to what is being said as it is about creating intellectual property.

Find ways to produce value

Other than you and your mother, not many other people will be interested in your brand unless it offers them something of value. Remember a medium is not a substitute for a message.

Find ways to 'add value' for your audience by creating or curating content that is in line with your brand. In this process try to distinguish between your audiences needs and wants. A person may need greater mobility but what they want is to remain independent.

Be purposeful in what you share

Every tweet, every post, every status update and every picture you share contributes to your personal brand. It is an amalgamation of multiple daily actions. And every place you share information about yourself can be found by searchers.

Try to keep your private life out of your brand, unless of course it specifically relates to your brand. For example if you are a sports physiotherapist and you volunteer at sporting events then it is a part of your brand.

Associate with other strong brands

Early on your brand will be weak. Leverage your association with other stronger brands to get yours up and going. Start by identifying the connections with your employer, your education provider and your peers (memberships).

Find your narrative

So far this is probably sounding very clinical. Try to remain as human as you can. What is your personal story? Every strong brand has a story. What led you to your point of difference? Tell us how you became who you are, but remember it must be consistent with your brand and your audience, not just an opportunity for a long monologue.

2. PERSONAL WEBSITES

At first glance physiotherapists Jason Smith and Darren Beales, and student Jessica Birt appear to have little in common. Jason has built a franchise organization employing more than 420 staff in over sixty locations, whilst Darren is a renowned specialist clinician and researcher, and Jessica is midway through her Physiotherapy and Exercise & Sports Science double degree. But these three are all building their brands via personal websites.

Jason explains, "People do business with people and sometimes they just want to look up a personal site to find out about you, rather than the organization". Darren says, "My website is a central place of reference that brings together the diverse environments in which I work". And Jessica rounds it out with, "I want to have a place that gives a holistic view of who I am and what I have to offer. No company website will ever do as well as I can".

Enhancing your career

An informative, well designed, professional website sends a message that you take your career seriously. It makes you easier to find and provides a glimpse into your personality that cannot be expressed in a Curriculum Vitae. The layout, font, colours and style all send a message about you. But most importantly having your own website allows you to control what people find when they search for you.

A personal website can evolve with you as your career refines, broadens or even takes a U-turn. Jason sums it up, "A personal website will stay with me even as I change". As a clinician Darren recognizes that client-therapist connections are common and by having his own website his loyal clients will always be able to find him no matter where he is actually working.

Creating personal websites has never been easier with modern and fresh on-line templates allowing you to simply insert the text – more on this later. Darren said, "For now my page is a fairly simple information page, but I can easily add features - such as blogs and resource links - to make it more dynamic as I please".

Your personal website is the base from which your social media derives its content. Everything you do should be driving people to your website. Or in Darren's case it can be your sole medium, "Because I don't have time to attend to the inherent demands of most social media platforms a personal web page is easier for now".

Enhanced Employment prospects

Recognising that she will soon be in the job market, Jessica is positioning herself for consideration by potential employers. A beautifully designed and well written website gives you the best chance of making that crucial first impression a great one.

Having your own website sends a message that you care about your professional image, and good, relevant content shows you put time and thought into your job. It also demonstrates an Information Technology skillset that many of your competitors may not have.

3. DOMAIN NAMES

Every website starts with a domain name. It is the address to your website and a valuable piece of intellectual property that supports your brand – remember consistency. The process of using your name in your domain name is called ‘branded navigation’ and it offers great power.

Domain names are registered from organisations known as Registrars. They are not purchased but ‘leased’ for as long as the annual fee is paid. Registrars also offer other services such as website hosting and email accounts, but more on that later.

Selecting a good domain name

There are six essential rules to selecting a good domain name. It should be:

1. Short
2. Memorable
3. Relevant
4. Easy to say
5. Easy to type
6. Easy to remember

Obviously you will be choosing your personal name for your domain name, but keeping in mind the above six rules you might consider amending long or complicated names. Or you could consider just using a single name if you are particularly famous or are aiming to be. Alternatively you might need to add a middle initial should you discover that your preferred domain name has been taken by another person of the same name.

A short domain name that is memorable and easy to say, type and remember often conflicts with the need to be relevant. In our case to be relevant professionally the word ‘physiotherapy’ is required in the domain name, however when adding it to your personal name rule numbers 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6 are significantly challenged. Many American physical therapists have countered this problem by shortening their reference to the profession by adding the letters ‘PT’ after their name. For non-Americans where PT may mean Physical Trainer, the shortened ‘physio’ could be used.

There are two components of a domain name: the top level and the second level, or put another way, the left and right of the dot. Until recently the top level (right of the dot) domain choices were limited to .com, .org, .net or a country code, such as .au, .ca or .uk. Subsequently you only needed to consider the second level (left of the dot) name. So the most appropriate version of my domain name would appear as `www.glennruscoephysio.com` or `www.glennruscoept.com`.

However there is some really good news. The Internet is expanding with the introduction of 1,400 new top level domains, including .physio specifically for the world physiotherapy and physical therapy community. So now we have the capacity to meet all of the rules of a good

domain name. By dropping the, now superfluous, .com and using .physio instead my domain name is now www.glennruscoe.physio.

My domain now offers branded navigation; it says who I am, what I do and where to go for more information in just a few letters. Plus I gain all the benefits of associating my name, 'glenn ruscoe', with the very powerful world brand of 'physio'.

To register your www.yourname.physio go to the Registrar at www.dot.physio.

4. WEBSITE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

A personal website is a blank canvas upon which you can show your creativity and cleverness, however remember it must be consistent with your brand. And as your brand has been half-defined by the .physio top level domain it is important that you remain thoroughly professional.

Colours, fonts, sizing, layout, etc., all contribute to your brand. Unless you are also a graphic designer this is the time for professional help. Fortunately many professionally designed templates already exist where all you need to do is enter the content – more on this later.

While there are no limitations to how you construct your website, to be successful it will require at least eight essential elements. Preferably these elements will be on the front page. Other pages can support your front-page material with supplementary information.

1. Headline

People surf the web quickly; on average five times as many people read the headline than the body copy. So their attention needs to be grabbed with a killer headline. However finding the balance between sensational and professional while maintaining your brand can be a challenge.

Usually people are seeking to solve a problem and they are looking at you for answers, so a headline that indicates your special knowledge can be a good place to start. Come up with a few options and test it on your target market.

2. Sub headings

Sub headings are like bullet points that support your headline. You may have caught a person's attention with your killer headline and the reader is open to looking for more information. They won't jump straight into the text just yet, but they will look at the subheadings, so make sure they are equally enticing as the heading but supportive of it. Pull the key words from your text and use the sub headings to emphasise them.

In some cases your name may be the actual headline and your special knowledge/solutions the subheadings.

3. Value offering

This is the important part. Now you have the reader's attention, they are committed to investigating your site further. You need to offer them some value for their time. To discover your value offering consider the following questions. What is it that makes you unique? How can that information help the reader? How does it match with your brand?

The value offering may be in the headline or in the subheadings but it has to be up there somewhere.

The most common value offering is some sort of special information, such as a brochure, report or e-book that provides information relevant to what they are seeking. These can be put on your site to be easily downloaded or accessed by the reader.

4. Supporting information

You've made your promise in the headings, now it is time to come through with some evidence and/or well-reasoned support. You've got their attention, so now you need to deliver. Make it succinct and specific. Bullet points work really well, but consider no more than 3 or 5 in any section.

This is where you get to tell your story, so do a good job. Make sure your text supports your headlines otherwise the reader will lose trust. Have someone else review it before publishing and ask for his or her harshest criticism.

5. Credibility

Anyone can make a claim, especially on the Internet. Where's the proof or support of your value offering? Firstly, because of the eligibility criteria, by using the top level domain .physio they will at least know you are a bona fide physiotherapist or physical therapist. Thereafter it is up to you to highlight your qualifications, experience, credentials, research, experience, etc. But remember, keep it relevant to your headlines and your brand. While you may be a volunteer dog walker does that have anything to do with your role as an expert in shoulders?

6. Supporting Image

Visual images and video are essential support tools for your message. The higher quality the better, but don't get fooled into using a great image that has little relevance, huge upload time or super size. The images are a visual opportunity to support your brand and value offering, that's all.

Most people balk at this point because they realize that no matter how much they try they don't look good in photos. Even though the website is all about you, the main image doesn't need to be of you. It can be of something that supports your brand. Images are often supplied with template websites or alternatively can be sourced from stock image suppliers for very low prices.

And a final word, not too many images per page; two or three at a maximum, otherwise they become distracting.

7. Call to Action

Once the reader has consumed your information what do you want them to do? Well, tell them. Make the desired action clear. A Call to Action is intended to provoke an immediate response because if they don't do it now they are unlikely to do it later.

'Contact me' is too vague. Really think hard about what you want them to do and use strong action words. However be mindful not to ask for too much. Sometimes it is better to take people to your intended destination in small steps.

For service and product providers, most often what you are seeking in the first stage is a way to keep in contact so that you can move them from being an enquirer to being a customer. And this is where you can get clever. Previously you provided some sort of specialist knowledge. You can very easily link the provision of that information in return for the provision of their email address – quid pro quo. In this way you are building a database of strong potential clients. So the Call to Action in the first stage may be to download the free report you created in your value offering.

8. Connection Method

This one is a 'no-brainer' but you would be amazed by how many times it is missed. How will the reader take your action? They need a means to connect with you. Typically this is clicking on a link or sending an email address but it can include subscription to a readership list and links to social media.

In my case my connection method is by phone and email, but also an online appointment booking system so that they can make an appointment right there and then.

Other stuff

You may include other elements in your website such as your narrative, a map of your location, a blog and products for sale. But remember it must be consistent with your brand, because it is consistency that builds trust.

5. WEBSITE BUILDING AND HOSTING

Website building

So now you are all ready to build your website. How do you do it? You can find yourself a website designer, tell them what you want and have it built. Not being able to read your mind they will likely ask you to show them some existing website styles that you might like to imitate. There will be a lot of 'back and forth' so it will be expensive, take a long time and require a significant investment by you to ensure that it is done exactly as you want. And every change thereafter will cost more time and money. It can cost thousands of dollars.

Alternatively you can do it yourself. There are many online website builder service providers who are providing thousands of fantastic website templates where you just drag and drop your content. Graphic design experts have built these templates so that they are functional, efficient and aesthetic. It is so simple that it is like editing a Word document, whenever and wherever you want. Your website lives in the cloud and when you are ready just click on 'Publish' so that the rest of the world can see it. Likewise for every edit, update and addition.

Even better, the templates offered today are 'responsive'. Given that consumers surf the web on their tablets and smartphones more nowadays than on their PC, the layout of the website needs to be able to adapt to the device. Responsive templates automatically shuffle the elements of your website to do that for you.

Your domain name Registrar will likely offer a website builder service. Alternatively there are other website building providers, such as Squarespace, Weebly, Wix, Voog, Yola, Wordpress and Strikingly. Make sure you shop around for price, and remember nothing is really for free.

Website Hosting

Once your website has been built you will want to publish it to the web. Your website needs to be hosted on a server and this will come at a small annual fee. Your domain name Registrar will offer this service and will often bundle it with the website builder for under \$100 per year.

Other website builders will also offer hosting, however be aware that it will take a little effort to point your domain name to the other website builder.

6. ATTRACTING VISITORS

Despite the belief that “If you build it they will come”. They won’t. It is going to take a little work to help people find you.

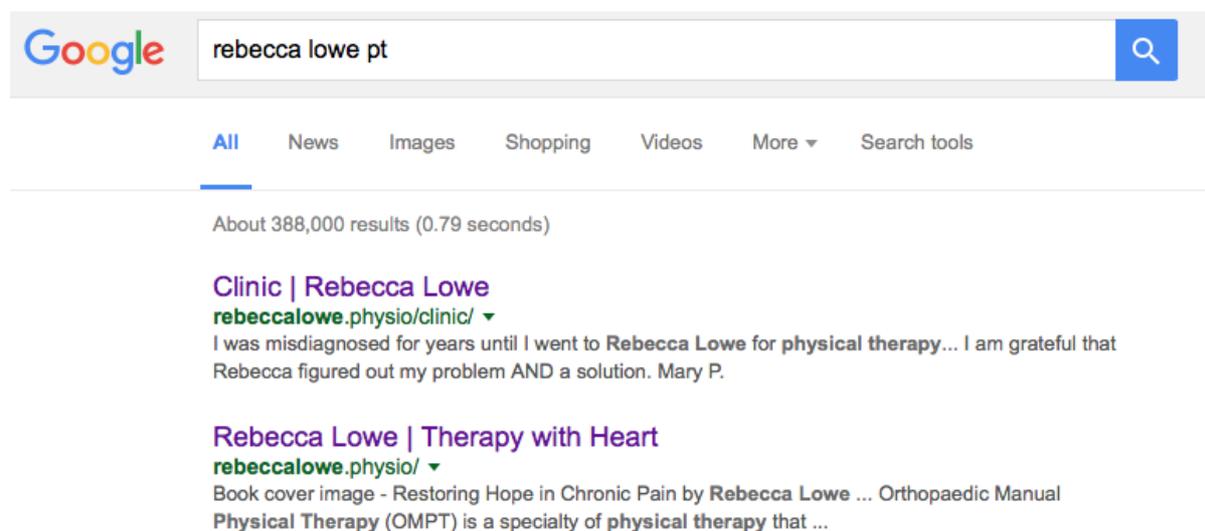
The topic we are moving onto now is called Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and it describes everything you can do to help your website rank higher in a search engine. There is a complete science behind SEO and people who have turned it into a profession, so this information is just an overview.

Domain name

Search engines seek to provide relevant content for searchers. Websites that have shorter, better and more memorable domain names are better for users. And what’s better for users is better for rankings.

The closer the words in your domain name are to the search terms the higher you will rank. Hence the importance of maintaining a consistent brand. When searchers enter the terms “Glenn Ruscoe Physiotherapist” it is almost guaranteed that the website at glennruscoe.physio will come first on the list. But if I refer to myself by my nickname ‘Fred’ to my patients when they search for me online, the term ‘Fred’ will cause great confusion.

For PT’s the news is good. Search engines are recognizing that the terms “PT”, “physical therapist” and “physical therapy” are the same as “physio”. As you can see below I tested it by typing ‘Rebecca Lowe PT’ into Google and her .physio site came up as number 1 and 2 out of a potential 388,000 results. There is inherent SEO value in using the .physio domain extension.



You may also consider registering a second domain name related to your area of expertise, eg., shoulder.physio, and have it re-direct to your website. This will capture those people

who are searching for solutions. Having multiple domain names pointing to the same website is like having multiple lines in the water when you go fishing.

However be aware that search engines are clever and recognize when multiple domains are pointing to the one website, so it is best to have the second domain pointing to a different page on your website with different content. In our example, [shoulder.physio](#), have a specific page that talks more about shoulders than you. Think of your website as a house that has multiple doors depending upon the visitor's needs. The visitor simply enters through the door that suits them best.

Key Words

The next best thing to having your domain name match the exact search terms is to have the relevant key words within your website. So if back pain is your value offering make sure the term 'back pain' and everything related to it is well mentioned.

Content is King

The actual content of your website is the most important element for SEO. As long as your content is relevant, fresh and well-read the higher your website will rank in search engines. The simplest strategy to achieve these elements is to write a blog where you share your expertise.

What to write about? This is where your value offering and your brand come into play. This is what you are an expert in.

What happens when you run out of ideas? The alerts that you previously created for your current brand and your value offering will provide all sorts of contemporary opportunities for you to write about.

Non-SEO methods for driving traffic to your site

By offering special knowledge in return for reader's email addresses you can build a database of people who obviously have a strong interest in your topic of expertise. Whenever you develop a new piece of information, service or product simply email a teaser to your list with a link back to your website.

If your website is the base of your brand, then social media represents the scouting parties that go looking for potential customers. By connecting with people who are interested in your topic on social media you can facilitate them visiting your site by linking back to your reports, articles, blogs, etc.

Finally, just tell people. The best way to do so is connect your email address to your domain, so in my case mail@glennruscoe.physio. Every time I send an email I am telling the recipient that there is a website at glennruscoe.physio.

ACTION IS BETTER THAN PERFECTION

I am sure by this stage you are feeling a mixture of excitement and trepidation. In its entirety the whole project sounds quite daunting, but step by step it is very achievable and not all that time consuming. After a little while it actually becomes fun and very rewarding.

Branding is not a project, it is a process. By commencing you are committing yourself to an ongoing process of regular action, assessment and review – not dissimilar to your daily practice. But in this case the beneficiary is you.

Always remember action is better than perfection. Get your site up and going now; you can always refine it later.



Register your.physio domain name

Go to www.dot.physio to register your .physio domain name.

Email Forwarding FREE

With every .physio domain name registered you can set up free email forwarding. In my case I have set the username 'mail' to my domain to create mail@glennruscoe.physio and have it forwarded to another email account.

Website Builder – FREE two week trial

With your .physio domain take a look at the website builder packages and the templates available. You can start to build your website for FREE for the first two week.

More Information

More Information on how to perform these actions is available at www.manage.physio.

There is plenty of online assistance available for all of the areas covered in this book and if you need any help please contact me directly by email at glenn@dot.physio.