



82 Creating a communication calendar

What is a communication calendar?

A communication calendar is your plan for all the individual marketing touches you intend to make over the course of any 12-month period. It is a complete schedule of events and activities. A communication calendar is your record of all the different ways which you are going to stay in touch with your customers. It could be through email marketing, e-zine, newsletter, information updates, telecommunication, website promotions, Christmas or other special day cards, invitations to social events, free talks, direct mail promotions and more.

Why is this important?

Keeping in touch with your customers is about keeping your customers in the loop. It is about reminding them that you care about their interests and needs. Having a calendar that plots each keep-in-touch activity will make planning easier. You can analyse the flow of touches from the customers' point of view and ask yourself important questions like

- Is it enough?
- Is it too much?
- Are the activities the right ones, in the right order?

Your challenge

Your challenge will be to create a calendar that offers exactly the right amount of touches. The right amount of communication is subtle, as it must neither be too much nor too little. Your customers will not want to be bombarded with information from you. In previous chapters each communication method will have been covered in more depth. Know what you want to achieve and then design your calendar of activities to suit.

How to create a communication calendar

Each part of your plan should ultimately fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Each element can support and link to each other.

Your electronic newsletter can be used to deliver useful information as well as to

promote an aspect of your business that your customer will find of value. The promotion that you choose can then be linked to your website and links provided in the newsletter to encourage traffic. Telephone calls to update customer records can be linked to invitations to events or customer needs reviews. Direct mail and email updates can be run concurrently, enabling one to support the other.

You may choose to have different communication calendars for your existing customers and for those prospects who have opted in to receive communication from you, but have not yet become customers. You may also have special communication calendars for individual clients that you are nurturing.

Sample calendar

This is a sample calendar that could be used for existing customers and elements of it for new prospects.

January	Happy New Year Newsletter – sale – website promotion
February	Newsletter – new products update
March	Newsletter – special Easter promotion – website promotion
April	Newsletter – telecommunication customer record update
May	Newsletter – annual customer review – website promotion
June	Newsletter – conference email/direct mail
July	Newsletter – special hospitality event – website promotion
August	Newsletter – conference email/direct mail
September	Newsletter – telecommunication – website promotion
October	Newsletter – conference – customer satisfaction survey
November	Newsletter – Christmas gift ideas email – website promotion
December	Newsletter – Christmas card – Christmas party

YOUR OWN CALENDAR – YOUR SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ What do you want your communication calendar to achieve?
- ▶ What methods are you going to use to touch your customers over a 12-month period?
- ▶ How are you going to ensure each touch supports and links with the other?
- ▶ What are you going to use each touch for?
- ▶ Make a plan and check out what it looks like.
- ▶ Consider what you are planning from the customers’ point of view.

- ▶ Get some feedback from your team.
- ▶ How are you going to implement this plan?

How to use this information

A communication calendar is an excellent way to ensure you plan and deliver your keep-in-touch marketing on time and on schedule. Study this information and use it to motivate yourself to create your own. Measure the results it brings you over the 12-month period.

Think communication calendar and get constant attention