



# Know Your Audience – Designing an Editorial Calendar for Your Ecosystem



## SNAPSHOT

### SPEAKERS

Hillary Boucher & Georgina Cannie (TheCR)

### COMPETENCIES

Community Management

### MATURITY PHASES

CMM2, CMM3



## TOP THREE TAKEAWAYS

This presentation was inspired by the quest to answer a common dilemma in this field – how to increase the value and the volume of member engagement.

1. **Understand the definition of an editorial calendar.** The key to developing an editorial calendar is to understand its definition. Learn from Georgina Cannie’s in-depth definition and content structure outline.
2. **Five Step Process.** Looking for an effective way to build an editorial calendar? Georgina of TheCR shared her 5 step process.
3. **Three Tactics for Involving Subject Matter Experts.** Having trouble getting subject matter experts (SMEs) to agree to help in your community? Georgina offered 3 helpful tactics.

## OVERVIEW

1. **Background – Georgina Cannie:** Hillary introduced Georgina: Georgina works in an advisory and strategy capacity for TheCR’s clients and partners. A big part of her day is day-to-day community management.

## BEST PRACTICES

1. **Create a Structured Member Engagement Framework with an Editorial Calendar:** Georgina's strategy for member engagement is to take a step back and create structured member engagement through an editorial calendar. There are 3 key steps:
  - a. Assess the appropriate programs
  - b. Create a context for your content
  - c. Leverage your partners and SMEs to collaborate and support your work.
  
2. **Understand the Definition of an Editorial Calendar:** A system used to define and control the process of creating your content. Think of it as a repeating, time-specific template for the content, programming and subject matter you want to feature.
  - a. It is different than other publishing outlets, such as a blog or magazine. The goal is to use it to create a stable environment that breeds familiarity for members.
  - b. A blog or magazine editorial calendar contains static article content. Community is real-time, which can be overwhelming. Community managers need to do the heavy lifting for members by funneling them through a pathway.
  - c. The editorial calendar allows you to channel fresh content streams into recurring, regular, programmatic anchors for members. This helps them navigate.
    - i. **Select a Topic Area:** Start with what members are talking about at the top.
    - ii. **Select a Timeframe:** This further narrows the engagement opportunities. Georgina prefers 2 week cycles, but base it on your community needs.
    - iii. **Layer a Topic:** Layer-in your content, programming and SMEs.
    - iv. **Plug-In Programs:** An example is an AMA (Ask Me Anything) program.
    - v. **Shift Topics, Stabilize Programs:** Repeat the cycle after the chosen timeframe, but stabilize the programs by keeping it on the same days.
  
3. **Consider These 5 Steps to Building an Editorial Calendar:** Georgina's process is to:
  - a. **Pick a Topic:** Many topics are needed, which leaves room for trial and error.
    - i. **Consider Organizational Strategy:** Refers to the over-arching themes that your organization promotes. Coordinate with the organizational calendar.

## BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- i. **Consider Community Tone:** This refers to the types of conversations preferred by members, i.e. high-level fact topics or Q&A structures?
    - ii. **Consider Member Research:** Ask what your members want to talk about. Use surveys or a discussion forum.
  - b. **Pick a Timeframe:** This is completely flexible based on your community needs.
    - i. **Consider Member Profiles:** Active and savvy technical members need less support. The opposite is also true.
    - ii. **Consider Topic Breadth:** Collaboration could populate an entire month.
    - iii. **Consider Content Complexity:** Is it “snackable” or entrée-sized?
  - c. **Core Programming:** Choose the right programs for the calendar’s structure.
    - i. **Content for Engagement or Consumption:** Engagement content enables dynamic community engagement. Content for consumption is designed for members to have an experience or receive information from you.
  - d. **Know Your Core Purpose:** Georgina recommends re-visiting the shared value and core purpose of your community to know which content to use.
  - e. **Involve Collaborators (or SMEs):** This deepens the value of the information.
    - i. It’s difficult to get SME’s to participate. Georgina shared 3 tactics:
      - A. **Program-Specific Feature:** Invite a partner or a collaborator as the featured guest of a recurring program template. Send all the information ahead of time. Let the SMEs know what you expect.
      - B. **“On-Call” Guest:** A guest will look for opportunities to engage in an ad hoc, spontaneous way. Set the expectation.
      - C. **Topic Cycle Partner:** The most robust option. Invite partners, departments, networks etc. to sponsor or host a topic cycle.
4. **Remember that Engagement is Not a Switch:** Broaden your view of what engagement means. Georgina referred to TheCR’s Work Out Loud (WOL) Framework as a way to understand the different stages of engagement. (*See Lessons Learned*).

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Scattered content creation patterns and/or engagement post distribution habits eat up valuable time and inhibit the flow of uniform and cohesive content streams. It also influences member behavior.
- Georgina shared the main benefits of using an editorial calendar:
  - **Stability + Freshness:** Members know what's going on and what to expect.
  - **Don't Reinvent the Wheel:** Maintain the same time and program structure.
  - **Listening + Response Channels:** Listen and plug-in what is trending.
- One member asked Georgina to elaborate on the WOL Framework:
  - **Validate Out Loud:** This is the first phase. People develop a comfort level.
  - **Share Out Loud:** People begin to connect and contribute vs. reacting.
  - **Ask Out Loud:** They have trust in the community to ask for advice.
  - **Explore Out Loud:** Members at this phase are community activists and partners.
- Georgina shared different types of editorial program calendars: feature calendars, repeat programs on the same day each week, featured topic cycle, Tip Tuesdays or “#twowaytuesdays” (we tell you something, you tell us something).
- Georgina was asked how to stay focused and continue to deliver amidst competing priorities. Slow and steady is the best way. Trello keeps her organized.
- It is absolutely acceptable to take breaks in the editorial calendar during heavy vacation periods, such as the summer months and/or December.
- It is tempting to stockpile your editorial calendar with content in the beginning. However, Georgina's advice is to begin slowly.
- One participant wondered how to balance pre-set content vs. as-it-comes-in content. Another participant replied that as-it-comes content is usually more inspired and engaging, but preplanned content is more strategic and has longer lasting value.

## **ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS**

Georgina asked participants to share programs that are working well for them:

- One participant was on the call to learn how to best prioritize multiple ideas.
- Another participant is excited to launch their first “AMA” program this month.