



AI art by Ed Canela

# Digital Skills for Entrepreneurs

## Topic 5 Creating Online Presence

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### **5** Creating Online Presence



Traditional MSMEs in Nigeria generally operate in marketplaces offline. The digital MSMEs operate in the clouds, online. And the two never meet. The course will host a platform where the two development actors can meet and share their practices with one another. In this topic, participants will establish online presence one small step at a time. Starting with collecting email addresses, participants will discover digital platforms and ways to maintain their online presence. They will set their goals, choose the right online platform, set-up their profile bio, create content and establish sustain their businesses online.

# Topic: 5. Creating Online Presence

## Learning objectives

1. Understand the importance of having an online presence.
2. Identify key elements of an effective online presence.
3. Learn strategies for building and maintaining an online presence.
4. Gain practical skills in creating and managing online profiles and content.
5. Explore tools and platforms for enhancing online visibility.

## 1 Introduction to Online Presence

MSMEs in Nigeria are increasingly leveraging digital technologies to enhance their operations, marketing, sales, and customer engagement. Despite having smartphones, these businesses often operate based on traditional methods. However, establishing a strong online presence is essential for business success. It allows businesses to extend their reach, engage with customers, enhance brand identity, drive growth, and stay competitive. To establish an online presence, small entrepreneurs need to follow specific steps.

**Step 1: Compile contact phone numbers:** gather phone number of potential target customers. Once you gathered enough phone numbers, open Whatsapp business account and start sharing your products or services on your status for your target audience to see

**Step 2: Get email addresses.** The email should include both present and potential customers. This list should be segregated into personal and business contact and once the database start growing, MSMEs should leverage tools like Microsoft Excel to



Video 1: How to Create a Brand-New Facebook Business Page | 2023



Video 2: How to Use Social Media for your Business

organise the database of their email contact.

**Step 3: Sell to those on the email contact list:** The next step is for the MSME to start convincing those on their email contact to start buying their products or services. They can do this by emailing all those in their database with price list product or service they are providing including detailed description. The email to the mailing list should include a call to action by all recipients of the email.

**Step 3: Creating Social Media Account:** After completing all the business registration, MSMEs will need an online home. This means either [Google my](#)

[Business](#) or Facebook Business and the Google my Business needs to be [verified](#). The journey of establishing a strong online presence via Facebook

business, Instagram, Tik Tok account can be rewarding for small businesses. The social media has a wider reach and so at this point they should start thinking of creating content that is targeted at their target audience. Also, they need to separate their personal social media account from their business account. They need to open WhatsApp business account which also should be different from their personal account. Getting out the right information and knowing how to engage their target audience through social media is very important for their online presence.

**Step 5: Content Creator:** with a functional social media account, the MSME should decide whether they have internal competent content creator or they need to leverage from outside the business.

**Step 6: Creating a Website.** This will be the next in the MSME's journey to creating an engaging online presence. The decision to create a website should be backed by the level of business growth.

**Step 7: Creating and eCommerce site:** this should be the last step where the MSME is able to incorporate payment gateway into their website.

## 2 Setting Goals for Online Presence

Before MSMEs dive into the digital realm, it's important for them to determine why they want to establish an online presence and set clear goals for their online presence. As a Nigeria MSME, are your goals of online presence to increase brand awareness, drive more sales, expand your customer base, or all of the above? Having clear goals will help shape your online strategy and guide your efforts in the right direction<sup>1</sup>. Having a clear goal for your online presence as MSME will help you determine other critical things like the target audience, budget requirement, type of platforms to use, available digital resources internal or external, cybersecurity consideration and all the steps you need to take to achieve online. This is a critical step that must be carefully done by any MSME in Nigeria willing to establish an online presence.

## 3 Choosing the Right Platforms

Choosing the right platform for Nigerian MSME's online presence is crucial for ensuring effective engagement, scalability, and achieving business goals. As an entrepreneur, the right platform for your online presence should align with your set online presence goals and the following are some factors you need to be considered to choose the right platform:

- a. **Online Presence Goals:** the right platform to choose should be determined by what the MSME wants to achieve by being online. For most MSMEs, the primary goal is to sell products, provide information, generate leads, or enhance brand awareness.

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<sup>1</sup> [Building a Strong Online Presence for MSMEs: A Comprehensive Guide](#)

- b. Target Audience:** Where the audience spends their time online and their preferred social media platforms, search behaviors, and e-commerce habits should determine the type of platform MSME should buy for their online presence because the goal is to reach the target audience.
- c. Budget:** Assess the available budget for initial setup and ongoing maintenance. Consider the cost of the platform, hosting, plugins, and any additional services.
- d. Features and Functionality:** Identify the essential features needed, such as e-commerce capabilities, blogging, SEO tools, integration with other systems (like CRM), and customer support options.
- e. Ease of Use:** Evaluate the platform's user-friendliness, especially if you plan to manage it in-house and whether an extensive technical skill would be required.
- f. Scalability:** Choose a platform that can grow with your business. It should be able to handle increased traffic, additional products or services, and expanded content needs.
- g. Customization and Flexibility:** Look for platforms that allow for customization to match your brand's look and feel. This includes themes, templates, and design options.
- h. Integration Capabilities:** Ensure the platform can integrate with other tools and systems you use, such as payment gateways, marketing automation tools, and analytics services.
- i. Security:** Check for robust security features, including SSL certificates, secure payment processing, and regular security updates.
- j. Support and Resources:** Consider the availability of customer support, community forums, tutorials, and documentation.

## **4 Creating Compelling Content**

To develop captivating content as MSME, you must first understand your target audience, including their wants, preferences, and pain areas. Define your brand voice, which should be consistent in all of your communications with your audience, and prioritise quality content over quantity, which should be conveyed through visually attractive photos, infographics, and engaging video. Use storytelling to engage the target audience and diversify content formats. Optimise for SEO, use images, offer solutions, and stimulate interaction.

To create compelling content for MSMEs, follow these steps:

1. Develop a content calendar to schedule posts.
2. Research industry trends using tools like Google Trends.
3. Create high-quality content with clear headlines, subheadings, and bullet points.
4. Incorporate keywords without keyword stuffing.
5. Include Calls to Action (CTAs) to encourage action.
6. Share content across social media platforms.
7. Monitor content performance using analytics tools.
8. Engage with your audience promptly.
9. Regularly update and repurpose content.
10. Collaborate with influencers and partners to create co-branded content.

By following these strategies, MSMEs can create content that attracts, engages, and converts their target audience, driving business growth.

## 5 Optimizing Profiles and Bios

Optimizing profiles and bios for MSMEs is crucial for establishing a professional online presence, improving discoverability, and engaging with potential customers effectively. Here's a detailed guide on how to optimize profiles and bios:

### Steps for Optimizing Profiles and Bios

#### a. Use a Professional Profile Picture and Cover Photo:

Choose a high-quality, professional profile picture that represents your brand. This could be a logo or a professional photo of the business owner. Select a cover photo that complements your profile picture and showcases your brand's identity. This could be a product image, your business location, or an engaging graphic.

**Examples of Optimised Profiles and Bios**

- **Instagram:**
  - **Profile Picture:** High-quality logo or business image.
  - **Bio:** "Handcrafted jewelry with a personal touch, Free shipping on orders over
  - **Link:** Linktree URL or website link for easy navigation to different sections.
- **LinkedIn:**
  - **Profile Picture:** Professional business logo or headshot.
  - **Headline:** "Innovative IT Solutions for Small Businesses | Custom Software Development | 24/7 Support"
  - **Summary:** "XYZ Solutions specializes in providing top-notch IT services for....."
- **Facebook:**
  - **Profile Picture:** Business logo.
  - **About Section:** "Welcome to ABC Bakery! We offer freshly baked goods made with love and the finest ingredients. Visit us for daily specials, catering

Box 1: Example of Optimised Profiles and Bios

#### b. Craft a Compelling Bio/Description:

Keep your bio concise and informative, highlighting your unique business. Incorporate relevant keywords for SEO. State your value proposition, why customers should choose you over competitors, and include a call to action for customer engagement.

#### c. Complete All Profile Sections:

Complete all business profile sections, including business name, address, phone number, email, website URL, and business hours, and provide detailed information about products, pricing, and promotions.

#### d. Use Consistent Branding:

Maintain consistent branding across all online platforms using the same logos, color schemes, and tone of voice, and update profiles regularly to reflect changes in branding, services, or contact information.

#### e. Optimize for SEO:

Utilize platform-specific keywords in your bio and descriptions and use relevant hashtags on platforms like Instagram and Twitter to boost profile visibility.

#### f. Link to Your Website and Other Social Media Profiles:

Utilize link shortening services like Bitly to maintain clean and trackable URLs for easy access to your business's website and social media profiles.

**g. Highlight Achievements and Credentials:**

Include awards, certifications, and achievements to boost credibility and attract customers. Utilize customer testimonials or reviews for persuasive social proof.



Video 3: HOW TO FIND YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE with Buyer Personas | Very Detailed

**h. Regularly Update Content:**

Maintain a constantly updated business profile with the latest information, including new products, services, promotions, and contact details, while sharing news and engaging content to keep your audience informed.

**i. Engage with Your Audience:**

Respond promptly to customer comments and feedback, and utilize interactive features like polls, Q&A sessions, and live videos to engage with your audience in real-time.

**j. Monitor Analytics:**

Utilize platforms' analytics tools to monitor profile performance, including views, follower growth, and engagement rates, and adjust your strategy accordingly to enhance your online presence.

## 6 Crafting the Target Persona

Crafting a target persona is crucial for MSMEs in Nigeria to understand their audience and develop tailored marketing strategies. This involves conducting market research, understanding demographics, psychographics, and behavioral traits, and creating a persona profile. Example of a target persona: 28-35 years old, female, urban, primarily in North Central Nigeria, with an income level of N500,000 – N1000,000 monthly. They believe family values.

The persona should be able to research products online before purchasing, use social media platforms like Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook for inspiration, and prioritize finding quality, sustainable products. They should also have a convenient way to discover and purchase high-quality products.

Using the persona, businesses can create content, marketing channels, product development, and customer service. This approach helps align products, services, and marketing efforts with the specific needs and preferences of their customers, leading to better engagement and higher conversion rates.

## 7 Building and Engaging Your Audience

To build and engage an online audience, MSMEs need to identify their target audience, create a strong brand identity, develop high-quality content, and leverage social media platforms. Ensure the website is user-friendly, mobile-friendly, and fast-loading, and optimize for search engines. Build an email list, offer lead magnets, and send regular newsletters, updates, and promotional offers. Collaborate with influencers and partners to reach new audiences and provide added value. Engage your audience by

responding to comments and messages, personalizing responses, encouraging user-generated content, using interactive content like polls and surveys, hosting live sessions and webinars, offering exclusive content and deals, and creating a community through online groups. Analyze and adjust your strategies based on data and feedback to enhance audience engagement. By understanding your audience, creating valuable content, and actively engaging with your community, you can develop strong relationships that drive long-term loyalty and business success.

## 8 Managing Online Reputation

Managing an online reputation is crucial for MSMEs as it directly impacts customer trust and business growth. To effectively manage your online reputation, follow these strategies:

1. Monitor your online presence using Google Alerts, social media monitoring tools, and review sites. Encourage positive reviews by asking satisfied customers to leave reviews and simplifying the process. Offer incentives for honest reviews.



*Video 4: How To Protect Your Online Reputation | Protective Online Reputation Management*

2. Respond promptly to reviews and feedback, maintaining professionalism and personalization. Address negative feedback by acknowledging the issue, providing solutions, or taking the conversation offline.
3. Create quality content through regular updates, SEO optimization, educational content, social proof, and engagement with your audience.
4. Develop a crisis management plan to address potential PR issues swiftly and effectively.
5. Implement reputation management by conducting a thorough audit of your online presence, developing a comprehensive strategy, implementing monitoring tools, training your team, creating guidelines for responding to feedback, and promoting positive content.
6. Regularly review and adjust your reputation management efforts to stay adaptable to changing online trends and customer expectations. By following these strategies, MSMEs can effectively manage their online reputation, build trust with their audience, and foster long-term business growth.

## 9 Monitoring and Traffic Analytics

MSMEs must effectively manage their online reputation to build customer trust and drive business growth. To do this, they should monitor their online presence, encourage positive reviews, and respond promptly to feedback. They should also create quality content through regular updates, SEO optimization, and community engagement. Implementing reputation management involves auditing their online presence, developing a comprehensive strategy, and monitoring online traffic analytics. Tools like Google Analytics, Google Search Console, and SEO tools can be used to track metrics.



Regularly reviewing and adjusting strategies is crucial to stay adaptable to changing trends and customer expectations.

## 10 Adapting to Evolving Trends

To adapt to evolving trends, MSMEs must stay informed, Embrace digital transformation, innovate, and maintain a customer-centric focus. This can be achieved through industry research, continuous learning, and analyzing market and consumer behavior. Utilizing data analytics tools and analyzing sales data can help predict future shifts. Embracing digital transformation involves adopting new technologies like e-commerce platforms, digital marketing tools, and automation tools. Innovating and diversifying products and services, offering personalized offerings, and forming strategic partnerships can help reach new markets. Enhancing customer engagement through interactive and personalized experiences, individualized communication, and omnichannel support can help address customer concerns. Investing in employee development through training programs, fostering innovation, and a flexible work environment can also help. Agile methodologies like Scrum or Kanban can make business processes more responsive to change. Regular reviews of strategy and compliance with new laws and standards can help MSMEs adapt to changes. Finally, monitoring regulatory changes and seeking legal advice can help MSMEs navigate changes and seize new opportunities for growth.

## 11 Demo of Appropriate Digital Tools

Tool	Description	Subscription
<a href="#">YouTube Channel</a>	You Tube is where you can create and group video for you target. You make video about your product or service and create your channel to put those video for the public to watch and learn more about your product or service. You can start earning from your you tube channel if you have 1000 subscribers and 4000 watch hours in the past years or 1000 subscribers and 10 million valid public views within past 90 days.	It's free but with premium of N1,1000 per month, you can avoid adverts.
<a href="#">SEO</a>	SEO stands for “search engine optimization.” In simple terms, SEO means the process of improving your website to increase its visibility in Google, Microsoft Bing, and other search engines whenever people search for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products you sell.</li> <li>• Services you provide.</li> </ul>	Free Plan: 1 website, track I competitor, on demand report and very few top keywords your rank for.  Pro Plan \$19 per month: 1 website track 5 competitors and additional \$5 per website and many more benefits

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on topics in which you have deep expertise and/or experience.</li> </ul>	
<a href="#">Messenger</a> ,	Messenger is a Facebook messaging app that can allow people chat. It's free once you have a Facebook account	It's free for all chats, voice or video call, but data cost applies when using it.
<a href="#">WhatsApp</a> ,	WhatsApp is an instant messaging and voice-over-IP service owned by technology conglomerate Meta. It allows users to send text, voice messages and video messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content	While it's free, except for data cost, WhatsApp charge N1,569.60/day to reach new potential customers
<a href="#">Discord</a>	Discord is an instant messaging and VoIP social platform which allows communication through voice calls, video calls, text messaging, and media. Communication can be private or take place in virtual communities called "servers"	There is a free version, but premium is 2.99 per month through Discord Nitro basic
<a href="#">Google my Business</a>	Allow small business list their business on Google with a free Business Profile (formerly Google My Business). Turn people who find you on Search and Maps into new customers.	Google my business free
<a href="#">Google my Business Verification</a>	To update your business name and other info on Google, you must first verify your business. When you verify your business, you can check that your info is correct and that you're the only one who can edit it.	The process is free
<a href="#">Ms CoPilot</a>	Microsoft Copilot is a generative artificial intelligence chatbot developed by Microsoft. Based on a large language model, it was launched in February 2023 as Microsoft's primary replacement for the discontinued Cortana	MS Copilot is not free. It cost \$30 per month for those with Microsoft 365 subscription
<a href="#">Traffic Analytics</a>	<p>Traffic Analytics is a market intelligence and competitive research tool that provides estimations of any website's desktop and mobile traffic. It can help you benchmark, evaluate a new market or niche, and even build a successful media buying strategy.</p> <p>The tool will help you see where a website's traffic comes from; how their audience engages with their site; what devices visitors prefer to use; how multiple websites' audiences overlap and much more. The market intelligence insights found in Traffic Analytics make it one of the most powerful tools on Semrush for market</p>	Semrush traffic analytics is not free

	researchers, marketing managers, business development teams, and sales teams	
<a href="#">for innovation - Visit GIZ's Lab for the Future</a>	Seeders partner with different organization to support entrepreneurship capacity building, impact investment, community & events execution, market insights, program management, innovation advisory and talent development across all tech-enabled industries and emerging market geographies. We work with a hands-on methodology, and are known for our lean and community-driven approach	Opportunity for different support to MSMEs
<a href="#">Snapchat</a>	Snapchat is an American multimedia instant messaging app and service developed by Snap Inc., originally Snapchat Inc. One of the principal features of Snapchat is that pictures and messages are usually only available for a short time before they become inaccessible to their recipients	Snapchat is free
<a href="#">Facebook</a>	Facebook is a <b>social networking site</b> that makes it easy for you to <b>connect and share</b> with family and friends online. There is personal facebook and facebook for business that MSMEs can use to reach their target audience	Facebook is free, but to reach a wider audience, you can pay to boost your post and to advertise
<a href="#">Tik Tok,</a>	What is TikTok? TikTok is a social media platform for creating, sharing and discovering short videos. The app is used by young people as an outlet to express themselves through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing, and allows users to create videos and share them across a community. MSMEs also use it to target their audience	Tik Tok is free
<a href="#">Instagram</a>	Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes photo and video sharing via its mobile app. It allow for taking of pictures, edit, and publish visual content for both followers and non-followers, as long as your account is public. Users can interact with your content via likes, comments, shares, and saves and it has become a big market place.	Instagram is free