

## How To Create A Marketing Calendar

Creating a marketing calendar puts your brand, product or service front and centre so your marketing efforts reach your target market. It's a blueprint for helping you develop brand awareness, increase visibility and cement your position as a thought leader in your niche market.

A well developed marketing calendar will ultimately save time, money and frustration in your marketing efforts. A calendar will keep you on track, give you deadlines, and help you plan budgets, human resources and product development.



A good marketing calendar should incorporate all of your marketing activity and include detailed week by week activities for the upcoming quarter, highlights for the next two quarters and broad strokes for the final yearly quarter.

### Traditional Marketing Cycles

Start with a blank 12-month calendar. Every niche business or industry has a traditional selling cycle. If you're in the diet and health industry, your peak periods are January, April and August. If you're selling real estate, you know people like to relocate during the summer so their kids can start the new school year in their new school district. If you sell calendars, you know that retailers buy in the spring and sell in the fall. You know the rhythms of your particular industry. Begin by filling in the monthly themes you might use to promote your product. I'll use book publishing as an example to illustrate some known selling opportunities. Use these to jump start your creativity and fill in at least one marketing opportunity for each month.

- January: Diet, Health, Fitness, Organization, Resolutions
- February: Heart Health, Black History Month, Valentine's Day
- March: March Madness, St. Patrick's Day, Women's History Month, Garden Planning
- April: Women's Fiction, Diet, Earth Day, Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month,
- May: Cinco de Mayo, Spring Cleaning, Mother's Day
- June: Father's Day, Graduation, Beach Reading, Vacation Ideas
- July: Family Reunions, Canada Day, Outdoor Cooking and Entertaining

- August: Back to School, School Sports, Professional Sports
- September: Organization, Parenting, Educational Activities
- October: Breast Cancer Month, Thanksgiving, Men's Fiction, Politics, Activism, Fall Travel
- November: Movember, Pre-Holiday Gift Ideas and Deals
- December: Holiday promotions, end of year sales, big percentage off sales, pre-new year special offers

## Brand Specific Marketing Opportunities

Next, decide on at least one customized promotion for your product or service per quarter in the coming year. For example:

- **First Quarter:** Buy One, Get One at 50% Off
- **Second Quarter:** Bundled Offer – Get one free product with the purchase of any two products
- **Third Quarter:** Free Offer to Build Your Mailing List – create a downloadable free report, checklist, video or e-book of value to your ideal client and offer it to those who sign up for your mailing list.
- **Fourth Quarter:** Social Media Only Offer – create a special discount that is only visible on a custom app on your business Facebook page. Promote it through your email marketing and offline signage by saying “Like us on Facebook for a very special offer.”

## Optional Calendar Strategies

Fill in any additional promotions, software and hardware upgrades and investments, training to add new skills for yourself and your staff, live events you'd like to attend for networking purposes, live events where you'll showcase your products and any other special activities you know you'd like to incorporate.

### Calendar: The Execution

Every entry in your marketing calendar needs to be supported in order to go from idea to revenue generator. Assign dates to both the creation and the execution of each step in your marketing plan. When you support a marketing strategy with a full campaign cycle of consumer touch points, you create the impression that your brand or product is “being talked about everywhere,” and that's exactly what you want. For example, the following marketing activities can and in most cases should, be used to support each promotion:

**Advertising:** Where you advertise depends on where your ideal customer spends time. If your demographic is on social media, Facebook ads can be effective and inexpensive. If your customer is likely to search Google before making a purchase, Google keywords advertising will connect you and your customer at the exact moment they are looking to purchase what you offer. If your customer reads the newspaper, that's the way to go or if your best clients subscribe to your newsletter, then a targeted e-blast with a special offer can create sales. Think about how your customer is currently finding you and amplify. Your best advertising may be to pay a referral fee to your already satisfied clients to recommend your services to their friends.

**Publicity:** Publicity can include interviews on radio, TV and in print as well as guest blog posts on high traffic sites. It can also be useful to create press releases to post to press release sites where smaller media outlets scan new posts for story ideas. Publicity can be self generated through creating videos for YouTube, blog posts, and podcasts. Every piece of content you create and post means a bigger digital footprint for you, your brand and your products.

**Social Media Campaign:** Contests, giveaways, special discounts and informative posts all create excitement and visibility for your promotion. On social media remember that people are more social and less excited by a hard sell. Create promotions that are fun to share, excite people with their value or make people smile. They'll share more and increase your reach. Garnering likes, shares, retweets, pins, and other forms of approval and word of mouth are the holy grail of promotion. People are more likely to act on the recommendations of their friends.

**E-mail Marketing:** E-mail still returns good value for most businesses. Make sure your subject line is clear and conveys value and your offer is worth the time it takes your customer to read the email. Reward them for opening your email by making your promotion one that creates customer confidence and trust.

**Events:** Live events are the perfect time to showcase your product or service. If you can demonstrate or provide samples of a product or can answer questions about your services, the live event should be added to your marketing strategy. Live events include conventions, conferences, workshops, webinars, teleseminar, meet-ups or any other gathering where your ideal customer can be expected to attend.

**Point of Purchase Display:** If your product or service is purchased online, then your point of purchase is a website and specifically a sales page. If it's sold in a store or at the back of the room after your speech, then your point of purchase is a physical location. Developing a look and clear communications collateral to capture eyeballs at the point when your ideal customer first comes in contact with you and your brand is essential to a successful marketing strategy.

**Distribution:** Having enough of your product or having the bandwidth to deliver your services means planning ahead. Does your product need to ship? What are the printing and shipping costs? If your product is available in retail, are your retail partners aware of and ready for an uptick in demand during your promotional periods? Have you encouraged them to stock up during your ad campaigns? If your product is a service, would you be able to deliver if more people signed up than expected? Can you deliver if fewer people sign up than expected? These are questions you need to address before your launch so your marketing efforts are thwarted by a lack of product or ability to deliver.

**Supply Chain:** Make sure that your vendors or delivery systems are tested, ready for launch and that you have all the support you need to take advantage of the wave of demand generated by a well executed launch. For example, if you deliver a product virtually, are all your auto-responders written and ready to land in purchasers in-boxes thanking them for their purchase and directing them to the next action you want them to take? Is your webinar platform able to handle a larger than expect crowd or can you upgrade to a bigger "room" if your launch is highly successful? Is your opt-in or sales page funneling interested parties into your email list and tagging them with the campaign that caused them to join? Or if your product is at retail, is your supplier ready for the increased demand, ready and able to ship quickly or do they need something more from you? Is your merchant account able to take credit cards and are they aware of the increased activity you are expecting so that they won't freeze your account temporarily?

Going through the planning and development phase of creating a long term, and project by project, marketing calendar gives entrepreneurs a way to organize marketing activities and a blueprint for execution and accountability.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-create-a-marketing-calendar--business-strategy-2013-1>