

SCHEDULE YOUR ENGAGEMENTS

> You know the adage: “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” The sentiment rings true in so many areas of business management, and it extends into the digital space.

I speak to a lot of people who take a “ready, fire, aim” approach to their digital content strategy. (Digital content being your social media platforms, blogs and website.) That approach, however flawed, is understandable. Owners and managers have only so much time to devote to tweeting, posting and blogging. You have a business to run. When it comes to social media and online updates, you get an idea during the day, pull out your smartphone and let the characters (and pictures or videos) fly.

There’s nothing wrong with that approach as a component of your overall strategy (i.e., “post timely, personal updates”), but if your entire strategy is to post as the mood strikes, you’re likely missing out on real opportunities to build your brand and bring in more sales through your online outlets.

Get Organized

In today’s world of search engine optimization (SEO), micro-moments and social media, your digital content strategy is as integral to your brand as the sign in front of your shop. It’s how people find you online, build their trust in you as a brand, and ultimately decide whether or not you are worth their business.

Just as with every aspect of your business operation, your digital content strategy requires proper management and a rock-solid plan. A central part of that plan should be a **digital content calendar**, which will help you plan your content across your digital channels, stay organized and efficiently schedule messaging to optimize your digital experience.

Get Started

The first step in creating a calendar is straightforward: Take an afternoon (or several) to brainstorm important dates, including holidays, events, marketing campaigns, deadlines for the next several months — and anything else you can think of that you will want to promote, post or make note of. You want your list to be comprehensive,



so review sales records, holiday notes (“Christmas 2015: Sure wish we’d promoted those candle deals sooner!”) and engage your staff. (Each month in *Floral Management*, editors also include some ideas on calendar items, including social media posts. See p. 14.)

Once you see all of these elements in one place — ideally on a calendar that’s accessible to your team — you will begin to have a better grasp for how to approach them from a content perspective.

You can plan your digital content as far in advance as you wish, but I recommend planning on a monthly basis to ensure you give your channels the attention they deserve. It also saves you time down the road, as you only need to do this once a month. Remember, you don’t need to have original posts across platforms: The great photo you took on Instagram can easily be repurposed on Facebook, although you want to strive to make each outlet unique. (In other words, don’t repost every Insta pic on Facebook, and consider different copy for different social networks.)

Once you have a monthly snapshot of your content opportunities, start mapping out your social media posts. I like the free social media planning tool from HubSpot. It’s basically an Excel spreadsheet with tabs set up to help you organize the process. My favorite feature is the “content repository” — consider this a virtual bucket for all of your upcoming social media content, including links. Anytime you post a blog

article to your website, shoot video or just take a snapshot of a gorgeous design before it goes out for delivery, document its name, purpose, URL or digital location on the content repository. When it comes time to schedule your social media posts, you’ll know where all of your content is without having to hunt around on your website.

From there, you can map out the day, time and specific message for posts for each of your social media channels. You can do this for the entire week or month. You might consider including a column for engagement, so you can make a note of a post that was particularly popular — at the end of the month (or year), you might be able to suss out some patterns (people really like questions or photos, etc.).

As for doing the actual posting, I’d recommend using a social media manager, which allows you to preschedule posts. Hootsuite is my favorite, because it allows you to monitor and post to all of the main social channels, including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. It’s just shy of \$10 a month, but that will buy you the ability to streamline the effort, so whoever is doing the posting can “get it done” and move onto their other tasks. 🐦

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This is just scratching the surface!



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