



## The Elusive but Essential Editorial Calendar

By Kirsten DiChiappari

After my clients get the hang of social media and see the benefits of participating in social networking, the first two questions I am asked are:

- 1) How do I come up with content?
- 2) How do I keep track of everything?

Coming up with content will vary from business to business. You might have years' worth of information stored up in paper marketing materials, old website pages, hand written testimonials, awards, industry publications, etc. Or, you might need to set up some Google Alerts to search the web and send you relevant content. You might even need to reach into your pool of employees, customers and colleagues for good posts.

But keeping it all organized is another story entirely. Start with what you know and keep it simple! First, I'll ask you these three questions:

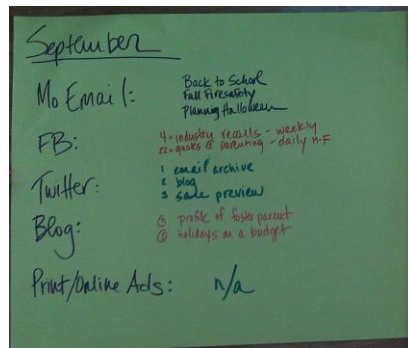
- 1) What are you **promoting**? Is it a person, a place, a product, or an event? Are you building your brand or blasting a special sale?
- 2) What vehicles of **communication** will you use? Have you taken ALL of your marketing into account? Don't forget that it is connected. Are you running print ads, sending out mass mailings, launching an email newsletter, or authoring a blog? Don't do things in a vacuum and create more work for yourself – as well as spend money randomly to market your business. Tie them all together so that no matter where a prospect finds you, they see the whole package!

- 3) What is the **frequency** you will communicate with your audience? Can you sustain daily posts or text messages? Are weekly articles or monthly

newsletters more your style? Or do you plan to just touch base when something happens? Remember that some things can be scheduled in advance, like emails, mobile messaging, blogs and posts to Facebook and Twitter. You can look productive and get in front of clients even when you are busy doing your job!

Once you have tackled the three questions, consider trying to lay out all of this information visually, in order to successfully manage your campaigns. Whether you are the type who prefers an Excel spreadsheet or a giant wall calendar and a Sharpie, knowing what needs to be done, when and how it will happen, and who is responsible are the keys.

MONTH	TOPIC	WHO	WHERE	COMPLETED?	NOTES
January	Post holiday blues	KD	Blog	Yes	
February	V-Day Sale	TS	Ad	Yes	Online
	V-Day Sale	TS	Postcard	No	Cost
	V-Day Sale	KD	FB	Yes	
March	Spring Again	KD	Blog		



Once you begin putting pen to paper, you will find that there are probably plenty of things built into your business plan ready for promoting, discussing or highlighting. Are there seasonal opportunities for advertising? Is your business or product consistent regardless of the time of year? Do you have to be more focused on clients and less on prospects at certain times, but you want to make sure that you are still out in the universe?

Be realistic with your time and energy – don't overcommit to weekly or daily posts if you already can't find the time to check your voice and emails! Know your limits so that you can set the right expectations with your audience – it is far better to tease more good information to come than to run out of things to say.

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*Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going. – Jim Rohn*

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Make sure that whatever kind of editorial calendar format you choose – paper or electronic – it is a **VISIBLE, TANGIBLE, FLEXIBLE** document. Setting up a plan and filing it in a drawer is unlikely to win you any new business. Making it something that you can't avoid, either because it is plastered on your office wall, or because you have set up a daily alarm that reminds you to review and update it, is really very important. In order for any marketing plan to become a natural part of your daily life, it has to happen enough times to become a habit.

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*"Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning." -- Thomas Alva Edison*

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Keep adding and perfecting your calendar. This is achieved through **REVIEW and REFLECTION**. Look back at last month, and if you have some notes, even last year. What worked and what didn't? What did your audience respond to and what fell on deaf ears? Determining how to spend your precious time and money is as much about accepting that your customers are in the driver's seat and you are merely a passenger on this journey as it is about anything else. It can be an unsettling and overwhelming thing to acknowledge that what brings you the most personal satisfaction may bring you the least amount of business and that the thing you enjoy the least is the one thing that really resonates with clients and prospects. Keep this in mind as you do next week, next month and next year's calendars.