

# How to Create a Social Media Content Calendar to Stay Organized and Achieve Goals

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Do you find yourself scrambling to find content to post on your business' social media every week? Are you quickly typing captions between customers and forgetting to include hashtags on your post? Do you wish you knew more about what type of content your followers are most interested in and when they are checking social media? All of this can be solved by creating a social media content calendar, an organized plan and schedule of what, when and where you'll be posting on social media.

Although creating a content calendar can take some work up front, it will save you time and effort down the road as you'll always have social media content ready to go. Planning out your content will help you minimize errors, post consistently, stick to your brand voice, avoid sloppy, rushed content, be more strategic, and measure results. All of these items will increase success on your social media platforms.

## Content Considerations

Before starting on your content calendar, you'll want to define two key aspects that will influence your content. First, who is your target audience? It can be helpful to think of an "avatar," or a fictional example of a person who is most representative of your target audience. You can even give them a name. What is their age and gender? Which social media platform do they use most? Which influencers are they following? Which brands are they following? Do they use social media to shop and make purchases? How do they spend their free time? What do they find entertaining? What are the pain points in their lives? The answers to these questions

will guide your social media content, as you should keep your avatar in mind every time you create a post. This way, when you're creating content, you can think, "What would make this person's life easier right now?" "What would this person find entertaining?" "When is this person most likely to have time to shop online?" and "Which influencers could share my content to get it in front of this person?"

Next, make sure you have a handle on your goals, as these will also affect content creation. What do you most want to accomplish through your social media efforts? You may even have different goals for different social channels. If your goal is to increase engagement, you'll want to create content that focuses on encouraging people to interact, comment and share. You may want to create content that is conversational or that sparks a conversation, asks a question, or relates to a particular trending topic. If your goal is to drive leads and sales, your content should use clear explanations

of value and enticing calls to action to promote clicks, website visits, newsletter sign-ups or form submissions. If you want to gauge customer feedback, you'll want to focus on asking for testimonials and reviews and perhaps even offering incentive to do so.

## Setting Up Your Calendar

Once you have a clear understanding of your audience and your goals, it's time to start your calendar. You can find a program or template online to create the calendar, however, if you're looking for something free and highly-customizable, a Google or Excel spreadsheet will also work just fine for the job. For each piece of social media content, your calendar should include the image, video or other creative elements to be used, the post caption, the call to action, any hashtags or links, the platform you'll be posting on, whether the post is organic or paid, the day and time for posting, a space to measure performance and metrics, and any relevant notes. When determining which platform to use,





keep in mind it's better to do an excellent job using a few platforms than to spread yourself thin across all platforms. Go back to your target audience avatar and think about which platforms they would be using to help you decide.

Here is an example of what might be included on your content calendar if you were introducing a new line of footwear in your store:

**Creative:** Video of unboxing and showcasing new products

**Caption:** Here's a sneak peek of our newest line, available in-store beginning January 16. Which pair are you excited to try on first?

**Call to action:** Sign up for our mailing list to get a special discount when this line hits the shelves.

**Hashtags:** #thisjustin #unboxing #shoes #fashion #shoesoftheday #shoelover #instashoes #streetstyle #shopsmall #smallbizsaturday

**Platform:** Facebook

**Links:** Link to mailing list sign up

**Organic vs. Paid:** Paid - \$100 budget

**Time:** January 8, 12:30 PM

**Notes:** Shoot video as soon as new product arrives on January 2

## Determining Important Dates and Scheduling

When creating your first content calendar, you'll want to work at least three to six months in advance. Start your calendar by adding relevant holidays, important dates for your business and community, and upcoming promotions. Be sure to give people more reasons to celebrate by adding in "extra" hol-

idays such as Dress Up Your Pet Day on January 14 (the perfect opportunity for a photo submission contest of pets sporting your footwear), Polka Dot Day on January 22, Measure Your Feet Day on January 23 (a great time to pro-

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mote complimentary fittings), Lost Sock Memorial Day on May 9, Flip Flop Day on June 10 and National Sneakers Day on October 9. Think about relevant events and buzz-worthy topics you can capitalize on, such as the Olympics or a sports season. Finding content to compliment these popular happenings will allow you to leverage trending hashtags and conversations to your advantage.

Once you have the important dates planned out, you'll want to identify times to share evergreen content, or more "generic" content that can be shared at any time that isn't related to particular timing or a specific happening. This content is always great to have "in the can" so that when something unexpected comes up (looking at you, COVID-19) or when you hit a busy time in your store, you'll have content ready to go when life gets crazy. You can always reschedule this type of content if something more timely comes up.

This brings us to another point – while your content calendar is a guide for all upcoming content, it is still an adaptable and flexible document. You can

adjust as needed to make sure your content is timely and relevant. For example, when the Milwaukee Bucks made it to the NBA finals, many local retailers adapted their content to be Bucks-focused, as everyone had the Bucks on

their minds. Retailers probably didn't have Bucks-themed content planned in advance, but those who were able to adapt and create content to go with the very buzz-worthy happening benefitted from a social media advantage.

## Get Creative with Content

So, you know what type of content you need – now it's time to create that content. Set a meeting, get your most creative team members together, and brainstorm. Some content ideas include: "Did You Know" content addressing common unknowns or misconceptions about your business, staff or customer spotlights, product spotlights, fun facts, statistics, lists, Q&A, testimonials, reviews, quotes, product demos, product reviews, charitable giving efforts, product comparisons, company news, new hire or staff news, industry news, discounts and promotions, giveaways, influencer partnerships, Main Street information, company history and more. Look at your past social posts to determine which were top performers and use this information to guide your con-

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tent going forward. In addition, it's smart to keep a tab on what competitors are posting (use this as research – it doesn't have to influence your ideas, but it's good to know what other businesses are doing).

Save yourself time and work by repurposing content across platforms. For example, you could write a blog post, and then create a few different Instagram and Facebook posts and Pinterest pins all pointing back to that post. Be sure to designate a safe space to store and organize all of your content. Whichever team members are helping with digital marketing should have

access and completely understand the organizational system so that hard work doesn't get lost.

There are numerous apps available to help with content creation, some free and others at various price points. A few useful apps with free options include:

- **Canva** – Choose from templates to create professional looking graphics for social media posts, flyers and more. (<https://www.canva.com/>)
- **Planoly** – Plan your Instagram grid so you can keep track of content and organize your grid in a way that is both strategic and aesthetic. (<https://www.planoly.com/>)
- **Campsite** – Create a “link tree” where one link links to several others so you aren't limited

by just one link (such as in the case of your Instagram bio). (<https://campsite.bio/>)

After planning your calendar and creating content (or assigning content creation deadlines to team members), you will be set up for smooth sailing so social media doesn't take a lot of time out of your daily routine. Keep track of metrics to get data on the best posting times, post frequency, and content to reach your audience and meet your goals. Learn from this data and adjust as you go along for the most successful social media strategy. The time spent creating your calendar up front will be worth it! ■

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