

Are You Blogging By the Seat of Your Pants?



Top 10 Tips for Creating an Editorial Calendar

If magazine editors waited for inspiration or for free time, no magazine would ever get published. So how do they churn out high quality content, month after month?

By using an editorial calendar. And top bloggers have learned this secret too.

An editorial calendar is a plan for producing regular written or media content, at regular intervals (e.g. monthly) at a perfect pace. It leaves you with deadlines you can use as a roadmap. You won't have gaps in your postings and there's no chance for people to forget who you are or give up on your blog.

And it can help eliminate writer's block and reactivity – the sort that leaves you realizing you forgot that your readers and subscribers were expecting Part Three of your series... yesterday!

1. Use the Method that Works Best With Your Learning Style

An editorial calendar is only useful if you use it. And if you set up a physical calendar that doesn't work with your natural learning style, you're more likely to forget to use it... or even, ultimately, abandon it.

- a) If you are a **kinesthetic learner** who likes the hands-on approach, a paper calendar may be your best option. (Tip: You will most likely to be able to find plain desktop calendars with large enough slots to be useful in your local Dollar Store.)

Just be sure to put it in a place where you are likely to see it, rather than hiding it away in a desk.

- b) If you are an **aural learner**, make an audio recording of your upcoming schedule.
- c) If you are a **visual learner**, paper or digital will work – it's just a matter of preference
- d) If you are a **read/write learner**, a dated, chronological list format will probably work better for you than a graphic calendar format.

If you want to find out or confirm your ideal learning style, try one of the free online questionnaires or quizzes, such as the [VARK](#) model.

The VARK Questionnaire

How Do I Learn Best?

Questionnaire version 7.1 [More Information](#)

Choose the answer which best explains your preference and tick the box next to it
Please tick more than one if a single answer does not match your perception. Leave blank any question that does not apply.

A group of tourists wants to learn about the parks or wildlife reserves in your area. You would:

- take them to a park or wildlife reserve and walk with them.
- show them maps and internet pictures.
- talk about, or arrange a talk for them about parks or wildlife reserves.
- give them a book or pamphlets about the parks or wildlife reserves.

(No sign-up required for the basic assessment.)

2. Create and Coordinate Monthly and Annual Calendars

Many people find that two versions of their editorial schedule work best:

- A **monthly** calendar (e.g. WordPress Editorial Plugin)
- An **annual** calendar (manual or digital)

The reason for this? On your Annual Editorial Calendar, you can enter important posts to tie in with events scheduled far down the road; or with seasonal events.

Then, every month when you sit down to fill out your monthly Calendar, a quick visual check with the Annual Calendar will allow you to transpose these events onto your monthly Calendar before you input new posts for the current month, making sure nothing gets double-booked – or missed.

Month	Holidays/Events/Themes	Articles	Other
Jan			
Feb	Valentine's Day		• Valentine's Day • Valentines • Valentines • Valentines
Mar	St. Patrick's Day		• St. Patrick's Day • St. Patrick's Day • St. Patrick's Day
Apr			

(If you like the format in the example above, download it by going to [Angela B.me.](#))

3. Use the WordPress Editor Calendar Plugin

If you use WordPress, then the free [WordPress Editorial Calendar](#) plugin can be your best post-scheduling friend. So do install it.



While you're writing your posts or maintaining your blog, you have access to the Editorial Calendar at a click of the button. And you can log in and glance at your Calendar to see what you have to do today before writing a word.

4. Use MS Excel to Create Your Editorial Calendar

If you are more comfortable using Microsoft Excel or you are a text-based learner, you may find Excel the best tool for creating your Editorial Calendar.

Another reason for using MS Excel: If your business is highly fluid, and you know you are going to be tweaking and adjusting your Editorial Calendar perhaps more than the average blogger.

In fact, there are many MS Excel templates for doing precisely that. (You can download – without signing up; just right-click and save – a very nice template courtesy of [Vertical Measures](#).

Month	Title/Description	Status	Due Date	Publish Date	Type of Content	Producer/Designer	Editor	Target Audience	Attribution/Source
January	3 Technology Roundup for the New Year	In Progress	Wed, Jan 23	Wed, Jan 2	Blog Post	Bob S.	Jerry L.	Existing customers	Blog
	Using Cloud Services with Your Mobile Device	Assigned	Wed, Jan 23	Wed, Jan 2	Blog Post	Stephen P.	Jerry L.	New customers	Blog
	10 Apps, Changing Your Android Device	On Hold	Mon, Jan 23	Mon, Jan 14	Video	Nile S.	Watson T.	General Audience	YouTube channel
	The Best and Worst of 2013	Pending	Wed, Jan 23	Wed, Jan 14	Blog Post	TBC	Jerry L.	Power Users	Blog
	Top 5 Apps for Your iPhone or iPad	Pending	Wed, Jan 23	Wed, Jan 14	Blog Post	TBC	Jerry L.	General Audience, Under 30s, tech savvy	Blog
	The Dash of the PC: Mobile and Tablet Devices in 2013	In Progress	Thu, Jan 23	Thu, Jan 24	Infographic	Martin S. & Niall	Watson T.	General Audience	2013 Infocenter
	How to Unroot the Night Root	In Progress	Mon, Jan 23	Mon, Jan 28	Peer Guide	Frank C.	Jerry L.	Power Users	Article on website
	The Top 11 New Tablet Apps	Pending	Wed, Jan 23	Wed, Jan 23	Blog Post	TBC	Jerry L.	Power Users Under 30	Blog

5. Use Color Coding

If you are a visual or kinesthetic learner, try color coding the different cycles – then highlighting scheduled posts according to each cycle color.

This is also a fabulous trick if you have learning disabilities or any other form of cognitive impairment, as the visual stimulus and cueing helps you mentally “sort” and remember better.

You could also designate cycles by creating a Category field in your Calendar, along with corresponding two- or three-letter Category codes... or [combine](#) both categories and color coding. (Tip: Include a Legend at the top of your chart-style annual Calendar or beginning of your multi-page or monthly Calendar.)

Mar	"Six Ways to Win" St Patrick's Day	PL HOL	- Winning Mindset - Legend of St. P - Leprechaun post - Famous Pats
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6. Include Your Calls to Action in Your Editorial Calendar

Write down the call to action (CTA) for each item on your editorial calendar. Not only will this ensure you remember to include it in your blog post, but you will be able to more objectively judge the level of engagement your post is likely to create.

	POST TITLE	CTA
APRIL 23	"Thinking Like a Winner"	Download Tip Sheet

And yes: You could designate a color and highlight your CTAs too, if you wish

7. Learn to Think in Cycles

No matter what your learning style, one of the biggest mistakes you can make is to think in a linear fashion – I. E. A B C D E F G.

Your blog will feel fuller, richer, more organized and more enjoyable to your readers if you learn to schedule your blog in multiple cycles.

Take your Annual Editorial Calendar and go through using the following “cycles” (and

any others unique to your business), one after the other:



- **Seasonal cycle** (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter)
- **Holiday cycle** (Christmas, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, etc.)
- **Events cycle** (e.g. Annual Cycling Workshop, Victoria Day Race, etc.)
- **Contest cycle** (e.g. Summer Photo Challenge, Christmas Giveaway, etc.)
- **iscal Cycle** (e.g. . Your annual business quarter-years, from beginning to end)
- **Product Cycle** (All your scheduled, upcoming product launches)
- **Sales Cycles** (High and low buying trends – base these on previous sales metrics)

Learning to plan your editorial calendar in this fashion will really help ingrain your business' "big picture" in mind – and make much better business (and editorial) decisions.

8. Formalize Your Editorial Calendar Management Protocol

It really doesn't matter whether you alone update the calendar and [distribute information](#), or your authors or staff are allowed to cross things off and add them – the important thing is a clear understanding of the ground rules – and a clear chain of communication.



So decide on...

- a) Who will update the Editorial Calendar(s)
- b) How the Editorial Calendar(s) will be updated
- c) Who will notify the rest of the team of necessary changes or completions
- d) How they will do this

Making sure everyone understands the system is the best way to avoid scheduling conflicts or omissions.

9. Create Other Types of Editorial Calendar too

Consider adding social media coding – or a separate **Social Media Editorial Calendar**. If you don't coordinate your social media campaigns with your posts, you could be missing opportunities to allow each platform – blog and social media – to enhance the other.

Plan on the keywords you are going to use in your social media posts, as well as in your blog posts. Align these with ad campaigns, if you are planning any. (Yes. Have an **Advertising Editorial Calendar** too.)



You can download the Social Media and Blogging Editorial Calendar template illustrating this tip simply, without sign-up, from [Eydie's Office](#).

And if handling multiple versions of Editorial Calendar seems too overwhelming – start off with just one, for your blog.

10. Consider Publishing Your Upcoming Editorial Calendar

Not only will it inspire you to meet your own deadline (since there is nothing more lame than not following through to your readers) but you may attract quality submissions – leaving you with great content to use for your blog and the time to plan next month's editorial calendar in comfort.

You don't have to publish it in full Editorial Calendar format: You can simply make sure you create a section of upcoming stories (with Submission Guidelines) on your website or blog, just as many online magazines and publishing companies such as [Chicken Soup for the Soul](#) does.



But when all is said and done, remember that Editorial Calendars are simply tools: Only you can decide what type works best for you. And, of course, they'll be no use unless you use them!