

Digital Assets and the Importance of Including Them in Your Will

What Are Digital Assets?

Digital assets are any accounts, files, or resources that exist in electronic form and hold either **financial, sentimental, or practical value**. They can include:

- **Financial platforms:** cryptocurrency wallets, online investment accounts, or payment apps.
- **Personal accounts:** email, cloud storage (Google Drive, iCloud, Dropbox, OneDrive), or online banking.
- **Social media:** Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and others.
- **Creative and intellectual property:** websites, blogs, digital art, music, or NFTs.
- **Everyday accounts:** loyalty points, online shopping profiles, or subscription services (Netflix, Spotify).

Why Almost Everyone Has Digital Assets

Even if you don't think of yourself as "digital," you almost certainly have some form of digital assets:

- If you use **email**, you have communication data.
- If you use **online banking** or shop online, you have accounts linked to money.
- If you use **social media**, you've built a digital identity and a record of memories.
- If you've stored family photos in the **cloud**, you have sentimental digital assets.
- If you've dabbled in **cryptocurrency**, you have digital wealth that can disappear without proper planning.

In short, if you have a phone, computer, or online profile, you already have digital assets — and they need to be managed just like your physical assets.

Why Digital Assets Need Special Attention in Estate Planning

Unlike traditional assets, digital assets come with unique challenges:

- **Access:** Executors and heirs may not know your passwords or authentication methods.
- **Risk of loss:** Crypto wallets or online accounts may vanish from reach if credentials are misplaced.
- **Sentimental value:** Photos, videos, and personal writings could be lost forever if heirs cannot access them.

Digital Assets and the Importance of Including Them in Your Will

- **Legal grey areas:** South African law is still catching up with the digital space, making structured planning essential.

Verso Wealth's Recommended Approach

We believe a Will should remain **legally focused and efficient**. To achieve this, we recommend:

1. **The Will itself** should only contain **essential instructions** to transfer digital assets correctly, ensuring smooth reporting to the Master of the High Court.
2. A **separate Digital Assets Memorandum** should detail all accounts, wallets, and platforms, with guidance on how executors and heirs can access them. This keeps sensitive data safe while still ensuring nothing is lost.
3. Executors and heirs must understand their **critical role** in safeguarding and responsibly managing access credentials.

This approach ensures that your estate plan covers both traditional and digital assets, while minimising risks of confusion, loss, or delays.

The Role of Executors and Heirs

- The **executor** must identify and report all digital assets, secure them, and ensure proper transfer or closure.
- The **heirs** must cooperate and protect access details responsibly, confirming that assets are not overlooked.
- Together, they ensure your wishes are carried out, both for your physical estate and your online legacy.

Key Steps You Can Take Today

- **Make a list** of your digital assets.
- **Document where login details are stored securely** (password managers, sealed notes, safes).
- **Prepare a Digital Assets Memorandum** to complement your Will.
- **Review regularly** as accounts and platforms change.



Digital Assets and the Importance of Including Them in Your Will

Why It Matters

Your digital world is now part of your real-world legacy. Without proper planning, wealth can be lost, family memories erased, and estate administration delayed. With the right structure in place — a well-drafted Will and a clear Digital Assets Memorandum — you can protect your digital footprint for the benefit of your loved ones.

Almost everyone today has digital assets, whether they realise it or not. By addressing them in your estate plan, you ensure your financial value and digital memories are preserved, your heirs are empowered, and your legacy remains intact. Verso Wealth is here to guide you every step of the way.

Contact your Verso Wealth financial planner today or email Verso Wealth at info@verso-wealth.co.za to start the conversation.

Written by Deon van Vuuren CFP[®] - Fiduciary Specialist and Financial Planner at Verso Wealth