

# PLASTIC SURGERY PRACTICE

## Put It in Writing: Five Reasons You Really Need a Marketing Calendar to Succeed

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Every marketer needs a detailed, structured 12-month marketing calendar. This document is the road map to marketing prowess—that is, if you adhere to it. It is not the same as your marketing plan; rather, it’s an integral part of it. Your marketing strategy should outline your goals, and your plan is all about how you are going to meet them. You can’t have one without the other.

So why do you need a calendar?

### **1) To Keep You Organized**

An annual marketing calendar organizes the well-thought-out tactics that will help you launch marketing programs, campaigns, and initiatives throughout the year in a way that forces you to stay on track. It will assist you in figuring out what you need to do, how to do it, and when to do it for maximum impact.

Ideally, if you follow the marketing calendar you created (optimally, to start January 1 for the year), you will be using every opportunity to market your practice without any lapses.

Start by breaking down the year by quarter, then by month, and then by week. Address all of the main marketing activities that will take place during each period, and as many of the smaller projects you are planning as possible. Spell out general marketing programs first, then add more meat by itemizing individual promotions or events when the information has been finalized. The more specific, the better. Set up reminders for all deadlines for insertion orders, art requirements, and e-blasts to stay on top of every activity.

For example, you may be bringing in a new piece of capital equipment, which could be your focus for the quarter. Then, you can next decide how to promote it on a month-by-month basis. The first month may include an introduction to your VIP clientele with a private reception, and an e-blast to notify your entire patient base that you have something new to offer.

For month two, you may want to run an ad campaign in your local newspaper that includes an online component. For the third month of the quarter, promote the new treatment with a geotargeted Facebook and Twitter ad campaign.

Within your calendar, you may also want to delegate a separate daily social media calendar for blogs and all content that coordinates with the main marketing calendar.

## **2) To Stay on Track**

A marketing calendar crystallizes your focus and allows you to analyze the investment and value of your marketing tactics. It also lets you avoid panicking when the phone stops ringing or consults slow. By fleshing out a calendar, you can plan in advance for the slower months.

Aesthetic medicine is not always cyclical. However, certain months are naturally bound to be busier than others. For example, the fourth quarter is prime time for procedures and noninvasive treatments because of the holidays, family gatherings, and special events.

January is a notoriously quiet month. The summer can be slow, but August can be active if your practice attracts students, teachers, and therapists who tend to have time off at the end of summer. If you practice in a market like South Florida or Arizona, the winter season is when the population swells from the arrival of “snowbirds.”

When drafting a marketing calendar, keep in mind what your best months are and when your practice is at risk of slowing down, and act accordingly. Take account of who your customers and competitors are and all the factors that could affect your business, including social, legal, economic, and political issues.

## **3) To Enable Clear Decision-Making**

You are in a better position to make smarter marketing decisions once you have determined the critical success factors that affect your business, and decided on the resources you have to deal with them.

Are your services really meeting your customers’ needs, or should you be adding new treatments? Is your pricing strategy right for your market? Do you need extra staff, or should you outsource marketing or social media services? Do you need a public relations or advertising campaign?

These and other questions that arise will be easier to navigate in the context of a marketing calendar. Whereas a strategic marketing plan integrates long-term planning (3 to 5 years) and short-term implementation, a marketing calendar is a short-term plan that itemizes the immediate day-to-day implementation of your tactics.

Your annual marketing calendar should dovetail with your long-term strategic marketing plan to ensure that every action you take is geared toward achieving your strategic goals.

A marketing calendar will also help prevent reactive decisions. There will be occasions when you want to change course, but your calendar will keep you on track. You will know what you already have set up for the months and weeks to come, so you are less likely to make rash decisions in response to market developments or external pressures from vendors.

#### **4) To Control the Budget**

You may include a marketing budget in the same document as the calendar, or keep a separate spreadsheet. Try to make it easy to see which events and strategies were productive and on target, and delivered the best return on investment. This will help you in the future.

Revisit your marketing calendar template each year, and revise it accordingly. Your next marketing calendar should reflect changes and additions based on the previous year's experience.

For example, if you spent \$2,500 per month on Facebook advertising and tracked positive results, you may want to increase that budget going forward. But if you ran an ad series in a local magazine that didn't generate enough new patients to pay for itself, you can redirect that budget to something else.

#### **5) Because Shift Happens**

Your marketing calendar should be a working document, meaning that you should plan to make changes and additions along the way. New issues may arise at any time that may call for a deviation in strategy. A regular review of your marketing calendar will reveal what you have followed and completed, show you what worked or is working, and help shore up holes. How frequently you revisit your calendar will depend on the nature of your practice and the extent to which the factors affecting it change.

For example, if a new treatment gains US Food and Drug Administration clearance and you plan to offer it to your patients, it may call for a change in strategy. You may decide to take budget from one quarter and move it up or push it to the next month to increase your spend on promoting the new treatment.

Similarly, if a new clinic opens in your neighborhood that offers a similar menu of procedures at discounted prices, you may need to beef up your efforts to re-establish your expertise among your existing patients.

#### **What Goes Into A Marketing Calendar?**

- All Holidays
- Elections
- Local/Regional Events (Health Fair, Benefits, Parades, etc)
- National Events
- Award Shows (Emmys, Oscars, etc)
- Disease-Specific Dates/Months (Melanoma Monday, Breast Cancer Awareness Month)
- Social Media Events (Throwback Thursday (#TBT), Fitness Friday #FF, Man Crush Monday #MCM)
- Speaking Engagements
- "Hallmark Holidays" (National Lipstick Day)

Download a marketing calendar sample here: <http://bit.ly/1IRb06Q>

Your calendar should be your bible. Refer to it whenever you have a marketing decision to make or a contract to sign for advertising, public relations, website upgrades, or other Internet marketing needs.

The best time to address your marketing calendar is at the end of the year for the beginning of a new year. Plan to sit down and reflect on what worked for you and what didn't, and what you want to do differently next year. For best results, make it a team effort, and ask your vendors for input.



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