

Designated Editor
Whitepaper Series



Content Continuity

editorial anatomy

7 vital steps to thriving content

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Web, blog, & social media content demand diligence

Web, blog, and social media content demand diligence; a planning tool such as an editorial calendar will help refine your content and perhaps uncover new opportunities.

While many big brands employ entire teams to create, manage, and maintain content across multiple platforms, few companies enjoy this luxury. But too many good companies are also risking their reputation and brand identity with haphazard content that – if you’re lucky – is an opportunity lost by funding the creation and sustainment of harmless noise. At worst, you could be igniting a crisis.

You know who you are Twitter schedulers whose only Tweets are “Hey, check out our latest #post.” Spare the Twittersphere, and stop throwing your money out the window!

Like all quality efforts, quality content requires preparation and planning. Following these 7 steps to create an editorial calendar will:

- Eliminate headaches
- End chasing down writers
- Forgo missed deadlines

Ultimately, a proper editorial calendar ensures content that’s meaningful to the people you actually want to engage with.

Always a wise investment to offer value and quality to your customers, no? Content is no different, and delivering schlock is like selling a defective product.

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■ Step 1

brain

Targeting: Use your ^ to refine your audiences

Seems so basic to identify your customer/prospect attributes, right?

But the big mistake here is answering “everyone who has a mobile phone,” or a “whatever.”

“Everyone” actually means “no one.”

The more specific you can be, the easier the subsequent editorial calendaring steps become, so don’t cheat. And there can be more than one answer.

For a law firm we’re working with, the answers are: Realtors and cross-selling to current clients. For another Designated Editor client: Boat owners in New England, and later beyond.

This is also a good time to consider strategic alliances and perhaps creating content designed specifically for those people who will refer you, etc.

Just as your brain reminds you of to-dos, your editorial calendar will ensure you’re not ignoring key targets.

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■ Step 2

true

Intent: Stay ^ to your target audience

Think of the heart in a physical and spiritual sense. Intent is the heart of your editorial calendar. Keeping your visitors' intentions and goals in mind, you'll create content that focuses on:

- What do these people care about?
- What will make them stop and read – and ideally remember you?
- What information do you have that they don't know but should (remember to meet question 1, do they care?)

Ask yourself: What types of information would be so valuable they would forward it to a colleague, mention it to a client. You want your clients to think of you as their ally.

Let's face it: We can't know everything, so we need to surround ourselves with experts in relevant areas so we can be the best we can. How can you be that ally?

This is the heart of your editorial calendar.

How can be an ally to your customers and prospects? This is the heart of your editorial calendar.

■ Step 3

terms

Keywords: Consider what [^] your target audience uses

Another brain function, think neurolinguistic programming meets SEO: Expand your keyword list to related terms and jargon your target audience uses that could be synonymous with your keywords. What better way to build better relationships than using the language your customers use?

If you don't know, take a friendly client to lunch and ask. More often than not, people are flattered when you show a true and deep interest in their expertise. **Warning: This could also lead to new opportunities and market niches**, which you'd then build into Step 2, the heart of your editorial calendar.

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■ Step 4

your Alerts & attention: Harness ^ senses

Consider this step in your editorial calendar the equivalent of your **5 senses**.

Now that you've defined who you're addressing and what they're interested in, you need to pay attention. Setting up alerts, such as Google Alerts, with the keywords and related terms you've identified, is a key component to editorial calendaring.

Don't forget to set up alerts for your actual target audiences. You'll want to know when key clients put out press releases announcing big industry awards. You'll also know when big news stories hit that may affect your clients – and be the first to let them know.

If you're watching and thinking about it, even minor reports or posts can feed your editorial calendar with trends and ideas you'd never think of.

Example: A post about wheelchair ramp safety and liability stemmed from a story in the UK where a nurse sued her patient's estate after sustaining an injury.

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■ Step 5

Social media mining & monitoring

Social media also falls into the **sensory** category of your editorial anatomy. Sniff out ideas by searching Twitter. Get a taste of LinkedIn & Facebook keywords and trends.

- What are your Facebook followers discussing?
- Which FB updates get the most response?
- Which LinkedIn groups are your key clients/target audiences part of?
- Who's posting questions on LinkedIn Answers? Can you help them out?
- What hashtags do clients/targets use on Twitter?
- Which of your clients are most influential on Twitter?
- What are they Tweeting about?

Social media monitoring: There are all sorts of tools out there (and will continue to be more), so I'm not going to recommend any. Ultimately, choosing monitoring tools comes down to budget. At Monitoring Social Media and Smart Content conferences, the semantic and monitoring experts underscore that tools are simply bots and don't satisfy the need for a human to interpret the data.

Be sure to cut and paste actual Tweets, posts, etc. into your idea file.

Our next step: the circulatory system of your editorial calendar.

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■ Step 6

Calendar and idea files: Collaborate & circulate

Like, **veins and capillaries**, your shared calendar and idea file will keep the editorial calendar and content ideas flowing to all the necessary parts of your organization.

Pick a calendar tool and keep it content-only. Be sure to note:

- Holidays
- Conferences
- Dates/events that you'd like to get a post out ahead of, or about

Example: With 21.9 million veterans in the U.S., Veterans Day is a key time for several of our clients.

Then set up a spreadsheet or other shared document that is divided into keywords. When a team member has an idea, or something comes up in an alert, someone needs to jump in there and write a paragraph. Be sure it's attributed, so you know who to go to gain more insights.

The trick is to make it easy and harmless. This is all about the carrot, so consider what your company can do to get everyone involved with generating ideas. Marketing is not the only birthplace of great content ideas. Sales has stories – as does operations – and don't forget customer service is likely a gold mine.

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■ Step 7

& Editorial roles [^] responsibilities

I like to think of this part of the editorial calendaring process as the **musculatory** system. Execution is everything, so go ahead and flex!

You'll need to evaluate your staff on these roles, meaning quality execution is part of job performance. Ask for volunteers – or hire someone – and then determine:

- Who contributes to the idea file?
- Who decides what types of content will be where?
- Who issues actual assignments and posts them in the calendar?
- Who's contributing, actually writing the content?
- Who's overseeing the process? Who will edit the content?

Just like knowing your keywords doesn't do anything if you're not creating content that includes them, an editorial calendar will not get your content posted. **Someone ultimately needs to be chiefly responsible for ensuring the posts get posted, edited, and written.** Once these roles are established and properly prioritized, like a respiratory system, it'll happen naturally.

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Editorial calendars: A ^{vital} system to generate quality content

Because meaningful engagement is so rare, thriving, quality content will distinguish you and your company.

But remember, it takes time for the good word to get out ... for things to sink in. So plan to give it 6 months or more of sustained, solid effort.

By the time you reach month 6, you'll have learned a lot, worked out numerous kinks, and uncovered new markets and audiences, which you'll then incorporate and evolve into a living, breathing tool: your editorial calendar.

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Former Boston Globe journalist, Suzanne McDonald launched Designated Editor to connect clients with core audiences via web content, blogs, social media, and mobile. Designated Editor's staff of journalists crafts content strategy and custom packages for a range of B2B and B2C clients.

www.designatededitor.com/de-blog provides twice-weekly updates on the latest in search marketing, social media, and emerging tactics, featuring insights from South by Southwest Interactive, OMMA Social, and SEO experts from SEMPO and SEMNE.

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