



## EPISODE 250

# How to Create a Three-Month Content Calendar (The Step-by-Step Process)

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**AMY PORTERFIELD:** Well hello there. Welcome back to another episode of The Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast. I'm your host, Amy Porterfield. I'm thrilled that you're here today.

You probably know that I just launched my brand new program, Digital Course Academy. Shout out to all of my brand new amazing new students. You guys are already doing big things and asking great questions and getting in there and doing the work so I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

I had to give a little shout out to my DCA members. But, if you were to ask any of them what I'm a stickler at the most, what I talk about over and over again, beyond course creation, beyond list building, beyond webinars, the one thing I talk about the most (any of my students can tell you this) is the fact that you must be creating consistent content on a weekly basis. It's a must.

The reason I'm such a stickler about this is that in order to have a thriving online business you must create content to help you attract your tribe. This is how they are initially going to find you.

When I talk about consistent content it might be a weekly blog, a weekly podcast, a weekly video show. Whatever it is your content needs to get out there and it needs to get out there consistently.

A few years back my own business took a significant turn for the better when I stopped only creating content in the empty cracks of time I had left at the end of the day.

I would have a podcast maybe one week and then things would get busy and I wouldn't podcast for weeks. Then I would scramble to get another one together. There was no regularity at all.



Since I was not showing up for my audience regularly they were not a loyal tribe. They weren't waiting to hear from me. They weren't tuning in on a regular basis. I was not top of mind with them.

When I began creating consistent weekly content my email list grew quickly. In turn I saw a significant increase in my overall revenue. I'm telling you right now, there is a direct correlation between the quality of your content, the growth of your email list, and your bank account. A direct correlation.

In my case, like I said, it was a weekly podcast episode. For you it might be your weekly blog or you might be doing weekly Facebook Lives and then downloading them from Facebook and uploading them and embedding them onto your own blog so that it lives on your website. That's important.

We can't be building our businesses on social media. We need to take that content and make sure it's on our website or blog as well.

Creating consistent content on a weekly basis is not always easy and it takes time. In fact, I'm recording this episode on a Saturday. I'm not a big advocate for weekend work although you do you. You work whenever you want to work and how you work best.

But, I'm doing this on a Saturday because I batch my podcasts. I do six in a row. We had just gotten done launching and things were really busy and I didn't want to get behind. And, I want to make sure that rain or shine my podcast comes out.

I've made a commitment. I am a podcaster who podcasts weekly. That's my identity. Because of that sometimes it means I'm podcasting on the weekend. So, it's important for me that I'm committed to this. I want you to have that level of commitment as well.

It will pay dividends in the success of your business. That, I know for sure. So the question is: How do you make sure this weekly content actually gets done?

You've got to come up with the topics your audience will like. There's likely research involved and you've got to make time to sit down and actually create the content. Oh yeah, and then life happens and throws your schedule off.

That's when your content creation takes a backseat. And, if you're being honest, that's when your business takes a backseat to everything else that's popping up in your life.



It happens. It's not good. It's not the way you want to run your business but it is normal.

I want to put it out there but then I want you to plan for it and say, "I know it's normal. I know it happens. But I'm going to have a plan so that I can make sure I pivot quickly and get back on track."

How do you make that happen? You plan for it. And that's exactly what we're going to do in this episode.

Did you know that 60% of marketers don't have any sort of content plan? 60%! That's a whole lot of people with big ideas, big dreams and goals. But they are missing a key factor to their ultimate success, a plan for their content creation.

If you're listening to me today and you're in that 60% there is no judgment, my friend, because the tides are about to change and you're going to be stepping over to the other side of that 60%. Deal? Alright, I'm waiting for you over here. Come on.

Today I'm going to show you a simple system to make this entire content planning and creation process so much easier. You're going to learn how to create a three-month content calendar and fill it up with topic ideas all at once and in advance.

By doing so you're going to take away the guess work, the overwhelm, and the last-minute content creation stress that goes hand in hand with unplanned content. To be specific, you're going to walk away with three things today.

- A fool proof plan to create consistent content that will leave you feeling confident, excited, and inspired.
- My top five favorite ways to choose topics that your ideal customer avatar will want to eat up immediately.
- I've created a place for you to keep it all organized in a three-month content calendar template. I've got it all laid out in a spreadsheet that you can take and make your own. All you have to do is follow the prompts and fill in the blanks and you're good to go.

Before we jump in, I want to share a sweet iTunes review from David Trotter. Here's what he wrote:

*"Without you I'm not sure where I would be. Your podcast, list-building course, and Digital Course Academy are inspiring and educating me all*



*the time. Thank you for all the time and energy you put into your resources.”*

David! This literally makes my heart melt. I just wanted to tell you that you taking the time to reach out like that means the world to me. I love putting my time and energy into content when it's received in the way that you've said here.

I'm so glad they serve as a way for you to learn new things and to inspire you so thanks, again, David.

Also, I'd love to hear from you, dear listener. Leave me a review in iTunes or a comment in my Online Marketing Made Easy free Facebook group which I will link to in the show notes and you may be hearing your name as a shout out in a future episode.

I won't make you wait any longer. Let's go ahead and dive in.

First, we're going to talk about content calendars. Your ultimate goal from this episode is to create a simple three-month content calendar filled up with great topics.

In order to do that let's reverse engineer that just a bit and first talk about how you're going to create space in your busy schedule for your content calendar planning session.

When we've done that we'll dive into how you're going to find topics that your ideal reader or listener or video viewer will be excited to see come across their inbox and social media channel when you share your content.

This is definitely going to be a note taking session so get out a pen and paper, my dear listener, because you're going to want to refer back to this. If you're driving or if you're on the run in some capacity or another then listen closely and later make sure to head on over to <http://www.amyporterfield.com/contentcalendar>.

There you will find the show notes and you'll get all of the details about how to download your three-month content calendar template (It's free, of course) so that you can get started creating your calendar right away.



I want you to get out your day planner or digital calendar or whatever you use for your calendar and find a two-hour block of time in the next five days where you can do your planning session.

I want you to give yourself two hours to do it. You're going to actually be creating the calendar in those two hours. I want you to actually do this work in the next five days so that time doesn't get away from you and you don't actually do the work.

If you're so busy that you cannot find two consecutive hours on the calendar in the next five days then break it up. Do one hour here and one hour there. Just make sure you do it.

Don't you dare say, "Okay, I'm not going to actually plan the time on my calendar to get this done but I promise I'll get it done in a few days."

No, no, no. This is a nonnegotiable. You and I both know if it doesn't get scheduled it will never happen. You owe it to yourself to block that time out. So, two hours, that's what it's going to take to have multiple hours of free time where you're not scrambling to try to come up with content for your blog or your podcast or your videos. Good?

You've set the time in your calendar. Now here's what you're actually going to do with those two hours that you've planned. First, you're going to open up the three-month content calendar template that I've created for you.

Remember, go to <http://www.amyporterfield.com/contentcalendar> to get access to this three-month template that you're going to use in terms of loading in all of the dates and topics and a few other things I'm going to share with you a little bit later.

First you're going to get the three-month content calendar template. Second you're going to add in the dates you'll be publishing your weekly blog or podcast or video show content.

There's a date column in the spreadsheet so you just need to add in your specific dates and I'm talking about the date the actual content will actually go live. We're working on a three-month plan so that's roughly 12 dates you'll be adding to your calendar.



Think about that, you're just coming up with 12 topics but the amount of time you're going to save by doing this exercise all at once will feel like you've just come up with 100 topics. Believe me, it's a good feeling.

Now you're ready to start choosing content topics and adding them to your content calendar. As topic ideas come in over the next few days I suggest you grab a pad of paper or a Google doc and any time you come up with a content idea put it down on paper or in a Google doc.

This is something you should make a habit. I constantly come up with ideas when I'm driving or when I'm working out or walking Scout or whatever it might be. Because I typically have my phone with me, in my phone I have a notes doc that any time I come up with an idea I just throw the idea in the notes doc.

Definitely get into the practice of doing that because next time you do your three-month content calendar you could have a huge running list just to pull from and fill up the calendar quickly.

Because we're likely starting from scratch, if in the next few days before your 2-hour planning session you come up with any great ideas for a blog post or whatever it is you're creating, make sure to write it down.

In your two-hour planning session you can then start pulling from that document and putting it into the template.

I'm going to give you my five favorite ways to come up with topic ideas to fill up your three-month content calendar. If you've already had success with other ways to come up with ideas by all means use those strategies.

Any way to come up with good topics is fine by me. I just want to make sure you get those creative juices flowing.

With each of my five suggestions I'm going to recommend a certain amount of time to complete the exercise. I don't want you going down any entrepreneurial rabbit holes. You go down, down, down and you never come up for air and you've wasted tons of time.

I actually want you to grab a physical timer or something on your phone, something that's going to make a beeping noise when time is up. The timer will help you stay



focused and on task the whole time. It will also help you stay within your two-hour time limit that you've allotted for yourself. Good?

I'm going to go through the five ways to come up with topic ideas for your blog, your podcast, or your video show. Ready?

### **Exercise #1 – Set a Timer For Ten Minutes and Brain Dump Topic Ideas Onto a Physical Piece of Paper (or a Google doc)**

When you sit down to do this picture your ideal customer. Think about which topics excite them or interest them. What do they want or need that you can provide for them? Where are they right now in their journey as it relates to what you offer in terms of your content?

How can you help them move along in the direction they would want to go? What content will help them right now?

This is a free flowing rapid writing exercise. You're putting words or phrases or questions down that they may be asking. That's another great thing. Think about the questions they ask if you meet some of them in real life at an event or you do a Facebook Live and you do a Q&A afterwards.

What are the questions they're asking? You can turn those into content. Just let it flow. No editing. You're not worrying about penmanship or grammar or anything like that. Don't worry if it's a good idea or a bad idea. No judgment. This is the beauty of brain dumping.

We're not looking for any kind of perfection here. This exercise is a really good way to begin your content calendar time, the two hours on the calendar, because it gets those creative juices flowing and will generally knock out any writer's block you may have been experiencing.

Even if you just come up with one really good topic the ten minutes will be worth it. If you just came up with 12 topics by doing exercise #1 then you don't need the next four I'm going to share with you. But, you might so let me give you #2.

### **Exercise #2 – Set a Timer for 20 Minutes to Perform the Following Task. Survey Your Audience By Asking Them What They Want to Learn About.**



Use something like a Google form and create two to five short questions that will help you to uncover topic ideas from your audience. I like to include at least a few open-ended questions when possible so I can use my audience's exact words in my copy or in my weekly content titles.

I like them to actually tell me in their own words what they want from me. But you can also use a list of content topics and ask them to choose their top three favorites. That's another way to use the survey.

It's a good gauge as to where they're at right now and what they want from you.

If you create this survey you can use it on social media. You can also, of course, use it to email your list even if you have a small list (still do this). You can also take a version of this (This is Part 2, don't just do this alone) to do some fun polls on Instagram or Facebook.

Instagram Stories have the polling feature: Do you like this or that? Which one do you like better? I would do a series of those as well just to get some feedback.

If you don't yet have a big enough audience that is going to get enough responses from a survey then I want to encourage you to go to someone else's blog or Facebook page or Instagram page that is in the same field as you that actually has a large audience.

See what's resonating with their audience. Looking in the comments of their social media platforms or look in the comments of their specific blog posts can unearth a gold mine of topic ideas.

Of course you're not there to copy their content but to find inspiration for what you can create with your own spin on it. For example, if you're in the life coaching field and you go to your competitor's blog and see that there are a lot of comments from the competitor's audience about overwhelm or decision fatigue or a need to overcome a certain fear you can take that topic right there and write about it on your own.

If you're thinking you should be coming up with new ideas, not necessarily. I love what Mark Twain said about new ideas:

*"There is no such thing as a new idea. It's impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give*





*them a turn and they make a new and curious combination. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely but they are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages."*

I totally agree with Mr. Twain. We're moving on to the next strategy that you can use to come up with new topics for your 12 weeks of content for your blog, podcast, or video show. That was hard for me to get out but you get it.

**Exercise #3 – Set a Timer for 15 Minutes to Take a Look at Your Calendar and the Seasons Where Specific Holidays Fall or the Types of Activities that Take Place During a Certain Time of Year.**

When you do that you're choosing themes for your content. For example, you may be in the physical fitness world and you may theme December as a pre-launch to the new year and then theme January as New Year/New You.

Looking at the calendar allows you to identify themes. My friend, Jasmine Star, does this really well. She has a really cool tool called Social Curator where it's a subscription model of images and captions that you get every single month so you actually have images to post on social media.

I'm a member and I use all of her images on my sales pages and slide decks, for my programs and training courses for slide decks, it's really cool. Anyway, I love her images. Go to <http://www.amyporterfield.com/socialcurator>, it's one of my favorite tools that my entire team uses every single month.

Inside of her membership site she finds themes, even something fun like National Donut Day or National Sibling Day and she uses these fun holidays that are actually on the calendar and turns them into content.

You could do this as well with your blog or podcast or video show. Get creative here.

Setting themes really helps you to narrow down and decide on topics that would entice your audience. If you need some inspiration Google "Holidays in the US" or "Holidays in Canada" or wherever your ideal audience lives.

Once you Google that don't get stuck in the Google vortex. Take a quick look and move on. This exercise should take you no longer than 15 minutes. But, coming up



with themes related to serious holidays like Christmas and New Year's or fun holidays like National Donut Day is always a great way to get inspired for content.

I know you're not going to write content around National Donut Day. That's just an example. But, you really can get inspired if you start to look at the holidays and then think about some themes for each of your posts.

Once you decide on your theme or themes for the three months in your content calendar you then do another brain dump based on the themes to come up with your topics. That's how it works.

Here's another way to look at putting themes together for your content calendar. I do themes for my promotions. Here's an example. If I'm leading up to a promotion I'll do what is called a 30-day ramp up.

In the 30 days before my promotion my theme is related to the course I'm going to sell. When I sold Digital Course Academy the 30 days leading up to that (four podcast episodes) all focused on course creation and launching a course.

My theme was dictated by what I was going to sell in 30 days. I didn't tell my audience that I was doing the topic because I was going to sell a course. I just made sure that all of the topics leading up to the promotion were aligned with what I planned to sell.

That's my 30-day ramp up. My Digital Course Academy students know this well. It's Step #7 in the Pre-Launch Runway so just to give a shout out to all of my DCA students, you've heard this before.

But for my podcast listeners that's one way you can create a theme if you're going to promote soon. The theme is the topics that would align well with whatever it is you're going to promote. It's a little bit more of a sophisticated way to do it and it works.

#### **Exercise #4 – Set a Timer for 30 Minutes and Look Back at What You've Created in the Past That is Really Resonating With Your Audience.**

Look at the comments. What was shared in the most popular social media post that you've done? Choose a topic or two that you can expand on or shed a new light with that topic or dive deeper or put a different spin on it.



Basically, what you're doing is going back to all of the content you've already created and find out what resonated the most. What was the most popular? What got the most likes or the most comments?

Even if it wasn't a blog post, maybe on social media you posted something and it got a lot of great feedback. Turn that into a blog post. I'm going to give you two examples.

**Example 1** – A while ago on Instagram (if you don't follow me on Instagram I'm @AmyPorterfield but it's definitely where I spend the most time when I'm going to post on social) I posted about a day that I really wanted to emotionally eat.

I talked about creating my most recent course, Digital Course Academy, and how I was putting the content together and had a flood of it not being good enough, people aren't going to like it, I don't know how to do this like I thought I did, who do I think I am to be teaching this?

I had all of those stupid thoughts that come up when we're deep into content creation. Even after ten years, guys, it still happens to me so if it's happening to you and you're just getting started, that's very normal. Just a side note.

All of these negative thoughts started flooding my mind and my first reaction was, "Give me food. Give me all of the food." I wasn't hungry. I just wanted to eat to ease that feeling I was having that I hated.

I wrote about it on an Instagram post. It literally, to this day, has the most engagement in terms of comments and hearts (likes). That spurred me on to create a podcast episode I did not too long ago about my weight-loss journey Part 2.

My audience was really resonating with it. It is something they care about. I thought I should do a podcast episode where I really dive into some of the shifts I've made. I said, "I didn't eat today but I wanted to." I said that in the post.

In the podcast episode I talked about the tools I'm using now to not emotionally eat. See how that one post led to an actual podcast episode? That's how it works. That's something I want you to think about.

Go back to your social media posts. Go back to your Facebook Lives. What resonated the most? Then create content around that.



**Example 2** - I'm going to give you one more example. If you go back to old content and see a few different pieces that are really resonating think about creating content around that but think in terms of a mini series.

I went back to old posts a while ago and anything I do on content creation like this tends to be really popular with my audience. I thought I would create a three-part mini series on my podcast all around content creation.

I did episode #235, #236, and #237 and called it The Three-Part Mini Series on Creating Compelling Content. It is similar to this but not really. I'll tell you about it in a second.

I talked about knowing your audience so you know what kind of content you want to create, I talked about getting clarity around the message with all of your content, and I talked about creating binge-worthy content that people just can't get enough of. It was different than coming up with topic ideas but it was very specific to content creation.

Come to think of it, you would probably love it if you're loving this idea of coming up with a three-month content calendar. So, after you do your three-month content calendar go check out Episode [#235](#), [#236](#), and [#237](#). I think you will love them. Of course I will post them in the show notes.

A mini series will help you come up with an idea and expand on it. It's kind of easier to come up with individual topics when you first think of either a theme or a series and then you expand on them. Anyway, those are two examples I thought you would find valuable.

**Exercise #5 – Set a Timer for 30 Minutes and Hit Google Up for Help**

Last but not least I'm going to tell you how to perform a very simple search in Google that will likely provide you with plenty of topic inspiration.

Open Google and type in something your ideal customer avatar would naturally search for if they were looking for the result you know they want. Just type it like they would type it.

I'm going to give you an example: "How to learn Spanish online". Type that into Google and take a look at the top search results that come up. Google has indexed



these in order of most searched and most clicked on so you know these are popular topics.

What words or phrases come up? What article titles do you see that you could write something similar, but unique, of course.

Scroll down a bit and you'll see the "people also ask" area. For example, this is what would come up:

- How can I learn Spanish fast for free
- How can I learn Spanish on my own
- What is the easiest way to learn Spanish
- What is the best online Spanish program

Can you see how you can come up with topic ideas? Just turn those searches into your topic and even content titles.

Scroll down to the very bottom of that Google search page and you'll see "The searches related to 'How to learn Spanish online'" area. This will give you a handful of more topic ideas. You are looking for "Searches related to".

You will repeat this process with other search terms and you are going to come up with tons of ideas because Google is going to give you those ideas. This one's an easy one and I highly recommend you just take it for a spin.

There you have it. As a recap, here are my five favorite ways to come up with topic ideas to fill your three-month content calendar:

- Do a good old-fashioned brain dump. It's my favorite way to get started with a content planning session.
- Survey your ideal customer or search your competitor's comments.
- Create themes and then from there come up with your topics.
- Expand or give new life and light to your own past content (think in terms of the mini series I told you about) to get a little bit more traction out of one idea.
- Let the Googles help you. That one is going to be kind of fun because I think it will flood you with new ideas.

Remember, some of coming up with good topic ideas is like throwing spaghetti against the wall and just seeing if it will stick. Don't be afraid to try new stuff and take risks.



You want to be thoughtful during the process but don't be so rigid that you feel stuck with making it perfect. You'll get better at this as you go along.

Head on over to <http://www.amyporterfield.com/contentcalendar> to get your free three-month content calendar template that we've created for you. That's where you're going to plug in all of the great content ideas you come up with plus the dates that they will go live.

I've also got a great social media tracking section in that template so you can make sure you're promoting the content you've worked so hard to create. Remember, you're going to get this work done this week.

In the next five days you're actually going to create your 12 topics in your template. That doesn't mean you have to write them all out in the next five days but here's the thing. Once they are in your calendar this is the final thing you've got to do.

Once they are in your calendar you have brainstormed them, you've chosen the dates, you've got them all there (it might even take you less than two hours) now you've got to get them done.

If you want to be like me then batch them. Maybe do six on one full day and six on another. I think with 12, creating all of them in one day is a lot so I would do six one day and six another day.

Don't leave your planning session without booking maybe two more time slots on your calendar to do six blog posts or to write six podcast outlines and record them or to do six videos.

Or, if you're going to do Facebook Live then do six outlines to prepare you to do those Facebook Lives. You need time on your calendar to actually create this stuff. Deal?

This will not work if you don't plan on your calendar when you're actually going to create the content. I do not recommend to do episode by episode or blog by blog randomly right before it's due. Do not do that. Batching, batching, batching.

That just means you sit down with a chunk of time. I'd give yourself five hours to do six blog posts or six podcasts or whatever; or six hours, whatever you need, but do it in two different days. Deal?



Okay, we're wrapping this up. Go to <http://www.amyporterfield.com/contentcalendar> to take you to the show notes and remind you of these five different ways to come up with content ideas and give you the link to sign up for the free template.

One more thing, if you like this episode and you know you want really good tactics and strategies and not a lot of fluff then make sure you subscribe to my podcast. Actually go into iTunes and subscribe to this.

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I'd love for you to subscribe and I cannot wait to see you again same time, same place next week. Have a wonderful week guys, take care.