

# The **ULTIMATE** Guide to Creating a Content Calendar

*(plus a FREE Template)*

There's an old saying that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. You wouldn't build a house without a blueprint, and you shouldn't kick off a content marketing program without a content calendar.

A strategic and comprehensive content calendar will not only help you stay on track in terms of delivering assets on time, but it will help bring cohesion to all your marketing efforts by charting them in a visual organizer that allows you to see how each piece relates to the others and progressively advances your organization's goals.

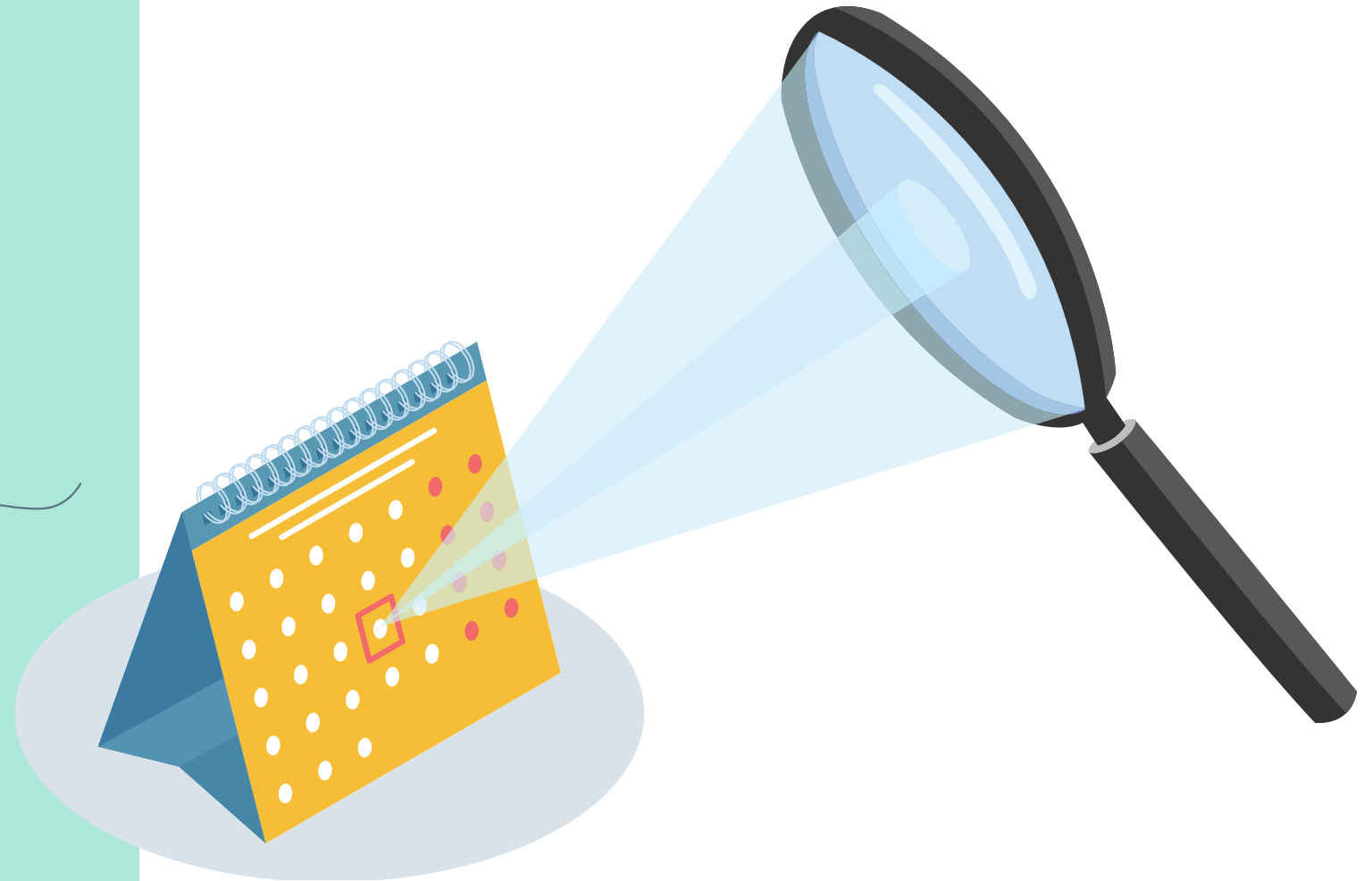
This guide will give you the tools to organize your thoughts and plans for the year and lay a foundation for a successful content marketing program.



## Determine Your Level of Detail

Content calendars can be as comprehensive or cursory as you like. You may wish to have different calendars with different levels of granularity depending on who will be viewing and using them. While your content producers may be invested in the details like the date and time of each social post, someone like your CMO or CEO will likely be best served by a calendar that maps out quarterly and monthly themes, events and engagements during which they may need to make an appearance or participate, and tentpole content pieces such as reports.

monday  
tuesday  
wednesday  
thursday  
friday





## Begin with the End in Mind

If your organization has marketing themes or campaigns that have already been set for each quarter or each month, then you've got a solid foundation. If not, a great place to start is by listing your organization's business goals. Beyond just increasing revenue, try to get specific about the ways your business can do that.

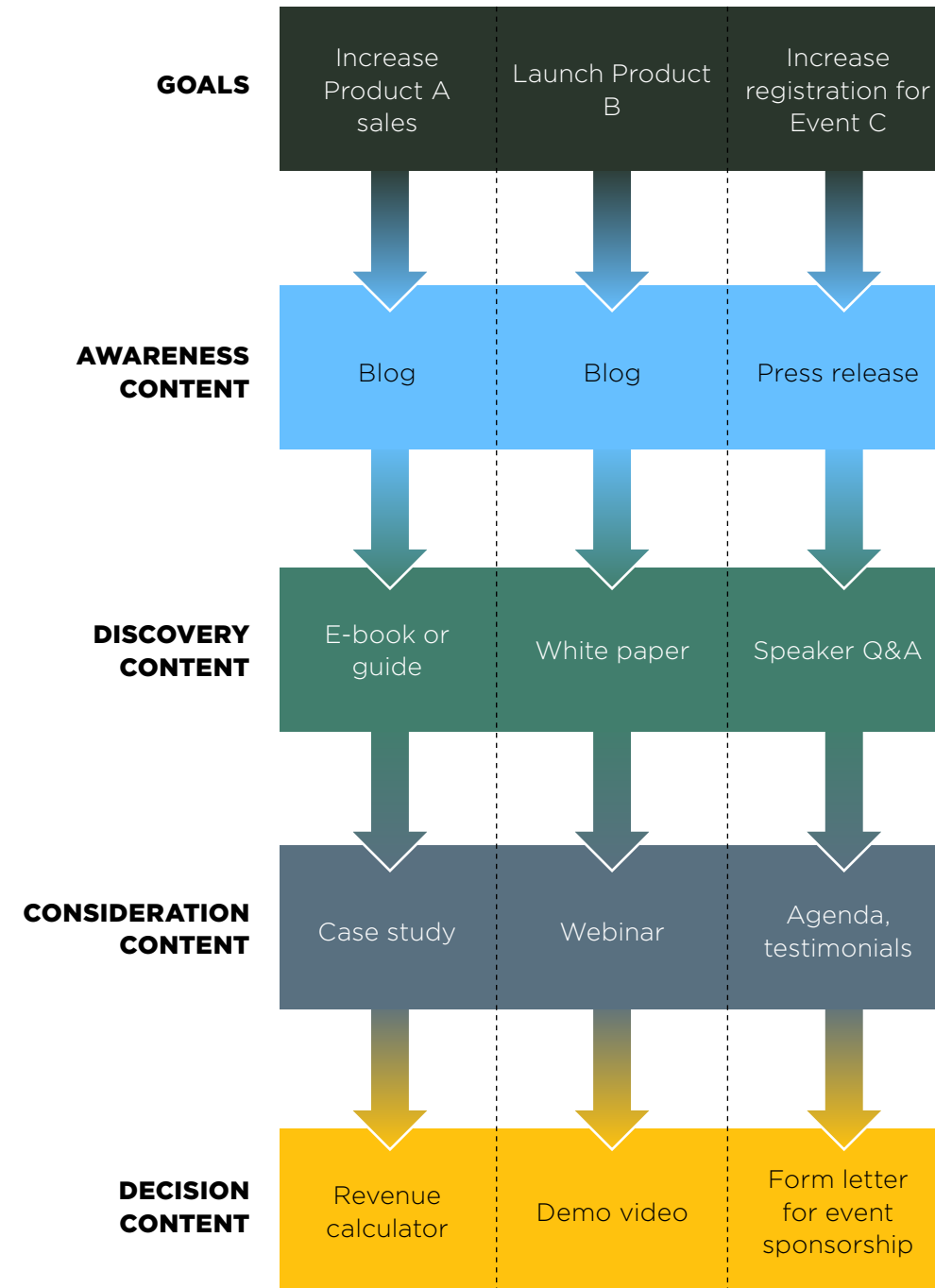
Will you attract more attendees to events (virtual or in-person)? Will you sell more of the same product or introduce new offerings? Are you trying to expand your membership base or do a better job retaining your current customers? Here's an example of the types of goals your business may want to achieve:

### GOALS

1. Increase sales of Product/Service A
2. Launch Product/Service B
3. Increase registration for Event C

## Map Your Content to the Buyer's Journey

Once you've identified your goals, you'll want to assign content to each stage of the buyer's journey associated with each goal. Rather than just using top, middle and bottom to describe your funnel, we suggest using awareness, discovery, consideration and decision. These words help put you in the shoes of your buyer and will make your content more responsive to their needs at each stage.



Depending on your resources, some of these formats and channels may be aspirational, or you may choose to outsource production.

Take inventory of the various channels and media types available to you and the role each of them plays in conveying your message. Some channels you might employ include:

**Social media**

Promote content created on your owned channels (podcast, blog, vlog, etc.); engage with your audience on topics that are important to them and your business.

**Blog**

Raise awareness about your brand, your products/services, your industry and the topics that matter to your audience.

**Podcast**

Generate interest in and affinity for your brand and your point of view on topics related to your industry, products and services.

**Webinar**

Provide high-value information to your audience that builds your reputation as a trusted source.

**Live event**

Engage with your prospects/customers and curate a high-value experience that educates and provides opportunities for connection.

**Print media**

Create a tangible artifact of your messaging that your audience can hang onto and engage with at their leisure.

**SMS**

Provide succinct information your audience can act on. Respect the personal nature of this channel and limit its use to avoid spamming.

**PR and earned media**

Share news about your brand, industry, products and services, leveraging the credibility of third parties to boost your notoriety.

**Video**

Use audio and visual storytelling to educate and inspire your audience



## Be Intentional About Intent and SEO

It's important not to give in to the impulse to make every piece of content an advertisement (or advertorial). Though some consumers begin their journey with high intent, you want a well-rounded content mix that serves consumers at all stages — even those who may not be actively looking to purchase but can be converted.

Intent refers to a consumer's willingness to make a purchase. In an offline setting, someone who is window shopping could be said to have low intent while someone who compares prices has high intent. Online, consumers often show their intent by the words they use in their searches. Below are some search phrases that consumers with varying levels of intent might use:

- **Low intent**

“what are flu symptoms?”

- **Medium intent**

“when should I see a doctor for flu symptoms?”

- **High intent**

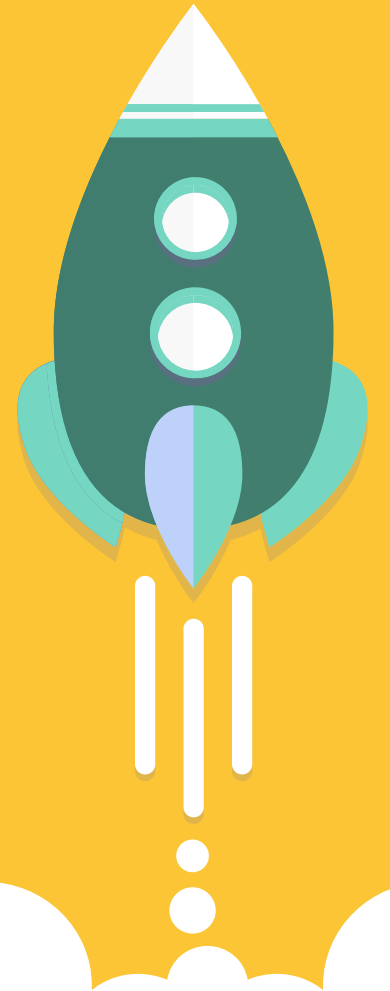
“doctors near me open now”

Consumers may not even be aware that they have begun their buyer's journey, even though they have begun to be influenced by the content they've consumed. The goal of your content, especially in the early stages of the buyer's journey, is to be the first, most convincing influence on topics related to your business.

You may want multiple pieces of content for each stage, especially to build awareness.

Because most consumers conduct their buyer's journey online with search engines, optimizing your content for discoverability online will increase the return you will get on your content investment and broaden your reach. To do this, you'll want to frame your content around questions that a consumer might ask.

For example, if one of your business goals is to increase sales of an online learning program, you may write a blog with tips for people interested in making a career transition, as well as a blog for people wondering how to keep pace with their industry.



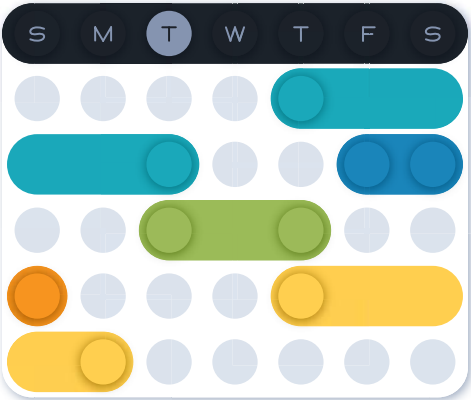
## Save the Dates

Now that you’ve determined the content pieces you need to advance your organization’s goals, you’ll want to set a posting or delivery date for each. Understand that tentpole pieces such as webinars, white papers and e-books — pieces you’ll likely put behind a form — will take the most time to create. These should be meaty, high-value pieces that your prospects will be willing to give their contact information for. Aim to publish/produce one of these pieces per quarter.

Blogging should be a more frequent practice: no less than once a month, but ideally once a week. Keep in mind that your tentpole content can be fodder for your blog (this is a great way to self-promote the tentpole pieces, too). You can write a blog around excerpts from your e-book or promote on-demand webinar views by writing a wrap-up of the original presentation.

Your podcast, if you have one, should have a new episode at least monthly. Your episodes don’t have to be an hour long. Maybe shorter weekly episodes are a better fit for your content. Pick a cadence that is manageable. You don’t want to have a hiatus because the pace of production becomes too demanding.

Here’s a list of channels and formats with a baseline frequency to get you started. Modify based on your available resources, audience preferences and available technology:



Blog	Biweekly/2x per month at least
Podcast	Monthly
LinkedIn	1x per day
Facebook	5x per week
Twitter	3x per day
Instagram	1x per day
Tentpole Content (white paper, guide)	At least 1x per quarter
Newsletter	Monthly
Direct Mail	Quarterly
Trade Show/Conference	As available
Webinar	2x per year

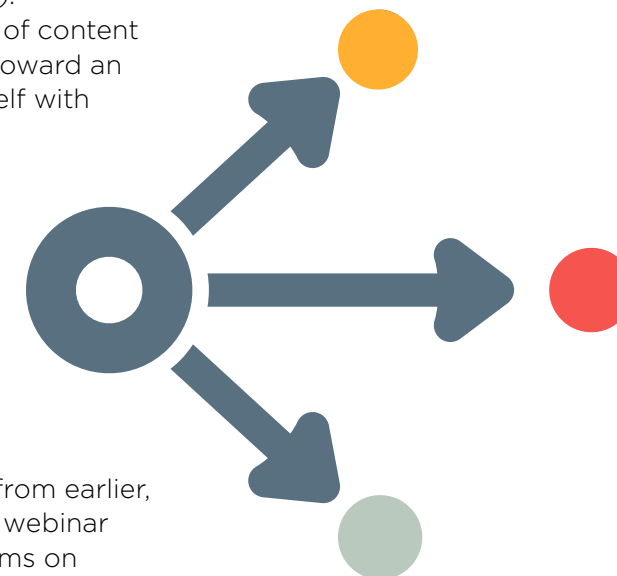




## Create a Distribution Engine

Each piece of content you create should give your audience an opportunity to take action, whether it be to subscribe to your newsletter, download an asset, register for an event or request a consultation. Be sure to include calls to action (CTAs) with every piece of content. These should be contextually relevant (i.e., encourage blog readers to get more insights in their inbox by subscribing to your newsletter).

Once you begin to assign each piece of content with the job of nudging your audience toward an action, your calendar will start filling itself with supporting pieces.



Using our example of online education from earlier, let's say that you are planning to host a webinar on vetting continuing education programs on August 25. To support registration, you'll want to begin promoting at least a week in advance. If you're blogging weekly, you can plan a post for August 18 about what to look for in a high-quality continuing education program. At the end of the blog post, encourage readers to learn more by registering for your upcoming webinar. Drive traffic to that blog post and your registration page on your social channels. Include the post and an invite to the webinar in your enewsletter.



## Start Creating

Once you have your calendar set, it's time to start creating. Your calendar will always be a bit fluid. You'll want to stay flexible, so you can respond to time-sensitive topics and organizational priorities. Get creative with your content, and challenge yourself to try to new formats.



### Ready to get planning?

Download our FREE 12-month content calendar template [here](#).

