

DEVELOPING YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM CALENDAR



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OVERVIEW

This guide accompanies the Digital Program Calendar template. The calendar is designed to align your team on email and social media content, to help you visualize themes, and to pace your asks. As we get closer to the election, we need to be strategic about what content we are posting and when; posting for the sake of posting is no longer an option.

Take some time to meet with your leadership team to complete your digital program calendar. Communicate this plan to your organizers so they can understand broad themes and how they can amplify your message on any given week.

DIGITAL PROGRAM GOALS

When planning your digital program, we find it helpful to do everything with three goals in mind.

1. Messaging



Social media and email are two great tools for storytelling. Use them to highlight your candidate, your supporters, and the story of your campaign. Remember that people are inundated by different messages everyday online—yours will break through the noise if it is authentic, consistent, and memorable. Tell real stories of real people that connect to the values of your campaign and why your candidate is running. Tell the story of the work your campaign is doing, and the people you are working for, and the difference that policy is making and can make in their lives. Facebook and Instagram Story are natural tools for this, but don't shy away from telling stories via email as well. Remember to include calls to action, and to connect the stories you are telling to the broader vision and core message of your campaign.

2. Mobilization



Digital is more than just message amplification of course. When used well, it has the power to engage people and move them to action. Look for opportunities to connect the stories you are telling to concrete actions your supporters can take on behalf of the campaign. How do the stories you are telling sync with the programs your campaign is running on the ground? If someone is passionate about access to healthcare, what can they do about it? Sign up to call voters! Remember that people will take incrementally higher-bar action over time. Start with small asks (e.g. share, forward this email, sign this

petition), tailored to your audience (email will allow you to segment your list), and keep those asks coming over time. Digital is increasingly becoming a big part of how we organize—don't miss an opportunity to channel your active online supporters to "offline" action. Note: it's important that your organizing team can follow up with supporters who sign up to take action online—so align with your organizing team on their programs and appropriately timed asks well in advance. Ideally, folks who sign up to attend an event or complete a canvass/phone bank shift should receive a phone call from someone on your team within 36 hours.

3. Money



Finally, digital—in particular email—is an important tool for your fundraising operation. The larger your email list, the greater your fundraising potential. You should be making consistent asks for money, but be careful not to treat your donors like ATMs. Fundraising asks should be interspersed with content that is focused on messaging and mobilization. It all comes back to building relationships with your donors that are built on respect, trust, and shared values. Pace your fundraising asks, and always include a link to donate. You can also add a donate ask as a secondary ask in emails and content that primarily focuses on storytelling.

TIMING YOUR DIGITAL OUTREACH: DATE, DAY, TIME

We've all heard there are optimal times to send emails, so be specific when you're planning your content. Think about what time of day you'll tweet, post, publish, or press send. You can check out [this blog on email](#) and [this on social media](#) for additional research, but here are some high-level tips for when to push content:

EMAIL

- **Before lunch**

8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. is a great window when people are looking at their email. If you're sending an email, think about the different time zones your audiences are in. If you're trying to reach donors across the country with your email, try to find a good middle ground.

- **Mid-week**

Send your important emails Monday - Thursday. Attention declines at the end of the week and over the weekend, but by Thursday we're hungry for a distraction.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Lunch time**

A great time to post is between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

- **Thursdays**

There seems to be something special about Thursdays, but in general social media gets more engagement during the week.

ASKS / CALLS TO ACTION

When completing your digital calendar, you should map out when, how, and what asks you will make of your supporters. Remember, your content should include an ask 90% of the time (if not more). Use the “Ask” column in the calendar template to determine your call to action on a given day or week .

Typical asks include:

- Share
- Donate
- Sign a petition
- Sign a card
- Sign up to volunteer
- Attend/RSVP
- Call voters
- Bring a friend
- Host an event
- Like or Follow
- Read
- Watch

Remember to include links, and make it easy to take action (e.g. click here to sign up for Monday night’s phone bank!).

VOICE

Whether you’re writing an email or drafting a social media post, it’s important to consider voice. Who is speaking? What does he or she sound like? What issues or audiences is she a strong messenger or ambassador for? Keep your audiences engaged by including different senders in addition to the candidate. Have the Campaign Manager give an update on the “State of the Race” or ask an influencer roll out his or her endorsement and talk about why she supports you. Consider the sender/messenger, and voice you will employ as you plot your content.

TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Finally, look at your digital calendar holistically. This is an opportunity for your campaign to be proactive and drive the narrative. Vary your content. Refine your asks. Social media and email are fast, easy ways for you to respond rapidly to current events and breaking news, but your program should not be purely reactive. You can control the narrative by planning out what you want to post in advance and what story you plan to tell.