



**Your Products & Services Turnaround  
(Part 4)**

---

**Creating Your Marketing  
Calendar**

## Creating Your Marketing Calendar

Hello, and welcome. This is Naomi from IttyBiz, and you're listening to the Products and Services Turnaround track, part 4, called Creating Your Marketing Calendar.

In this section, we're going to talk about getting your sales and marketing initiatives on a reasonable, pre-planned schedule so that you don't keep finding yourself in the turnaround position. Feeling like everything is an emergency sucks, and if we get started on this part now, the current emergency disappears sooner, and future emergencies become a lot fewer and further between.

Before we begin, I just want to tell you that you're doing great because you've taken the time to listen all the way through to the end of the products and services track. That shows that you're serious about turning around your ittybiz, because you're already following through. I know you can do this, and you're proving me right already. So congrats.

Now, let's get started.

### How Marketing Calendars Work

If you're like most ittybiz owners, you're going actively sell things as infrequently as you can possibly get away with. If you're not broke, you're not sending an email, right?

Your perfect world is to have a nice little store, or maybe a consulting or services page, and a nice, reasonable number of people will make their way over there every now and again and buy stuff. Not a huge number – you're not trying to buy a yacht here. But reasonable. Yes?

And maybe a few of those people will tell their friends about you, or maybe they'll send you some social media traffic, and everything will happily take care of itself.

When you have to do an actual promotion, or make an actual offer, it feels like you've failed somehow.

Wouldn't it be a whole lot nicer world if we could just sit back and let the sales roll in?

That would be a lovely world, but it is not the world we live in. Not yet, anyway. I'm going to get you a whole lot closer to that world today, though.

First, I'm going to take you back to the mall example for a minute and have you stand outside your favorite store. (Well, do this if your favorite store is also the favorite store of other people.) You may do this literally, or you may do it in your head.

Look at the store. Look at the people going in and out of it. Watch the commerce taking place.

Now look at the signs.

My favorite store in the mall is the Gap, and it never ceases to amaze me how many promotional signs they have going on. Something is always on sale at the Gap. Some new product has always arrived. It's fall sweaters, or winter sweaters, or holiday sweaters, or oh my gosh, spring has sprung in February. (I believe my local Canadian Gap gets its signage from their Miami regional office.)

The Gap is always telling me, in very large text, exactly what is on offer at any given time.

Now, if even the Gap feels it prudent to have several large signs announcing what's on offer at any given time, and they're an incredibly popular, multinational corporation, do you think maybe the logic would apply to you, who nobody's ever heard of?

So here's a question for you... when do you think your local Gap received those signs from head office? Probably not this morning, right?

And head office probably ordered the signs a while before that.

And somebody probably designed the signs a while before that.

And a committee probably rejected the first eighteen versions of the design a while before that.

And somebody, or several somebodies, had to decide what was going to go on the signs a while before that.

So the offer or promotion you're seeing today was planned, say, four months ago? Maybe six?

Now, if the offer you're looking at right now was decided on four months ago, when do you think the offer you're going to see next month was designed?

They're probably deciding on a sign right now that you won't see for two more seasons.

That, my friend, is a marketing calendar. And it's going to keep your ittybiz out of the danger zone.

## **Making Your Promotional Life Easier**

A marketing calendar tells you what you're selling, how, and when in nice, handy, predecided black and white.

Marketing calendars do a lot of wonderful things for your ittybiz. (They make your ittybiz taller, for example, and they also help to reduce the seven signs of aging.)

Seriously, though. Let's talk about why you need a marketing calendar in terms of what it's going to do for you and your ittybiz.

It motivates you to work to the schedule. If you're sending an email on Tuesday, you better hustle and get it out there or the Wednesday email's going to look pretty ridiculous.

It makes you think of ways to keep your mailing list warm. If you're going to sell them something in April, it's a good idea to talk to them in March so they don't forget who you are.

It gives you reasons to cross reference older products or other services. If you're going to sell X in June, you might want to sell Y in July. And you may feel inclined to sell Z to the buyers of one or both in August.

It gives you momentum and keeps you moving forward. You know that you're going to be sending an email next week, so it might make sense to, I don't know, write it?

It takes the guess work out of what you're going to sell and when.

It dramatically reduces the chances that you'll forget key pieces of your marketing materials. You know you're mailing on the 17th because it says so on the calendar.

And, my favorite, it means you're a lot less likely to wimp out on promoting. You know who to mail and when, instead of wondering if you should.

When you have your marketing calendar in place, you can start thinking a few products or offers ahead, and keeps you acting on multiple offers in various stages of production. Having a bunch of products or offers in the hop means you're much less likely to experience this kind of emergency next time.

So let's get you a marketing calendar of your very own.

## **Facing The Blank Page**

The biggest problem ittybiz owners face when they're creating their marketing calendars is facing the blank page. You stare at the year ahead, or the quarter ahead, or even the month ahead and it looks terrifyingly blank. Somebody put YOU in charge of deciding what goes where? Hang on a minute! Isn't that the marketing department's job?

Oh, right. You are the marketing department.

Given that you're an inexperienced and reluctant marketing department, I'll give you a nice and easy way to create your marketing calendar with a zero hyperventilation quotient.

Get out a piece of paper, or something you can type into, and a calendar. If you're using paper, a few different colors of pen would be handy here.

If you've never seriously done this before, the best way to create your base marketing calendar is to arrange it around the bad times. It's a lot easier to figure out when you CAN'T promote than it is to figure out when you should. You can waste a lot of time wondering if you should sell on the Wednesday or the Thursday, or you can simply go with "I can't have a sale on Valentine's Day because my spouse will kill me." Much easier.

Think about the times when you absolutely can't actively sell anything. These are probably going to be very unique to you and your ittybiz. If you're vacationing for three weeks in May or your daughter-in-law is planning to birth a child or two in February, those are probably not the best times to engage in serious promotion.

Try to think of everything you can that could impact your ability to be in Very Serious Work Mode. I want you to incorporate big chunks of time like your vacation, but I also want you to incorporate little things, like long weekends at the lake or spouse's office Christmas parties or niece's ballet recitals.

Mark these zones in red. These are no promo zones. I don't care what the Four Hour Workweek says, you are not yet at the point in your ittybiz where you're in any position to hold major promotions while you're on vacation. That's for the pros.

Now I want you to add a buffer of at least two days on either side of your big no promo zones and a one-day buffer on either side of your little no promo zones. These are "you probably shouldn't" zones.

(I have done promotions in the days leading up to a vacation and they involve a lot of completely unnecessary pain. They also involve a lot of searching for wifi.

And when you get back from doing the thing that you plan to be doing, you're probably going to be absolutely slammed with administrative crap. Do not plan to release a product or hold a consulting sale the day after you get back from vacation. Or the day after that. Or the day after that.)

Mark your buffers in yellow. Yellow zones are times when promotions can exist, but it's not ideal. You could have a one-day sale in there, or put a very quiet "push" out, but this is generally not where you're going to do much active promoting.

Once you've done that, you've got your basic structure. You know when it would be a very bad idea for you to be actively promoting something.

Now consider if there are time periods where it would be very unwise to promote. These reasons are also going to be very unique to you and your ittybiz. If you know your biggest competitor has a Fourth of July sale every year, you want to consider if you want to compete with that. If your industry has huge conferences or events on certain days

every year and few of your buying customers are going to be around and checking their email, that's a bit of a flag.

Mark those times in yellow as well. They're not absolutely no promo zones – in fact, low key promotions tied into competitor's calendars can be very lucrative – but you don't want to put anything you care about in these time slots.

Next, consider major holidays and how they're likely to impact you. This isn't as cut and dried as it might seem. You might say, well, I can't sell on Christmas! Well, maybe, maybe not. I happen to sell a lot on Christmas. But if YOU'RE not selling on Christmas because you're busy juggling four drunk aunts and baking a ham, well, mark it red.

Lastly, think of standard buying seasons and how they impact you and your ittybiz. Some ittybiz owners find that they make the most of their sales in traditional buying seasons like Black Friday, New Years', Memorial Day or Back to School. Some find that the opposite is true, and nobody's shopping for them during back to school because they're all buying back to school stuff.

If you're just starting out or you haven't made enough sales yet to track a pattern, assume you'll primarily promote during traditional buying seasons for the moment. This is not because it's necessarily going to be a strong selling time for you – you don't know that until you test it – but it's a lot easier for a novice to write copy for a promotion during a standard buying time. Let's face it – you don't have to be a copywriting genius to type “Black Friday Sale” in the subject line of an email.

Now you have the structure of your calendar and it's time to reverse engineer it.

If this time and that time and the other time are bad times for you to promote, what might be good times? I've tended to promote a lot in late February and early March because my birthday is on the 8th and I tend to respond to that by going to Las Vegas. I'm sure as hell not selling from Vegas, but a little spending money beforehand might be nice, yes?

So find a few places – maybe four? - that look like they might be good times for you to promote and tentatively mark the zones in green. You don't have to commit to anything right now, but you're creating a guide. Do not stress out over this. If you change your mind or forget your mother-in-law's birthday cruise and have to scrap the whole thing tomorrow, nobody will ever know. You're safe here. OK?

Now for each of those possible green zones, consider how long your promotion might be. Five days? Perfect. Write that down. Don't overthink it.

Now consider how you might plan to promote during that period. Do not make this terrifying. Go with your first guess, as long as your first guess isn't "Um, I'll say something on my Facebook page on the first day, I guess?" Fewer than four emails and you're losing the majority of your sales.

Let's say you're going with four.

Well, you'll want one on the last day of the promo period. So on the last day, write "email number four".

You'll want one the day before that. So on the second last day, write "email number three".

You'll want one on the first day, so write down "email number one".

Stick the remaining email on a day between the first and the third.

Now consider if hypothetical future you might write any blog posts. Two is good. Put them in somewhere. Anywhere will do. It doesn't really matter. Just write "blog post 1" and "blog post 2" on whichever days feel nice to you.

Now think about if you're the type who tends to engage in any social media hullabaloo. Let's say once a day on each of your two major social media outlets. Put "1 x Facebook" and "1 x Twitter" on each day.

Now step back and look at what you've done. You, my love, have a promotion schedule. You don't even know what you're promoting and you've already got a schedule. Aren't you clever?

Last, and only last, put some cursory thought into what you plan to sell during these timeframes. At this point, it does not matter – you're simply playing a little game inside your mind. Don't bust your butt on this. Your subconscious will take care of this over the next few days.



A new product? Your regular service on a discount? A store-wide sale? Just give it some thought and write your notes in if you feel so moved.

And guess what you have. Go on, guess.

A marketing calendar! Would you look at that?

Now you have a rudimentary marketing calendar and with it, you can start doing your promotions, launches and offers by planning them ahead, instead of in a scramble. And you know what that does?

It makes people a whole lot more likely to just wander in and buy things, just like at the Gap. Who knew?

So now you know that marketing calendars don't have to be scary. They just have to be done, because that's what gets people buying from your ittybiz as opposed to some other person's ittybiz.

Thanks for listening to part four of the Products and Services Turnaround track, called "Creating Your Marketing Calendar." I'm Naomi from IttyBiz, and I'll talk to you very soon.