

Do I have to have an online presence to be successful?

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No. I believe with all my heart that you do not have to do anything you do not want to do, and there is still a path to success.

However, it might be harder or take longer to get there. And it will be increasingly difficult to manage your success long-term. If you truly want to build your business in the modern world, growing or sustaining it for the future, you're going to want to have your own slice of the internet.

Here's why:

A business run in-person only is limited to your personal circles of influence. There is only one physical you. You live in one physical town and state, have one set of coworkers and family members. You are limited to a certain number of nights/weekends in a month. You have real-life obstacles, responsibilities and parameters to work around. If you take a break, or can't hold events for a while, your business comes to a complete halt.

Online, your business runs 24/7. It never stops working for you. Pins that are years old keep bringing traffic to a blog. People access Facebook and Instagram all hours of the day and night. The library of tutorials you've created or the gallery of cards you've amassed only becomes larger. Your audience has grown from 12 to 120 or 1200. Your "reach" is limited only to what you're willing to spend to get your content in front of people's eyes.

Once things are rolling (which can take quite a while) orders come in when you're asleep, on vacation, at church, kids' games, etc. You work an online business during hours that suit you and actually DO set your own schedule, like direct sales companies always say we do :)

You still are only one person, working around the realities of your life. But instead of your efforts being seen and appreciated once, by a small audience, and then gone forever, they are positioned where they can be seen and used over and over again, by a virtually unlimited audience around the globe.

Don't be deceived—it's still WORK.

In fact, it can potentially be more work than it was previously. It's just different work. It's still you in the stamp room regularly, but it's more often you at the light box, on the editing software, typing away at a blog post. It's still managing orders, but instead of inputting them, receiving the shipment and driving around delivering them, it's emailing a thank you, mailing a thank you, and following up. It's still going out on a limb to distribute catalogs, but you're giving out five times as many by being willing to mail them across the country.

It's still a newsletter, it's just a weekly electronic one that signs up people by itself, year-round, instead of a paper one you mailed out once a quarter at great time and expense. It's still creating tutorials, it's just packaging them in a consumer-friendly, DIY PDF format people can do in their jammies at home without you there over their shoulder.

Most of all, it's still about connecting with the customer. People want to do business with people, not products. We're increasingly brand-loyal and willing to be a walking advertisement for companies and brands we enjoy. The more personal touches you can include, the better.

Don't make the mistake of thinking online equals cold and impersonal. I've found just the opposite. I have health boundaries for my time and family now, while enjoying dozens of new friendships with people I never would have met in real life. I still enjoy connecting with my "real life" customers, but having most of my business come in online means I can actually have a life, in person.

Time to Proceed:

I hope this article has given you some serious food for thought. I don't blame you one bit for hesitating on the cusp of something you know is going to take a time and money investment. Maybe you've tried one or two platforms and got discouraged by lack of visible progress.

If you're afraid, that's ok. Do it afraid. Trust those who've come out on the other side and already know it was worth it. Don't obsess over which platform is the best. Just pick one and go for it. Google anything you can't figure out. It's easier than it's ever been to get online and start connecting. The worst thing that can happen is you lose a little time and maybe a few dollars. The best thing that can happen is you discover a whole new world of friends and a way of business that truly works for you and your family.

If you're excited, great! Just don't get carried away and tackle too many new areas at once. Slow and steady wins the race. Learn one platform or practice, then move to the next. Fully utilize the features and advice available from each. Focus on building your brand consistently and creatively, to stick out from the crowd of voices shouting for attention online. Don't allow yourself to get discouraged until you've sincerely, consistently tried something for six months to one year.

If you're still feeling this is not for you, that's ok. Just realize you are always going to be working within a pretty small world, recreating your efforts over and over again. Don't resent people who've decided the future lies online. There is room for us all. And you can definitely still have success (perhaps defined differently) as an in-person only demonstrator, especially if your circles of influence are expansive. Keep an open mind and reevaluate if you feel like you're working too hard for too little payoff.

If you're feeling late to the party, you are. But that's not a good enough reason not to go to the party! And you're only a little bit late *to the existing platforms*. You're not late at all for the many incredible, unimaginable online platforms and programs that haven't even been dreamed up yet. It's never too late to teach an old doggie new tricks. The doggie just needs to be willing to work for the treat!

Final Thoughts:

If you see some big-time successful demo doing something online, don't automatically think you have to do it, too. She or he may be working just like you—seeking out new platforms, giving them a good trial before deciding if they are a good fit or not. If it turns out it's a path to success for many, it will come to the top repeatedly and you can investigate it for yourself. I've tried many an idea I decided wasn't worth sharing. What actually works will float to the surface and define itself, soon enough.