

Marketing Communications Calendars for Branded Online Stores

In today's digital era, every online store needs to focus on content marketing. While content can be created and sourced, an important element is to communicate this to consumers, decision makers and influencers

For content targeted to consumers, the following prime segments can be looked at

- Existing active customers making 1 purchase every three months from your online store
- Existing inactive customers who have not made a purchase for the last 3 months
- Past customers who last transacted with you over 1 year back
- Prospective customers who have registered but not purchased from the online store
- Website visitors who left behind their contact information during a web chat or a phone call but never registered nor purchased from your store
- Friends and family of your customers

It is a good practice to create a marketing communications calendar for your online business

Create a Marketing Calendar

A Marketing Calendar is communication plan for marketers to set up with the objective of planning all the marketing events and communication well in advance.

Key Advantages of creating a Marketing Calendar

Time saving, better resource planning - Creating a marketing calendar in advance enables the organization to be aligned and to get better results from intra-organizational efforts

All the marketing activities are compiled at one place- Since marketers need to coordinate with different teams & departments to execute the campaigns, preparing a calendar helps them compile all the activities at one place & makes it easier for the teams to plan & coordinate

Keeping a track on important events- It's important for brand stores to see that no important events are missed. Events like Christmas, New Year, Black Friday etc. help the stores in increasing the sales and visitors to a great extent, therefore, ensuring that timely promotions are rolled out makes it even more critical

Deadlines are met- If an effective marketing calendar is put in place then it becomes easier for the marketers to meet deadlines & execute the events in a timely manner. It helps them plan and prepare campaigns beforehand

Control on Budget- Most of the branded stores fix separate budgets for marketing. So, it gives marketers' the freedom to create their plan as per the budgets allocated. This plan can then be further shared with all the marketing teams like SEO, Social Media, Affiliate, E-mail marketing

etc. & they spend the amount or optimize the campaigns based on the budgets allocated to them

Creating an effective marketing calendar

Marketing Calendar Tool/ Software- A marketing calendar can be prepared using Excel, Microsoft Outlook, Google calendar etc. It's imperative to use the application/ tool keeping in mind how dynamic you would want it to be. Shared document software or cloud based project management software is preferable so that tasks can be assigned and participants can collaborate and get work done within the organization and with external agencies and partners

Campaign Definition - This has to be evaluated if the campaigns would be occasion based, season based, product based, category based etc. Consumers begin searching for events like Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving etc. almost 15 days to a month ahead of time. Google Trend, which is a free tool, can actually be used to see when consumers begin searching for a particular event and how often a particular search-term is entered relative to the total search-volume

Objective Setting- It is imperative to first think through the objective of running each and every campaign i.e., if the motive is to target frequent buyers or to target new visitors, or to increase sales, or to promote a particular category or product etc. If there is a roadmap in front of you then achieving the target becomes easier

Selecting Marketing Mediums- This list should include each and every marketing medium which you plan to use such as affiliate marketing programs, email blasts, Alliances, pay per click, remarketing, social media updates, blogs, press releases, events etc.

Setting Goals & Budget- Monthly/ Quarterly goals should be added to the calendar so that a proper track of performance is kept and if required; campaign, target audience, budget etc. could be tweaked at the right time to get the right results

Identifying Roles & Responsibilities- Often, people from different teams are involved in getting a single event implemented & making it a success therefore, list items would have to be delegated to plan, audit, implement etc. Against every item, names of the people in-charge need to be mentioned. Also, one person would have to be the calendar in-charge to make desired amendments in the calendar & share it with everyone

Summary

Marketing Calendars, if planned and executed in an appropriate manner can actually prove to be very helpful in preventing marketing lapses as they build a consistency to your plan and help you spend wisely without making it extravagant.

However, at the initial stage there are no perfect calendars but once you have learnt the art of putting all the marketing pieces together effectively and efficiently in a calendar, it can yield big results

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