<u>How to Use Your Content Planning Calendar</u>

Creating a content plan helps you to keep a consistent flow of blogs and other updates to keep your website fresh, fulfil social media promotion needs and help you follow through with your content marketing strategy. The following steps will help you populate the content planning calendar for a whole year…

1. **Note all the common questions you get about your product or service.**
   The content you create should add value for your customers and website browsers. This builds trust and credibility with people considering your products and products like them. List all of the common and not so common questions you get asked about your business and answer each of them thoroughly in a blog. That's one blog per question.

2. **Check what people are asking the internet about your product or service**
   There are lots of tools out there you can use to find out what people are asking about virtually anything. My two favourites (and they have free options) are Answer the Public: https://answerthepublic.com/ and UberSuggest: https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/

   Make sure you change the location settings to cover where you are in the world, then tap in the keywords associated with your product or service. Note all of the questions (and any ideas you get from this search) as topics for your content calendar.

3. **Note Important Dates**
   There are international and national days to commemorate, raise awareness and celebrate almost everything! There are almost certainly going to be at least three days that are related to your business – The day you started trading, Small Business Saturday (the first Saturday in December if you're in the UK), and whatever day is associated with your business' product or service – for me, that's International Writer's Day on March the 3rd each year.

   Of course, there are major holiday observances like Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day too, and months for raising awareness. The 'there is a day for that website' will help you to find all the days that matter to your business. Note them down and create some content around the theme for the year that day is being celebrated. (https://www.thereisadayforthat.com/)

4. **Check out the competition**

Take a snoop around your competition's website and see if their blogs and web pages inspire any ideas for you. If there is a particularly good blog that would work well for your audience take note and write on the same topic, but do it better.

Better could mean with more up to date information, a more in-depth look at the subject they are addressing or just an easier to read, better laid out version. Don't copy anyone's content verbatim as that's plagiarism. If you are going to cover the same topics as your competitors, make sure your content is inspired but original, never copied.

Finally…
Place your topic ideas in the Content Planning Calendar with a working title in **column A**, provide a short description of what you intend to write should be given in **column B** – this will stop future you from wondering what you had in mind with the working title when they come to write in a few months.

Column C is for any articles or research links that will help you create the content you have in mind.

Column D is the date the piece will be published – aim for consistent publishing dates, every Tuesday for example. The blog section of your website should enable you to schedule the publication of blogs, so if you have more than one piece ready at a time, you can schedule the date and time you'd like it to go public.

Column E is for your directions about how you will share and aim to get the most exposure and engagement from your content.

Column F is a reminder for your internal links to your website – which pages will you link to throughout the content.

Columns G to N are for you to track the effectiveness of your content with the different social platforms or email newsletters you are active with.

Column O provides direction for the content you are creating. Who are you creating this for and what is it supposed to do?

Columns P to U allow you to track the effectiveness of your content across various platforms over three months. Having this level of detail over time will help you see patterns of what works well for your business and what isn't worth spending your time on. Collating these metrics in one place makes it easier for you to track the effectiveness of your efforts.