



The Ultimate Guide for Creating A Content Marketing Editorial Calendar



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INTRODUCTION

Content marketing is becoming more popular with businesses across all industries, categories and sizes.

The idea of ‘**thinking like a publisher**’ is no longer as foreign as it was just a short time ago. But there is a lot of work that goes into content marketing – from understanding your target audience and researching keywords, to publishing and distributing interesting content that attracts and retains customer interest.

As a result, having an editorial calendar to manage your content marketing process is absolutely essential. In fact next to creating **buyer personas** (or customer profiles), an editorial calendar is perhaps the only other key strategic exercise that significantly impacts your content marketing success.

DEFINITION

An editorial calendar is simply your **content publishing plan**. Some people call it a ‘Content Calendar’ but it’s all the same thing. It is a tool that keeps you and your team accountable so that you can **consistently** create content that is **valuable, helpful** and **relevant to your audience**.

The calendar itself doesn’t have to be complicated or restrictive. Remember that it is simply a ‘To-Do’ list that guides your method of creating interesting content for print, digital and the social web. Without it

you risk getting off-topic, and publishing content that is irrelevant or useless to your target audience.

PURPOSE

Why use an Editorial Calendar?

An editorial calendar allows you to plan ahead and maximize the audience-reach from your print media, digital media, and social channels.

Consider some of the **benefits** of using an editorial calendar:

- Lets you plan ahead
- Adds structure to your creativity
- Provides accountability
- Identifies distribution channel(s)
- Provides key-word focus
- Defines clear Call-to-Action (CTA)
- Establishes due dates for creating and publishing content
- Connects content to buyer personas

Despite these obvious benefits [most businesses don't use editorial calendars](#) (according to Joe Pulizzi, founder of Content Marketing Institute). No wonder they're not able to maximize the ROI opportunities achievable from their content.

For some industries an editorial calendar is very [useful in helping buyers through complex sales cycles](#). It is used to connect a specific buyer

persona to content that paints the *problem-solution scenario* for him, thus helping him to make a purchasing decision.



“An editorial calendar is the foundation for strategic, goal-oriented professional blogging”

Social media content also benefits from planning. Remember that you need to plan what kind of interesting and compelling stories you are going to share on Facebook, Google+, Twitter and so on. Such stories (or updates) can be sourced or inspired from your blog and should therefore be included in your editorial calendar.

BRAINSTORMING

There are different approaches to creating a content marketing editorial calendar. Some combine social posts (e.g. Facebook and Twitter updates) with long-form content, such as white papers, blog posts, podcasts etc. Others are simpler and just focus on blog posts.

Either way there are some important things you should think about before creating your organization’s editorial calendar.

“Figure out if you will deliver your content through multiple distribution channels such as print, your email newsletter, and social sites like Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn and Slideshare”

i. Posting Strategy

Decide how often you will publish content on your blog and social media channels. Be realistic and evaluate the resources that you have at your disposal. It is better to start out publishing two articles each week on your blog than overcommitting to publish five, only to run out of steam and abandon your blogging efforts down the road.

Also decide at this time what social media channels you will use. You want to make sure that you're leveraging the platforms that your target audience typically uses. So for example if your customers are not using Pinterest, then there's no need for you to invest time and energy creating content for that platform.

ii. Content Strategy

Decide what kind of content you will post at varying intervals. It's a good idea to mix-up your content types so that your audience will not become bored by the same old stuff.

Also be sure to [create content that matches the needs of specific buyer personas](#) based on the buying stage that they are in. Some content topics to think about are:

- 'How-to' articles (e.g. *"How to predict a heart attack"*)
- Case-studies (e.g. *"Why GE Healthcare's content strategy rocks!"*)

"As you think about your content strategy identify similar sites to yours that will inspire ideas for your own content."

- White papers (e.g. *“Achieving an Exceptional Patient & Family Experience of In-Hospital Care”*)
- List or Number Posts (e.g. *“5 Ways to make a cancer diagnosis easier to bear”*)
- Opinion-piece (*“Video games for health?”*)
- Compelling Audience Stories (e.g. *“How my mother fell through the cracks of the system and died”*)
- News-related/Trending Topics (*“What Democrats and Republicans can agree on about Medicare”*)

You may also want to consider highlighting certain themes in your content on specific seasons or important dates. For example around Thanksgiving and Christmas you could publish such articles as, *“Surviving Thanksgiving with Diabetes”* or *“Safety Tips: Holiday Drinking & Driving Don’t Mix.”*

iii. **Formatting Strategy**

Decide what your blog posts will look and sound like i.e. number of words, blog images, source of images, tone (e.g. conversational and relaxed, or informational and serious), overall message of your brand (e.g. after reading your content your audience should immediately know that you’re a sports doctor). You should also decide if, how and when you will use video, podcasts, info-graphics, webinars and other content formats.

If you have multiple authors posting on your blog and social media channels make sure that your **‘Style Guide’** is documented and accessible to everyone. Also think about including an **‘Author Resource Box’** at the end of your blog posts. This is simply the last paragraph of your blog article, which gives credit to the author.

When posting social media content e.g. Facebook or Twitter updates, it's a good idea for each contributor to sign off with their first name if you have several people on your content marketing team. It allows readers to know whom they're talking to and makes things more personal and friendly.

iv. Engagement Strategy

At this point in your brainstorming make a decision as to how you will respond to comments on your blog. Keep in mind that responding to comments tells your audience that you're **listening** to them. Engaging with your readers also gives the impression that your blog is a friendly and interesting space – this will **encourage others who are outside your community** to join in the conversation as well.

Decide too how you will respond to **negative comments** and critical feedback on your blog and social channels. Remember that deleting a comment just because the reader disagrees with you is not worthwhile. It is better to engage with them and try to win them over rather than upsetting them further by deleting their comment.

TOOLS

Once you've brainstormed the general direction that you want your content to take, it's time to think about documenting your editorial calendar. The tool or software that you choose is entirely up to you. If

“Don't get hang up on the type of tool to use.

The important thing is to document your publishing plan and to make sure that it is accessible to everyone on your team.”

you're old school then a physical day planner and pen will do just fine. But if you're more comfortable with digital solutions there is no shortage of these.

A simple Excel spreadsheet is a suitable tool to organize your thoughts for publishing content. Another great option is Google Drive (formerly known as Google Docs). However if you're a WordPress user and would like a more powerful 'bird's eye view' of your content then you may want to explore plug-ins such as [Stresslimit Editorial Calendar](#), [WordPress Editorial Calendar](#) and [Edit Flow](#). Your organization may also prefer to use a proprietary program.

END-RESULT

The end result of your planning process is the actual spreadsheet that illustrates your publishing schedule.

The image shows a Google Docs spreadsheet titled "Editorial Calendar Template". The spreadsheet has a header row with the following columns: Day, Suggested Topic, Content Type, Post Date, Theme, Author, Distribution Channel, Keywords, and Call to Action (CTA). The rows are color-coded: the header row is yellow, and the data rows are light green. A note in the "Theme" column of the first data row reads: "Consider themes, seasons or special days for thematic inspiration e.g. Flu season, heart".

Day	Suggested Topic	Content Type	Post Date	Theme	Author	Distribution Channel	Keywords	Call to Action (CTA)
				Consider themes, seasons or special days for thematic inspiration e.g. Flu season, heart				

Fig 1. Editorial Calendar Template (click image to view enlarged version)

Figure 1 illustrates an editorial calendar template tweaked for healthcare marketers. An active copy prepared by Patricia Redsicker is available on

Google Drive to help you get started with your publishing plan. [Click here](#) for immediate access (no registration required).

You may create as many columns on your editorial calendar as you like as long as it works for your organization and your team.

Columns should include information such as:

- Blog topic
- Content type (How-to article, podcast, List post, white paper etc.)
- Post date
- Author (In case of multiple authors)
- Distribution channel(s)
- Keywords
- Buyer persona
- Buying stage
- Call to Action
- Image source
- Category
- Links (both internal and external)

SHARE IT



Image Source: [Anicca Media](#)

Sharing the calendar is very important when there are multiple authors or contributors to your blog as it helps everyone see what others are working on. The benefits of this are:

- Duplication of content is eliminated
- To share perspectives or ideas that could add value to blog articles

Be sure to print it out and pin it on your bulletin board, or make it accessible to the whole team on Google Drive or whatever document-sharing software your organization uses.



“Don’t forget to share your editorial calendar with everyone on the team.”

CONCLUSION

Patricia Redsicker's *Ultimate Guide for Creating a Content Marketing Editorial Calendar* provides an overview for brainstorming and documenting your editorial calendar. While the guide has been tweaked to resonate with healthcare content marketers it can certainly be used by professional bloggers and business organizations from any industry.

As pointed out in the guide, the layout of your editorial calendar is not the key issue. What matters is having a documented and shared publishing plan that works for your organization and your team members. An editorial calendar should never be 'written in stone'. Adjustments and modifications are valuable. They indicate that the calendar is 'a live document' that continues to add value to your content marketing team.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide.



ABOUT PATRICIA REDSICKER

Patricia Redsicker is a content marketing strategist and professional blogger based in Baltimore, MD. She works with a variety of healthcare brands helping them to create compelling and insightful print and digital content that attracts and retains target audiences. Patricia is an expert resource for healthcare organizations in the Baltimore-DC region wanting to invest in high quality content marketing strategies. Specialties include content marketing strategy, brand story-telling, social media content, professional blogging, and ghostwriting. You may reach her via phone: 410-972-1807 or email: patricia@wordviewediting.com

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