

What Your Firm Should Have in Common with *Sports Illustrated*

Using a content calendar for website and social media postings makes it easier to bring in the types of clients you want.

About the time this *Wisconsin Lawyer* arrives in your mailbox, the swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated* will be hitting newsstands. As it does every year, *Vogue's* "September issue" will highlight the fashion trends for the coming year. In December, *Time* will name its "Person of the Year." These signature issues are planned many months – often as many as 6-12 months – in advance of publication. That planning is key to their success.

These hotly anticipated publications are carefully crafted to attract attention and maximize sales. While your firm's website might never draw as many views as one of these publications, you can and should consider creating your own content calendar to help amp up your marketing and boost your bottom line.

The Benefits of Creating a Content Calendar for Your Firm

Consistently posting fresh content is key to improving your firm's search engine results and connecting with potential clients.

Google,¹ Bing,² and other search engines protect specific details about their algorithms, but it is clear that websites that do well without spending a substantial amount of money on keyword advertising stand out by consistently posting quality content. This generally means making substantive changes to a website at least once per month. The most efficient way to do this is by having a blog on the site and adding new posts each month.

Another advantage of blog posts is that they can be repurposed as social media content. Each social media platform has its own algorithm that boosts engaging posts and highlights users who frequently contribute to the site. Packaging blogs as social media posts can engage readers,

highlight your knowledge, and prompt potential clients to contact you.

Creating a content calendar can help ensure that law firm employees are consistently posting blogs on the firm's website and updating social media accounts. Rather than scrambling for content, you will have a rough idea of what you want to discuss for the next few months. You might be able write posts ahead of time and schedule them to post automatically.

The Ethics Rules Favor Planned Content

Planning the type of content you want to post, and linking it to your marketing goals, can prevent you from posting something that violates ethics rules or is otherwise unprofessional.

BY EMILY STEVER KELCHEN

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The Rules of Professional Conduct prohibit attorneys from communicating with judges, juries, and represented parties.³ Giving legal advice, claiming expertise, and posting untrue or unsafe information are also big no-nos.⁴ And you don't want to create the impression that you are entering into an attorney-client relationship with people reading your online content.

If you face a complaint about your marketing, you can check your content calendar to remind yourself why a particular piece was posted. The calendar can also serve as evidence that a post was not targeted at a specific individual – such as a judge – but was part of a broader plan to highlight your work in a particular area or knowledge of a certain topic.

How to Create a Content Calendar

Content calendars don't have to be elaborate to be effective. Start with a blank page or spreadsheet and then jot down topics you want to blog about or post about. Don't avoid being creative, but keep in mind that you are posting online to generate business.

Think about the topics your "ideal" clients might search for online. Plan posts filled with information you think those clients want to know by

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anticipating the questions they ask during intake interviews, such as how long it will take to get relief or what various legal terms mean in plain English. Or put yourself in their positions and imagine what they might type into a search engine and plan posts accordingly.

For example, a potential client who is considering divorce might want to know if Wisconsin courts award alimony. In Wisconsin, alimony is referred to as "maintenance," and you could write an entire blog post about the meaning of the term and when a court will order that maintenance be paid.

Next, think about regularly occurring events around which you could plan posts. You could write about something you learned during a continuing legal education presentation at the State Bar of Wisconsin's Annual Meeting & Conference, reminisce about law school graduation, blog about the annual data released by a governmental agency, highlight your firm's annual contribution to a worthy nonprofit organization, or wax poetic about Major League Baseball's antitrust exemption as the playoffs begin. Focus on events that will resonate with your ideal clients or have a strong connection with a practice area you want to highlight.

If you already have a robust website or blog, review your analytics to find out which pages or posts are performing the best. This is a good indication of the information people are looking to you for. If your top content is not geared toward your ideal clients, you should prioritize creating new pieces that will appeal to them.

Now, take the list of potential topics you have generated and plug in some potential publication dates. Match topics to specific months when doing so makes sense. If you want to write about tax law, post in the months when people are doing their tax planning. Plan to write about marital property agreements? You need to get that up before wedding season (but keep in mind that people get married year-round).

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Consider external publications (that is, ones not affiliated with your law firm or organization) that might be interested in publishing your work as well. If you want to write an article for *Wisconsin Lawyer*, talk to the editorial staff about the publication timeline when you make your pitch. If your article is published, you can then republish it on your website with proper attribution.

Also consider your firm's workflow. If there is a month each year that is always slow, consider writing about topics that could bring in more work at that time. Or you might want to allot some of that time for writing blog posts and then publish them throughout the year.

If there are gaps in your content calendar, be prepared to look for relevant cases, news clips, or other hot topics to blog about. Share information that will highlight your ability to solve the problems your preferred clients are facing.

Firm But Flexible

Although it is possible to plan everything you want to write for an entire year, it is okay to adjust the plan as the year unfolds. The best-laid plans are often thwarted by courts and policymakers when they modify laws or take actions that bring new topics to the forefront.

You should adjust the content calendar if content is not bringing in clients. Regardless of website or social media analytics, if content is not leading to more clients, something is amiss. Consider adjusting your tone or the topics you write about until you find something that works.

Plan Your Work, Work Your Plan

A well-considered content calendar is an important tool for lawyers who hope to convert website visitors into clients. Being more thoughtful about what you are going to post can help you comply with attorney advertising rules and make it easier to generate posts

and consistently get them up on your website.

Over time, you should be able to track the results of your effort by looking at your website and social media traffic and mapping that on to data gathered during client intake interviews.

You probably won't end up with as many readers as *Sports Illustrated*, *Vogue*, or *Time*, but you will have something in common with these publishing giants. **WL**

ENDNOTES

¹How Results Are Automatically Generated, www.google.com/search/howsearch-works/how-search-works/ranking-results/ (last visited Apr. 11, 2023).

²How Bing Delivers Search Results, <https://support.microsoft.com/en-au/topic/how-bing-delivers-search-results-d18fc815-ac37-4723-bc67-9229ce3eb6a3> (last visited Apr. 11, 2023).

³SCR 20:3.5, SCR 20:4.2, SCR 20:4.3.

⁴SCR 20:7.1, SCR 20:7.4. **WL**



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