yurenji digital

ABOUT ME

REN TAKEMOTO · FOUNDER, YURENJI DIGITAL

Who I am, and why I do what I do.



This isn't a sales deck. It's the story behind the person you'd be working with — where I grew up, what shaped the way I think, what I care about outside of work, and why I decided to build a business around helping other people grow.

If you're deciding whether to trust someone with part of your business, I think you deserve to know who they actually are first. So here it is, as honestly as I can put it.

BACKGROUND

My roots

Born in Gifu, raised partly in South Carolina

I was born in Gifu Prefecture, Japan. When I was young, my family moved to South Carolina, and I spent seven years there — long enough that it stopped feeling like somewhere I was visiting and became somewhere I grew up.

At school I was surrounded by people from all over the world. I learned early that the same sentence can land completely differently depending on who hears it, and that most misunderstandings aren't about intelligence, they're about context.

Coming back to Japan, I saw both places with fresh eyes. I missed the directness I had grown used to in the U.S., and I appreciated, maybe for the first time, the care and attention to detail I had grown up around in Japan. I still carry both, and I think the best version of me lives somewhere in between.



BETWEEN TWO CULTURES

What growing up in two places taught me

Lessons I didn't know I was learning at the time

Listening before explaining. When you're the new kid who doesn't fully speak the language yet, you learn to watch and listen before you talk. I still do that. I'd rather understand someone's situation properly than rush to sound clever about it.

Being direct, kindly. America taught me that saying what you actually think is a form of respect. Japan taught me that how you say it matters just as much. I try to hold onto both — honest, but never careless with people.

Feeling at home with difference. Having friends from many backgrounds made me curious rather than cautious about people who see the world differently. That curiosity is probably the most useful thing I own.

Not belonging fully anywhere — and being fine with it. For a while that felt like a disadvantage. Now I think it's the reason I can sit comfortably between Japanese and English, between two ways of working, and translate not just words but intentions.

WHERE IT STARTED

I grew up on social media and content

It is where I learned how content and audiences really work

As a kid I posted sports clips and comedy videos online, mostly for fun, and slowly started building views on my own. Nobody taught me. I figured out titles, thumbnails and openings by getting them wrong over and over, watching what people actually clicked on and what made them leave.

I remember the strange feeling of making something I was really proud of and watching it reach almost nobody — and then, sometimes, posting something I'd barely thought about and seeing it take off.

Those moments made me curious in a way that never went away. Why did one video work and another didn't? What was the viewer actually looking for? That curiosity is still at the centre of how I think today.

It's a different education from reading about it. The lessons stuck because they cost me something, even when the only thing at stake was a kid's pride. I'm grateful for every video that flopped, because each one taught me something a textbook couldn't.

A JOB THAT TAUGHT ME A LOT

What guiding tours in Kyoto taught me

Small private groups, in English, with people who have one day

Alongside everything else, I work as a private tour guide in Kyoto. My guests have usually flown across the world, and they often have just one day in the city. That puts a kind of gentle pressure on every minute.

I learned very quickly that people don't remember facts — they remember how something made them feel, and whether it connected to something they already cared about. The same temple can be boring or unforgettable depending on how you tell its story.

Guiding also taught me to read a group in real time: when attention is drifting, when someone has a question they're too polite to ask, when to talk and when to simply let a place speak for itself.

Most of all, it taught me that the job isn't about me. A good day is measured by what the guest walks away with. I try to bring that same attitude to everything I do — the work is only good if it's genuinely good for the person on the other side.

LEARNING PROPERLY

Why I chose to study it formally

Instinct got me started. I wanted foundations as well.

Learning by trial and error taught me a lot, but it also left gaps. I wanted to understand the reasoning behind what I had been doing by feel, so I studied social media strategy, social media marketing, digital advertising and AI-powered marketing through formal courses and earned the certificates below.









HubSpot Academy: Social Media, Social Media Marketing II, Digital Advertising · Semrush Academy: Become an AI-Powered Marketer

None of these make anyone an expert on their own, and I don't treat them that way. What they gave me was a shared vocabulary and a set of principles to test my instincts against. I also registered my business properly in Osaka — I wanted what I build to be real and accountable from the very first day.

OUTSIDE OF WORK

What keeps me grounded

The things I come back to when I'm not working

Soccer

I've played since I was a kid. It's where I switch my head off, and where I learned that effort only counts if the team gets better because of it.

Nature

The beach, hiking trails — anywhere quiet and outside. Most of my clearest thinking happens away from a screen.

Anime

Neon Genesis Evangelion and Dragon Ball shaped how I think about story, character, struggle and growth more than almost anything else I watched growing up.

My cat

Honestly, the calmest member of the household, and the best reminder not to take myself too seriously.





SOMETHING I BELIEVE

Why trust matters more than ever to me

A thought I keep coming back to

We're entering a time when almost anything can be generated in seconds — articles, images, ads, even voices. I find that exciting, and I use AI tools every day. But it also makes me think a lot about what becomes rare when everything else becomes easy.

My answer is trust. When content is effortless to produce, people start looking for signs that there's a real person behind it — someone they can see, hear, question and check for themselves.

I think that's why real people explaining their thinking, patiently and honestly, will matter more over the next ten years, not less. It's the same thing I noticed as a tour guide: people connect with people, not with information.

This belief shapes how I want to work. I would rather build something slowly that people genuinely trust than something fast that they forget. That applies to my own work as much as anyone else's.

WHY I STARTED

Why I decided to build Yurenji Digital

The honest reasons, not the polished ones

Before starting, I looked seriously at more than ten different business ideas and wrote two of them up in full. I walked away from both. Each made sense on paper, but I had chosen them through analysis rather than because I could do the work well from the first day, and that felt dishonest to the people I'd be serving.

Content was different. It's the thing I've been doing, failing at and learning from since I was a kid. It's work I understand from the inside.

The deeper reason is simpler. I've seen how much it changes someone's life when their business or their creative work finally reaches the people it was meant for — and how discouraging it is when good work goes unseen.

I genuinely want to help people grow. Not in a slogan way, but in the sense that the best days I can imagine are the ones where someone I've worked with tells me their situation is better than it was. That's what I'm building toward.

WHO I BUILD WITH

Working with Yuji

My co-founder, Yuji Kozawa

I didn't want to build this alone, and I'm lucky that I don't have to. Yuji Kozawa is my co-founder, and he looks after sales and business development — which mostly means he's the first person people talk to.

What I value most about Yuji is his honesty. His job, as he sees it, isn't to close a deal at any cost; it's to figure out whether we're genuinely the right fit for someone, and to say so plainly when we're not.

We balance each other well. I tend to go deep into research and detail; he keeps us connected to real people and real conversations. Most of the decisions that shaped Yurenji Digital came out of long talks between the two of us.



HOW I TRY TO WORK

The standards I hold myself to

Not rules on a wall — habits I try to live by every day

Tell the truth, especially when it's inconvenient. If something isn't working, I would rather say it early than dress it up. Good news and bad news deserve the same honesty.

Understand before acting. I try to learn someone's situation properly before offering opinions. Advice given too early is usually just a guess.

Never fake a result. No shortcuts that make numbers look better than they are. If it isn't real, it doesn't count.

Say no when I'm not the right person. Turning down work that I can't do well is better for everyone than taking it and disappointing someone.

Own my mistakes. I'll get things wrong. When I do, I want to be the first to say it and the first to fix it.

Keep learning. The platforms, the tools and the people change constantly. The day I stop learning is the day I stop being useful.

STILL GROWING

What I'm still learning, and where I hope to go

I don't have it all figured out — and I'm comfortable saying so

I'm early in this journey. There are things I've only read about that I'll need to learn by doing, and conversations I'll need to get better at. I try to treat every project and every person as a chance to improve, and I actively ask for honest feedback.

I'm based in the Kansai region, and I split my time between building the business, guiding in Kyoto, and a lot of reading, watching and experimenting.

Long term, I hope to build something that lasts — a business people recommend to their friends because it genuinely helped them, not because it was loud.

I'd also love to be a bridge between Japan and the rest of the world: helping Japanese businesses and creators reach people abroad, and helping people abroad understand Japan the way I was lucky enough to experience it growing up between both.

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Thank you for reading.

I know this was longer than a typical introduction. I wrote it this way because I'd rather you know who I really am than have a polished picture of someone who doesn't exist.

If anything here resonated with you — or if you just want to talk — I'd genuinely be glad to hear from you.

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