

CONTENT PLANNING TIMELINE

Start your new content year with less stress, better content and a budget surplus

You know what they say: If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail. And this time, they are right.

We advise starting to plan your content calendar about five months out. Why so early? Well, in a very unscientific study of people we've worked with, people who plan their content in advance have teams that are less stressed out, produce better work and even save on their budgets by strategically repurposing content. And in a surely more scientific survey of marketers across North America, the [Content Marketing Institute](#) found



that organizations that have a documented content plan in place are much more effective at content marketing than their unorganized counterparts.

If you want to hit the ground running for next year, we recommend starting the process in August. If that seems a little premature, remember that creating a good content plan takes time — and input from stakeholders. And like it or not, the holidays aren't far off. And oh, by the way, you also have to keep your daily tasks afloat during this time. So trust us when we say, August isn't too early at all.

▶ **HERE'S ONE WAY TO APPROACH YOUR
CONTENT PLANNING TIMELINE.**

AUGUST

These first few weeks are about analyzing data and gathering input. Begin to reflect on the content you've produced and the campaigns you've launched so far this year. What was successful in your eyes and why?

Then spend some time with members of your team and stakeholders to find out what's worked well and what's missed the mark. What would they like to see be done differently next year and how? The more feedback and buy-in you can get up front, the better.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Review current year's content and campaigns.
- Pull relevant data.
- Schedule meetings with team and stakeholders.

TIME: 

SEPTEMBER & EARLY OCTOBER

Spend September and part of October on the nuts and bolts of developing your plan and doing the [creative brainstorming](#). But jotting down "diabetes video" for your March content isn't enough. Content planning is about much more than assembling a content calendar.

Start by spelling out your content mission, goals and main messages. Then build a calendar that will fulfill your goals. And be specific. Include article descriptions, blog post topics and rough outlines for meatier pieces like white papers. Putting your all into this step will [save so much time and money](#) later on.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Schedule brainstorm sessions.
- Establish next year's content mission, goals and main messages.
- Determine key themes for your content calendar.
- Pull in outside help if needed.
- Build your content calendar.


TIME: 

LATE OCTOBER

Be sure to leave enough time in October to get sign-offs from stakeholders, executives, your editorial board — anyone who needs to weigh in. And don't forget to get approval on the budget, too! A robust content plan is great, but if you don't get the dollars to support it, you'll be back to square one.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Get signoffs on the content calendar.
- Make sure you have approval on a budget to accomplish your plan.

TIME: 

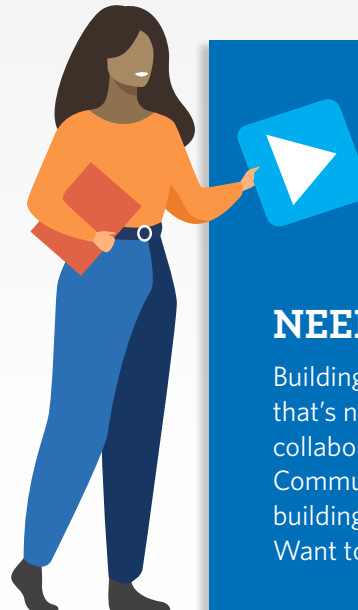
NOVEMBER

As soon as you flip that virtual calendar to November, it's time to start assigning your January content. There are just over eight weeks left in the year, but when you factor in the holidays, vacation time, gingerbread house contests, cookie exchanges, end-of-year lunches, etc., you're basically left with about a month of actual working days. And don't forget, you'll still need to keep your current year's content rolling if that's not yet complete.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Assign January content to your creative resources.

TIME: 



When you look at it this way, the new year isn't all that far away now, is it? So tell your inner procrastinator to get to work. You'll be so glad you did come January.

NEED HELP?

Building a content plan is hard work. So, if you're overwhelmed, that's normal. But it's also fun work — especially when you have collaborators who can help you get the job done. At Active Voice Communications, we love learning about organizations and building content plans. Learn more about our [planning process](#). Want to chat? Email us at info@theactivevoice.com.