

Nonprofit  
Communications  
Report

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MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NONPROFITS

## PLANNING PROCEDURES

# Steps for Building an Editorial Calendar

It takes more than great writing to make a nonprofit blog a success. While a talented wordsmith is certainly an asset, a reliable calendar may be even more important.

“More than anything, an editorial calendar offers a way to stay organized and ensures that you share your message consistently while also providing value to the audience,” says Amy Steinmann, principal for Halbrooke & Elm Strategic Communications, a firm that lends support for small businesses and nonprofits. A well-maintained calendar is as much an accountability tool as it is a guideline for presenting clear and useful content to the people who need it most.

Steinmann, who has guided healthcare organizations in their blogging efforts, offers steps for building an editorial calendar:

- 1. Start planning six months in advance.** This time frame offers enough lead time for blog writers to prepare their topics but also leaves room to pivot if necessary. “The COVID pandemic was a situation in which a shift in content was necessary for many organizations,” Steinmann shares. “Even in instances where you have to change course, you may find that there is still highly relevant content. It’s nice to be able to look at your six-month plan and see what you can pull or update to fit your needs.”
- 2. Choose topics that reflect organizational goals and audience needs.** “For example, healthcare organizations that

want to raise awareness of services may consider sharing patient stories, profiles of doctors and staff or health tips related to awareness months,” Steinmann says. “Often organizations and associations that support awareness events can provide content and social media posts which can be used as a starting point.”

- 3. Publish high-quality content consistently.** While a weekly posting schedule is ideal, this should only be pursued if it can be maintained long-term. “If you’re only publishing once a month, it’s especially critical to make sure every post is well-written and engaging,” Steinmann adds.
- 4. Experiment with different formats.** “The traditional text blog is great, but try sharing the occasional two-minute video and include the transcript, or present an audio interview accompanied by a blurb with the highlights,” Steinmann suggests. “Doing so will keep your blog dynamic and interesting.”
- 5. Reference metrics.** “Check in quarterly to see how many views, comments and shares your posts have garnered,” Steinmann says. “It won’t give you a ton of data, but it can help you shape your content plan for the next six months.” ♦

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## MEDIA RELATIONS

# Know What’s Key to Story Placement

**Q** *In your experience, what are the most important tactics you’ve applied to get articles placed in various media publications?*

“Communications professionals today understand that we are functioning in unprecedented times as the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted so many of our institutions. As you strategize to amplify your messaging, during the pandemic and beyond, your ability to navigate challenges and opportunities to effectively communicate your organization’s vision is critical.

“It is essential to research, focus and pitch media opportunities and distribute news in a tailored and targeted manner to multiple media channels. Measure results to enable strategic goal setting. Use a variety of touch points to engage regularly with producers, reporters and influencers to reach key audiences, promote your mission and initiatives and position your organization as innovative and forward looking. Monitor media coverage, breaking news and trending stories as well as social sentiment so timely events propel you on a successful path to promote your leadership

and expertise and generate top-tier media engagement.”

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“When sending your pitch, it’s important to get right to the point. It’s also important to be relevant. You have to have a solid understanding of what is going on in your industry and how those topics are being covered. Make sure you are adding value, and if you can supply new data or information from a new and exciting angle, that can really help with getting placements too.

“Try pitching stories with a heartwarming or localized perspective. For example, our team here at Smith & Harroff created a series of press releases for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) ‘Yes I Can Awards.’ By reaching out to local news outlets and spotlighting the accomplishments of exceptional local children in different parts of the country, we were able to help the CEC gain a broad range of national exposure for their efforts and programs.” ♦

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