Life, Love, Happiness & JSON-LD. A Personal Branding Success Story

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This personal branding success story started with me trying to help a reluctant friend who did NOT want to be helped! I didn't expect such fantastic results and because I was the first to be surprised, I'm sharing this hiking video with you. This is a great story about life, love, happiness and structured data. Schema markup, written in JSON-LD to be precise! But first, he's a DM that a connection sent me in the past 2 hours:

> I've heard from schema pros that **schema isn't that helpful for visibility gains**.
>
> It's only helpful for the SERP features they drive

I must tell you they are wrong on many levels! Sure, a good Schema markup strategy will directly impact CTR. But then a CTR increase will indirectly benefit visibility. I won't explain what happens when CTR diverges from Google's predictive analytics models but it is something very positive! So those Schema pros have a limited understanding of Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) and its positive consequences!

I just completed a multi-month real-world test and the direct visibility gains were incredible. Here's my hiking video about this story. This is the desktop high-resolution (4K) version.

VIDEO on https://semking.com/json-ld-personal-branding-success-story-website/

The vertical but lower resolution mobile version will be posted to my social profiles on Linkedin /organic-growth/ or X @semking in a few hours 🙂

For those who prefer to read text, here's the background story. My friend is a very senior popular figure who has regularly been interviewed by the most prestigious news outlets worldwide. Because he works for a major brand known around the world, he often speaks to the media. All the press mentions benefit the company that employs him. This makes sense: he is well-compensated. In exchange for selling his time and expertise, the employer benefits, and the brand's products/services are mentioned in the media, etc. It is a win-win.

His success story is cool but most likely not replicable!

Because the media will never quote most regular employees, I want to be clear: this story is fantastic but it cannot be reproduced easily by anyone.

Now, because I always try to think ahead, I had one of those crucial conversations with him. I told him that a Google employee I knew had been fired after XX years and that he lost

everything: access to his emails, badge and because he had no personal website, his only option was Linkedin to inform people who knew him of what had happened.

Better than nothing, but he was living on rented land. You see, this ex-Googler owned nothing. His identity was tied to the brand (Google/Alphabet) during his entire career, and now he was lost. At least, that's how I perceived the whole thing when he wrote to me. I'll never name-drop or reveal who it was, but yeah…

I shared this with my friend (but I still never mentioned the identity of the individual in question). I tried to explain that he could go through the same shocking experience at some point if he were "fired".

He argued. I argued. After insisting week after week, I won the fight and I managed to convince him to secure the best possible domain for what I had in mind. Here's what I told him and what I wanted to tell you. In one sentence: a personal website, especially because job security is unpredictable these days, is a security. In more sentences, here's the breakdown.

1. On your personal website, you control the narrative

Your personal website allows you to control the narrative about your professional life, skills, and achievements. But social media or company blogs have rules, character limits, pre-defined sections, design templates, etc. On your website, you have total control over everything: content, design, and how you present yourself to the world.

Your site gives you security and stability: if your Linkedin profile is deleted, blocked or if your company emails change, your personal site remains a constant link to your professional identity. You "own" your own virtual real estate, you can create your own email@you address, etc.

2. Your website is your portfolio

Your website is a platform to display your work, projects, or case studies. Things that you may not want to share on your social media profiles or through corporate channels because in a way, those channels belong to the brand/company hiring you while employed. When you get a salary, you cannot post anything you want without consequences.

Suppose you are a creative, a developer or a writer and you want to share personal or alternative projects. Is your professional profile the best place to do that? Of course not! On your website, you can highlight skills, projects and hobbies outside your current role, and show more of yourself. Those attributes can appeal to future employers or clients.

3. A Job Hunting Advantage

If you are employed and not actively looking for a job but passively considering proposals, you certainly would NOT want head hunters to email you directly on your corporate email.

Well, your website and associated email can be interesting in that context. And for recruiters, a personal site shows that you are independent, that you worked on your personal brand, and if on top of all this you are highly visible, it shows you know what you are doing!

4. You can be wild and free (like me!)

Personal branding isn't just about standing out, it's about being remembered for who you are. For instance if you watch my hiking video, you'll think I'm crazy, wrong, amazing, whatever. I don't really care but I'm sure you'll remember me for a little longer than if you had seen one more post on your social feed.

Whatever your conclusion is, positive or negative, you'll remember me as someone who isn't just copy-pasting AI-generated content on Linkedin. You'll know I'm a real person, a genuine content creator.

If you like me, you might even think I'm a "thought leader" (LOL, yes this is scary). But why? Easy answer: if you've ever tried to create content and film yourself, you already know how hard it is to speak alone in front of a camera in the security of your own home. It will be easy for you to extrapolate and try to imagine how hard it is for me to walk at high altitudes, speak in a language that I not speak natively, and explain things in a captivating way that keeps people engaged 😀

5. Organic visibility

Search engine visibility or presence in Large Language Models' training corpus/datasets isn't random. Publishing great content on your personal website could help you rank well for your name or skills. And it could help you appear in AI answers!

6. A personal website gives you psychological security

Knowing you have an online presence that you control will give you psychological security. If your employment status changes, if anything unexpected happens, you'll have a place to direct potential employers/clients to. If you are suddenly suspended or banned from your social accounts for good or bad reasons, people will still be able to contact you.

Conclusion: own your online presence

If you want the spicy details and how my strategy ended, take the time to watch my video. Initially, my friend ranked between the 30th and the 40th position in search engines for his exact first and last names.

Why? Because he had no great content, no backlinks, and no recognition since all his life, he worked for this large brand… but also because other popular and recognized figures share his name. My idea did not involve any backlinks or any traditional SEO approach. ENJOY! 😀